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TITLE: THE SOVIET GENERAL STAFF:
ANTECEDENTS AND CURRENT ORGANIZATION

by Bruce Menning

THE ROLE OF THE SOVIET GENERAL
STAFF IN MILITARY MANAGEMENT:
PERSISTENCE AND CHANGE

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THE SOVIET GENERAL STAFF

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SUMMARY*

In 1927-29 Boris M. Shaposhnikov published Mozg armii (The Brain of the Army), in which he argued the need for a general staff to "direct the military system, link it to the other parts of the State machine, give it life, inspire and lead it to victory or defeat." The two Final Reports which follow this Summary discuss the role and function of the Soviet General Staff. Bruce Menning, in "The Soviet General Staff," focuses on the antecedents of the Staff and its current organization in light of continuity with its Tsarist tradition. Shane Mahoney, in "The Role of the Soviet General Staff in Military Management," shares some of Menning's basic concerns but emphasizes a different perspective. Mahoney stresses aspects of continuity and change especially as they relate to the role and function of the Staff in military management.

Three main conclusions emerge from the research of Professors Mahoney and Menning. First, the remote antecedents of the Soviet General Staff date to Tsarist times, although their longevity fails to rival the near-legendary German/Prussian General Staff which until 1945 traced a continuous tradition reaching to the Napoleonic era and beyond. Second, throughout Tsarist and Soviet times, the General Staff has remained subordinate to political processes without accumulating the sustained influence of its Prussian counterpart. The Staff is perhaps better understood as an instrument of the political elite in the military establishment rather than as a monolithic spokesman for the parochial interests of the armed forces. Brezhnev's reliance on the General Staff does not signal any basic decentralization of military management. Rather, the General Staff's recent prominence is probably a reflection of the increasing need for military professionals to replace older patron-client networks in the military establishment. If this is the case, greater reliance on the General Staff will actually operate to dampen the decentralizing tendencies familiar to Western bureaucracies.

Finally, the presence of General Staff officers on diplomatic delegations should not too readily be interpreted as a sign of greater military assertiveness. They are an indication that the issue at hand requires military expertise and coordination between the military and civilian components of Soviet society. At times the Staff has been more closely associated with the particular Regime than with the Soviet Armed Forces in general.

In more specific terms, the General Staff has never had great political staying power, even in times of war, although it has certainly wielded more influence during periods of active military operations. While Stalin displayed some of the same suspicion toward the Staff's real or imagined power as his Tsarist predecessors, the Brezhnev regime seems more willing to utilize the military and political expertise of the General Staff. Nonetheless, the relationship is still based on "personal," rather than "constitutionally" - derived power, and during the approaching leadership transition, the extent of the Staff's role might easily decline.

*Prepared by the National Council

A Brief History

The antecedents of the General Staff date to Peter the Great (1682-1725) whose first formal table of military organization provided for a General Staff of the Army, with a quartermaster general. After Peter's death, however, quartermaster affairs entered a period of slow decline, which persisted until Catherine the Great (1762-1796). Tsar Paul I (1796-1801) abolished the General Staff in 1797, apparently because he feared centralization of military authority in hands other than those of the Tsar.

Paul I's response to the real or imagined threat implicit in the existence of a powerful central staff organization helps explain the failure of the imperial Russian military establishment to develop a true general staff during the 19th century. As long as the Tsar considered himself commander in chief, and his administrators and commanders desired to maintain strict hierarchical control over their respective bailiwicks, there could be no staff on the emerging German pattern. What actually occurred was an organizational and bureaucratic centralization at the expense of genuine staff-oriented, inter-agency coordination and planning. Central military institutions remained quite independent of one another during the first quarter of the 19th century. Tsar Nicholas I (1825-1855) imposed a degree of unity on the system, however, by appointing A. I. Chernyshev to head both the War Ministry and the Main Staff. Military reform continued under Alexander II (1855-1881) with the appointment of D. A. Miliutin to head the War Ministry. Miliutin vastly improved military administration through a calculated policy of decentralization which reserved to the War Ministry's sphere of authority only those affairs bearing on the existence of the armed forces as a whole. Local military organizations retained a measure of control over the administration of their own affairs.

The 1880's and 1890's saw a debate on whether to modify Miliutin's achievements. Two issues dominated: the feasibility of creating a general staff on the German model, and the desirability of decreasing the War Minister's authority. Failure to modify the system led to increasing difficulties as the Main Staff was taxed to the breaking point with too many organizational responsibilities in an increasingly complex military environment. The Main Staff was, in fact, reorganized and enlarged in 1903, but only with defeat in 1905 in the Russo-Japanese War did Nicholas II create a new Main Directorate of the General Staff. The superiority of this Army General Staff persisted less than three years, however, after which the Tsar resurrected the traditional arrangement in which the General Staff was once again subordinated to the War Ministry. Even during this three year period, the War Ministry retained budgetary control and had to be consulted on certain other issues.

The years before WW I saw the Directorate shorn of independence, having lost what little ability it had gained in 1905 to impose dictates on the Imperial Army. This can explain why it assumed nowhere near the decisive role played by its German counterpart in World War I. In the Russian Army, a mixture of tradition, politics and organizational peculiarities dictated that coordination of the War effort would fall not to the General Staff, but to the Staff of Supreme Headquarters, Stavka.

Continuity and Change During the Revolution

The February Revolution saw continuity of personnel, traditions and some organizations between the Tsarist period and the Provisional Government. Nonetheless, the General Staff remained without a powerful and independent role in the management of the armed forces. Furthermore, the military was left badly fragmented. Thus, in spite of large numbers of Tsarist officers who cast their lot with the Bolsheviks

after the October coup, including over one-half of the Tsarist General Staff, there was a failure to create a single staff agency with organizational or operational control. Attempts to centralize were overridden by the Bolshevik impulse against greater reliance on an exclusive Staff, for the regime feared "Bonapartism."

Throughout the 1920's and into the 1930's, the role of the General Staff was continually held in check, and any changes in its responsibilities were largely cosmetic, especially as Stalin's influence increased. The Purges also contributed greatly to limiting the Staff's role. In this atmosphere there was still recognition of the need for a general staff, most notably in Shaposhnikov's Mozg armii. Shaposhnikov's views remain important, in part because they were of some influence in molding the General Staff and in part because evidence suggests that he retains disciples within the contemporary Staff.

Even in the face of the Wehrmacht, resistance to greater reliance on a professional General Staff continued during World War II, although the imperatives of modern warfare gradually forced opponents of a general staff system, including apparently Stalin, to modify their views and policies. Even during war, however, Stalin dealt with the General Staff as he saw fit, not according to constitutional provisions or Staff influence. Granted, the General Staff had a somewhat expanded role in operations planning and implementation, and by mid-War had begun to operate as a well-oiled machine. It remained but one organ in a matrix of institutions (such as the Stavka, the Headquarters of the High Command) which were involved in managing the War, and it lacked the authority Shaposhnikov and others would have desired.

Little is known of the Soviet General Staff during the immediate post-war period, except that it appeared to retain the principal characteristics of its post-1942 organization. Following the death of Stalin and the onset of Khrushchev's de-Stalinization campaign, the General Staff's reputation suffered when it was tarred with the same brush applied so liberally to Stalin. Because the General Staff had served as the executive for the Stavka and Stalin, some criticism was inevitable.

This is not to say that the General Staff was locked into a role determined by centuries of tradition. In some respects it has become a far more important organ than its predecessor, a result probably more of historical development beyond its control, than from its own institutional dynamics. The areas of greatest importance are in the military-industrial bureaucracy, elite recruitment opportunities, military strategy and foreign policy. Change begun under Krushchev with his emphasis on force modernization, and implemented by the Brezhnev regime, required that new approaches to military management be undertaken. The resulting revitalization of the General Staff signals the present Regime's willingness to place greater reliance on the professional Staff officers rather than on a haphazard collection of personal clients to serve as its prefects in the armed forces. Brezhnev appears confident that a cultured professional ethic in the General Staff, together with its long tradition of subordination, will ensure loyalty to the political elite and simultaneously enhance its competence to assist with the integration of the technical and political aspects of military management. Finally, the expanded role of the General Staff may contribute to the routinization of political succession after Brezhnev, at least with respect to the military.

The increased role of the General Staff thus includes greater regime reliance on the Staff for military strategy. Furthermore, the contemporary military balance redirects attention to the types of armaments in which the General Staff can claim undisputed professional expertise. The concept of the General Staff has remained essentially unchanged since WW II. On the other hand, global conditions, new weapons systems and the like have led to the creation of new departments and greater responsibilities. In sum, while the militarization of Soviet foreign policy does not necessarily mean the militarization of the Regime's policy decision-making processes, the political elite undoubtedly draws more heavily on the kinds of advice and calculations that the General Staff is best equipped to formulate.

Conclusions

The analysis of the role of the General Staff in Russian and Soviet history undertaken by Drs. Mahoney and Menning reveal considerable stability and institutional momentum. While comparison with its Prussian counterpart is useful in places, the record of institutional development casts doubts on the validity of such a comparison. The Soviet General Staff did not experience the uninterrupted history of service or the level of influence of the Prussian one. Its development is strongly attached to traditional patterns of personal, absolutist rule; and if there were an attempt of the Chief of Staff to solidify power on its base, it is probable that the Soviet General Staff would not provide a bureaucratically cohesive basis of support, because the Staff is highly "personal" like the rest of the Soviet system. In this regard the staff has little bureaucratic staying power.

In addition, the Staff has not occupied an historically central position in strategic or operational issues. Its potential wartime role is ambiguous, subject to the creation of ad hoc institutions which have deprived it of a leading role. It has not served as bureaucratic spokesman for the Soviet armed forces to the political elite. It has no great decision-making responsibility though it plays a strong advisory role in such technical issues as the SALT talks. Here, too, however, decisions are the result of the participation of a number of offices. On the other hand, at present the Staff assists on the resolution of complex technical, political, and military issues precisely because of the fact that it has never served as the "brain of the army." This makes it suitable for new assignments precisely because of long traditions identifying it far more with obedient and dedicated service to the political elite than with bureaucratic advocacy on behalf of the armed forces. At the same time, it is a military institution whose numbers display the pride and comradeship of an elite, uniformed service.

The Soviet General Staff has a history of enduring commitment to the nation whose roots are in Tsarist times, and of ability to manage the Soviet Union's military capabilities for the Politburo. Its development, perhaps one could say rise, has not come about through self-reorganization, but because of attempts to modernize, routinize and professionalize the patron-client approach to military management in the USSR which occurred under Khrushchev and Brezhnev.

THE SOVIET GENERAL STAFF: ANTECEDENTS AND CURRENT ORGANIZATION*

In a signed article (1976) for the Soviet Military Encyclopedia, General V. G. Kulikov, then Chief of the Soviet General Staff, defined a general staff as "the main organ for directing the armed forces of a state in peace and war."¹ Unlike the near-legendary German General Staff, which until 1945 traced a continuous tradition reaching to the era of Napoleon and beyond, the Soviet General Staff has known official existence only since 1935. The current organizational version of the Soviet General Staff dates to 1942. However, antecedent and analogous organizations offered useful precedent and frequent links of continuity in tradition, personnel and doctrine to join the 1930s and 1940s with both an earlier revolutionary age and the tsarist military establishment. Before the formal appearance of the Soviet General Staff, the Staff of the Workers' and Peasants' Army had existed since 1921, while its predecessor, the Imperial Russian General Staff traced its roots to the late nineteenth century and the era of military reform. Indeed, as far back as the eighteenth century various types of command and quartermaster staffs had discharged many of the functions now identified with the responsibilities of a modern general staff. Thus, when General Kulikov wrote that in the post-World War II period the Soviet General Staff "perfected its organizational structure and methods of work," his carefully chosen words implicitly acknowledged the fact that neither he nor his immediate predecessors were building on empty ground.²

The remote antecedents of the modern Soviet General Staff appeared during the eighteenth century, when various rulers, military administrators, and field commanders created both command staffs and what were then called quartermaster staffs. Already in 1711 Peter the Great's (1682-1725) first formal table of military organization provided for a "General Staff of the Army," an army field

* Part of a larger study on the history of staff organization, prepared for the US Army Chief of Staff, by the US Army Center for Military History, Washington, DC.

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staff composed of 184 officers and men whose activities combined the functions of quartermaster with those of the military engineer. That is, the new organization assumed responsibility for assisting field commanders in planning for and undertaking reconnaissances, field marches, encampments, and general military operations, including the movement and placement of heavy artillery. The commander's principal assistant was his quartermaster general who discharged the functions of a field army chief of staff. In addition, field commanders usually possessed personal staffs of adjutants and clerical personnel whose task it was to handle records and communications. No direct staff link existed between Russian field forces and Peter's newly-created Military College, that organ of central administration which bore primary responsibility for the conduct of military affairs. Because the Tsar usually remained with his armies on campaign, there was minimal necessity to provide staff liaison between the head of state and Russian field forces.³

Peter's death in 1725 did not signal any abrupt departures in staff organization and procedures, but quartermaster affairs entered a period of slow decline which was arrested only in the reign of Catherine the Great (1762-1796). In part, the decline stemmed from a shifting set of priorities which enhanced staff engineering functions at the expense of quartermaster concerns during the stewardship of Field Marshal B. Kh. Munnich and the Shuvalov (Peter and Ivan) brothers in the 1730s and 1740s. And in part the decline stemmed from outright neglect of the army's quartermaster functions. In 1762, after operations during the Seven Years War had revealed glaring deficiencies in the army's field administration, Catherine instructed a Military Commission to present plans for a reorganization that would both remedy shortcomings in staff work and provide co-ordinating staff links between the Military College in St. Petersburg and Russia's field armies. A year later the Commission emerged from its deliberations

with a revamped version of the General Staff, the chief of which was now vice president of the Military College. Under his guidance the General Staff assumed undisputed control over quartermaster activities to include preparation of topographical and related materials for various areas of operations and the training of quartermaster officers. The Chief of the General Staff maintained co-ordinating links with operational forces through a network of subordinate staff officers assigned to the field armies. Despite a reorganization of the system in 1772, the new arrangement fell short of expectations, in part because distances between the capital and theaters of operation during the Russo-Turkish War of 1768-1774 precluded close co-ordination, and in part because commanders abused the system by employing trained quartermaster officers as members of personal staffs. Although the General Staff was far from an imposing institution, Catherine's successor, Tsar Paul I (1796-1801), abolished it in 1797, apparently because he feared centralization of military authority in hands other than those of the Tsar.⁴

Paul's response to the real or imagined threat implicit in the existence of a powerful central staff organization helps explain the failure of the imperial Russian military establishment to develop a true general staff during the nineteenth century. As long as the Tsar considered himself commander in chief of the imperial armies and as long as his chief administrators and commanders desired to maintain control over their respective bailiwicks in traditional hierarchical fashion, there could be no general staff on the emerging German pattern. What actually occurred was an organizational and bureaucratic centralization at the expense of genuine staff-oriented, inter-agency co-ordination and planning. Such centralization reinforced the lines of the traditional authority but did little to facilitate military problem solving. Only defeat or near defeat provided sufficient, although usually temporary motivation, to restructure

the tsarist high command and its staff functions.

When Paul abolished the General Staff, he transferred the majority of its experienced personnel to a new organization, His Imperial Majesty's Suite for Quartermaster Affairs. It was this body, ranging in size from 25 officers and men to 150, that performed the duties of a quartermaster staff for the field armies of Alexander I (1801-1825) during the era of the Napoleonic wars. Meanwhile in 1802, the Military College was superseded by a Ministry of Land Forces, which in 1808 became the War Ministry. Despite the reform efforts of M. B. Barclay de Tolly and Prince P. M. Volkonskii, the system was marked by a failure of staff coordination between the center and various local agencies and field commands. Nor did the situation markedly improve after the hectic campaigns of 1812-1815, when Alexander reorganized his military high command to administer the largest peacetime military establishment in continental Europe. At the apex of the structure stood His Majesty's Main Staff, which after 1816 assumed responsibility for all questions "related to the combat sphere," and which included in its organization the chief of staff, the war minister, the inspector of artillery and the inspector of the engineering corps. At the same time, major issues related to the support of field forces and the more mundane aspects of military housekeeping were relegated to the War Ministry. The Staff of the Military Colonies and the Directorate of Military Educational Institutions remained independent of either the Main Staff or the War Ministry. The whole situation represented a kind of military anomaly in which as L. G. Beskrovnyi, a Soviet military historian, put it, "both aspects of the military organism (housekeeping and field command) remained independent of one another."⁵ The Main Staff bore responsibility for field questions, but could not be held accountable either for the training of the army or for its armament, equipping and provisioning. Because the Directorate controlling military ed-

ucation was independent, the Main Staff had no direct control over the education of the officer corps. Finally, the Minister of War was deprived of the right to report independently to the Emperor; instead, he reported to the Emperor through the Chief of the Main Staff. His Majesty's Suite for Quartermaster Affairs existed until 1827, when it was reorganized and renamed the General Staff, then combined during the following year with the corps of topographers under the chief of the Main Staff. Only in 1828 did Tsar Nicholas I (1825-1855) impose a degree of unity on the system by naming a close confidant, A. I. Chernyshev, to head both the War Ministry and the Main Staff.⁶

Chernyshev remained a powerful influence on the course of tsarist military administration for the remaining two decades of Nicholas I's reign. Between 1832 and 1836, Chernyshev presided over a major reorganization of the imperial military establishment to unify separate field and support elements under a single ministerial umbrella. In 1832, tsarist decrees abolished the Main Staff and created within the War Ministry a Department of the General Staff, which consisted of the former General Staff's Directorate, the Military Topography Depot, and the Corps of Topographers. The new Department was subordinated to the Quartermaster General who now reported to the War Minister. A description of the Department's responsibilities published in 1836 listed the disposition, quartering, and movement of ground forces, in addition to the direction of supplementary agencies, including educational institutions and the Topography Depot. Candidates for appointment to the Department of the General Staff (62 officers) were drawn from graduates of the newly-created (1832) Nikolaevskii Military Academy, which would eventually become the Nikolaevskii Academy of the General Staff. Thanks to Chernyshev's organizational work, the Russian version of a European General Staff remained essentially a quartermaster staff buried deep within the well-ordered organizational structure of a newly-unified War Ministry.

Successive Quartermaster Generals did little to enhance the Department's reputation with their stress on cartography and the collection of statistical information to the detriment of other legitimate Department of the General Staff activities.⁷

Shortly after mid century, a combination of events, including Crimean defeat, the accession of Alexander II (1855-1881) and the appointment of D. A. Miliutin to head the War Ministry, opened a new era of military reform for Imperial Russia. Between 1861 and 1881, Miliutin presided over a series of important changes ranging from the introduction of universal military training (1874) to a thorough reorganization of the War Ministry (1864-1869). Although the reform-minded minister avowed that his alterations only simplified Chernyshev's fundamental structure of 1836, Miliutin vastly improved military administration through a calculated policy of decentralization which reserved to the War Ministry's sphere of authority only those affairs bearing on the existence of the armed forces as a whole. Within the new scheme, local military organizations retained a measure of control over the administration of their own affairs.⁸

Within the Ministry of War, Miliutin's organizational model persisted--granted changes to accommodate the increasing size and complexity of the Imperial Army--until the first decade of the twentieth century. The Ministry consisted of a Military Council, the Main Staff, seven directorates, two inspectorates, the Main Military Judiciary, and five main committees. According to Miliutin, the Main Staff's position within this hierarchy possessed "a significance completely corresponding to the general understanding of the staffs of armies, districts, corps, etc., that is, of such organizations which were concerned with affairs related to the composition of forces, their structure,

and service."⁹ In accordance with the fundamental Statute (1869) governing the organization of the War Ministry, the Main Staff bore responsibility for maintaining information about the armed forces, managing affairs related not only to the composition of forces and their personnel requirements, but also to the formation, deployment, and support of those forces. In addition, the Main Staff was responsible for the collection both of military-statistical data and intelligence. The Staff consisted of six sections, an Asian detachment, and a judicial detachment. Only one of those sections dealt with the kind of questions belonging to the sphere of competence of a modern general staff.¹⁰

During the two decades following Miliutin's departure from office in 1881, several commissions reviewed the War Ministry's organization with an eye to modifying the edifice so carefully constructed by the reform minister. Two recurring issues dominated sporadic debates over reform: the feasibility of creating a general staff on the German model; and the desirability of decreasing the War Minister's authority. One group of officers lobbied for the creation of a genuine general staff, the chief of which would report directly to the emperor and the primary function of which would be strategic planning. Another group of senior officers close to court importuned the conservative Alexander III (1881-1894) to turn back the clock to the pre-Chernyshev years by resurrecting an independent Main Staff outside the organization of the War Ministry. Whatever the merits of either cause, both foundered because successive war ministers perceived them as threats to their status and used their influence to scuttle reform efforts.¹¹

By the late 1890s, failure to modify the system led to increasing difficulties as the Main Staff was taxed to the breaking point with too many organizational responsibilities in an increasingly complex military environment. As early as 1894, General N. N. Obruchev presented a detailed plan to enlarge and restructure

the Main Staff to enable it "to discharge tasks of the highest strategic order related to the disposition of forces in theaters of war, the formation of armies, (and) the composition of plans for their concentration and first movements . . ."¹² In 1900, a new Chief of the Main Staff, General V. V. Sakharov, proposed a major reorganization which would enlarge the Main Staff sufficiently to enable it to discharge the many new responsibilities imposed on it since 1867. Sakharov also suggested that the Chief occupy a position as principal associate of the War Minister with the right to report directly to the emperor. Although Nicholas II (1894-1917) and the War Minister, A. N. Kuropatkin, disagreed with proposals to elevate the Chief of the Main Staff to a position above the heads of other ministerial department heads, in 1903 the emperor approved Sakharov's plans for structural changes that enlarged and reorganized the Main Staff. The new Main Staff consisted of five directorates (First Quartermaster, Second Quartermaster, Duty General Officer, Military Communications, and Military Topography). Separate sections of the two quartermaster directorates had charge of affairs (planning and mobilization) usually associated with the activities of a general staff. In January, 1904, Sakharov's initiatives to enhance the position of the Chief of the Main Staff became academic when Kuropatkin left to assume supreme command of Russian forces in the Far East and Sakharov became War Minister.¹³

For three years beginning in 1905 there existed in Imperial Russia an organization akin to the German General Staff. Nicholas II, stung both by defeat in the Far East and revolution in European Russia, created in 1905 a Main Directorate of the General Staff, the chief of which was subordinate only to the emperor. The deputy chief of staff, the quartermaster general, served as primary assistant to the chief and supervised four quartermaster sections, the separate jurisdictions of which were arranged by function. The old Main Staff, meanwhile,

was relegated to the position of a promotions board for the War Ministry. In addition, in 1906, the Tsar created a Naval General Staff to assume a position in naval affairs analogous to that of the General Staff in army affairs. The superiority of the Army General Staff persisted less than three years, after which the Tsar resurrected the traditional arrangement in which the General Staff was once again subordinated to the War Ministry. At first, Nicholas had favored the new system in which the Chief of the General Staff reported only to him, thereby enabling the Tsar in a limited way to avoid embarrassing military questions put to the War Minister by the Duma, the new representative assembly created as a result of the Revolution of 1905. However, as laws governing elections to the Duma grew more restrictive, successive Dumas became more tractable, and the Tsar came increasingly to rely on Duma members to support the huge expenditures needed to finance his program of naval expansion. It made good political sense in the complicated political atmosphere of the post-1905 period to restore the General Staff to its former position of accountability to the War Minister. Even more important, as one observer has noted, was the realization by high-ranking military functionaries such as V. A. Sukhomlinov that the route to power "lay through the War Ministry, and not the General Staff, despite its formal superiority, because the former could more easily control both jobs and money."¹⁴ In late 1908, Sukhomlinov, then Chief of the General Staff, announced that the old manner in which the War Ministry held undisputed sway better suited Russian circumstances, and there followed an Imperial decree under which provisions the General Staff reverted to the status of a regular directorate within the War Ministry. Not surprisingly, in March, 1909, Sukhomlinov became War Minister.

Shorn of its independence, the Directorate of the General Staff in the pre-1914 period lost what little ability it had gained in 1905 to impose its

dictates on the Imperial Russian Army. The Staff's sphere of responsibilities was defined to include: 1) composition of plans for movements and dispositions for initial engagement; 2) the conduct of military surveys and reconnaissance; 3) the leading of columns in the theaters of war and especially on the field of battle; 4) the selection in concert with military engineers of positions for fortifications and fortresses; and 5) the implementation of projects having a military statistical or military-historical significance. Sukhomlinov assumed a crucial policy-making and co-ordinating role that was limited by his own ability to maintain a precarious balancing act, one in which he attempted limited military reform while protecting his own position by playing against one another old-line conservatives and more progressive-minded military technicians. The General Staff's role was to assume responsibility for working out mobilization plans for a brief future war which Staff members gradually came to assume would be decided by the outcome of initial confrontations. In turn, the ability to succeed in these confrontations would largely be determined by the quality and speed of the field forces' initial dispositions.¹⁵

The failure of the General Staff to retain independent status before 1914 helped explain why it assumed nowhere near the decisive role played by its German counterpart in World War I. Once hostilities dragged beyond initial engagements, a mixture of tradition, politics, and organizational peculiarities dictated that coordination of the war effort would fall not to the General Staff but to the staff of Supreme Headquarters, Stavka. Thus, the Stavka staff functioned as the real general staff, while the Chief of Staff of the Supreme Commander became the actual Chief of the General Staff. After Nicholas himself assumed Supreme Command in 1915, his chief of staff, General M. V. Alekseev, discharged the functions of the Chief of the General Staff. Meanwhile, most of the General Staff officers moved from Petrograd (old St. Petersburg) to Stavka at Mogilev, and the War

Ministry reverted to a position of secondary importance.¹⁶

Officers with general staff preparation fared better than the General Staff itself, thanks to the growing need for military specialists to serve in various command and staff capacities. The Miliutin military reforms of the 1860s and 1870s had revitalized the Nikolaevskii Academy of the General Staff, with the result that its graduates became an important source of talent for both the Directorate of the General Staff and increasingly significant command assignments. Even though not all graduates subsequently served with the General Staff, those who had completed the course of studies at the Nikolaevskii Academy gradually came to represent an elite element within the officer corps of the Imperial Russian Army. Known as the Genshtabisty, they displayed a level of technical competence that often boosted them into the front ranks of their contemporaries, despite the persistent influence of older elites such as officers of the Guards regiments. Thus, although the Genshtabisty came to make up only two percent of the Russian officer corps, in 1912 they commanded one-third of the infantry regiments and two-thirds of the infantry divisions. During World War I, the high command consisted overwhelmingly of Genshtabisty, including, for example, 20 of 22 commanders-in-chief of army fronts.¹⁷

During the three years of civil war and allied intervention which followed the two revolutions of 1917, a number of officers who had once served with the old Imperial General Staff cast their lot with the new Bolshevik regime. However, despite the existence of continuities in personnel and tradition, there were marked differences which set the Reds apart from their predecessors. For one, members of the new leadership both within and without the armed forces resisted impulses to duplicate in revolutionary terms the German General Staff. The worst aspects of the old system seemed to lend themselves too readily to the

development of military elitism, something to be avoided in a new model army of workers and peasants. More important, the new regime feared Bonapartism in any guise, and therefore substantial resistance developed to impede the establishment of any general-staff-type organization which possessed the power to lead a military life of its own. Consequently, in 1921, the Staff of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army emerged as the central military organ responsible for planning. A separate body, the Main Directorate of the Red Army, discharged functions related to the daily operation of the army and its mobilization system.¹⁸

The organization limitations of the 1920s did not preclude speculation about the need for a general staff against the larger background of Red Army reorganization. Indeed, it was between 1927 and 1929 that the first three volumes of B. M. Shaposhnikov's classic, The Brain of the Army (Mozg armii), appeared as part of a continuing debate over the future nature of the high command and the desirability--even necessity--of a general staff. Shaposhnikov was both a product of the defunct Imperial Russian General Staff and a serious student of European staff systems, especially the German and Austro-Hungarian. Like others before and after him, he searched the historical record of the years between 1914 and 1918 to explain the planning and organizational failures which had led to stalemate and a war of attrition. One of his conclusions was that a general-staff-type organization must exist in any modern state. Shaposhnikov's views remain important, in part because they were of some influence in the molding of the Soviet General Staff, and in part because evidence suggests that he retains disciples within the contemporary General Staff.¹⁹

Shaposhnikov defined the general staff as "that organism which directs the military system, links it to other parts of the state machine, gives it life, inspires and leads it to victory or defeat."²⁰ The chief of the general staff was to be a high commander not in the old sense of the term, but a "statesman," the

leading member of a collective which directs war and makes preparations for it. Like many of his revolutionary contemporaries, Shaposhnikov was concerned that the general staff never created its own policies and politics. Instead, the staff was to be the executor of the policies of the state. Although Shaposhnikov's roots lay in the old regime, he had little time for elitism or military caste systems. More than once he denounced staff elitists as "demigods" and "hierophants," and one of his more memorable admonitions to staff officers was "to be more than you seem."²¹

Shaposhnikov's vision of the general staff remained one of an organization devoted to orchestrating an overall war effort in support of the various separate field commands. The chief of the general staff was to be a modern "great captain" who headed a collective organ, one consisting of dedicated people who were well-trained, energetic, capable of hard work, independent judgment, and decisive action. At the same time, these officers had to be tactful in their dealings with field officers and modest in their communications with headquarters. Staff officers were to be aware of the political life of their own country and that of neighboring states, but the same officers were cautioned never to seek to establish their own policies. Politics remained the affair of other state organs and not the general staff.²²

Although Shaposhnikov's thought seems recently to have returned to vogue, during much of the 1930s he remained a prophet without honor in his own time. The projected fourth volume of The Brain of the Army was never published during his lifetime, and beginning in 1931, his career hit the first of several notable snags when Stalin for reasons which remain obscure had him transferred to command the Volga Military District. Only in 1937, after having served successively as commandant of the Frunze Military Academy and commander of the Leningrad Military District, was Shaposhnikov appointed Chief of the Soviet General Staff, a post

from which Stalin had him removed in August, 1940, ostensibly for failures associated with the Russo-Finnish War of 1939-40. In July, 1941, Stalin recalled him to head the General Staff, but illness forced him to retire in May, 1942. Shaposhnikov died of tuberculosis in 1945.²³

Although much of what Shaposhnikov preached eventually became reality, his proposals had little immediate impact on staff developments of the late 1920s and early 1930s. Instead, the imperatives of modern warfare gradually forced opponents of a general staff system, including apparently Stalin, to modify their views and policies, first gradually and then more rapidly, as the threat of another European war loomed nearer. As early as 1924, the Council of People's Commissars had created a special directorate within the Red Army Staff to monitor the ability of the domestic economy to fulfill defense requirements in the event of future hostilities. After the announcement of the First Five Year Plan in 1929, this directorate worked closely with the State Planning Commission (Gosplan) to insure that industrial production reflected the needs of the Red Army. In 1930, Red Army Staff activities grew to encompass responsibility for mobilization. Then, in 1935 the Red Army Staff was renamed the General Staff of the Workers' and Peasants' Army. Finally, in 1936, Stalin announced the creation of the Military Academy of the General Staff, the purpose of which was to train staff officers and future commanders under the immediate supervision of the Chief of the General Staff.²⁴

Despite its title, the Soviet General Staff of the late 1930s lacked the kind of organization and authority which Shaposhnikov had earlier envisioned as critical to such an organization's effectiveness. Its various subdivisions were labelled "sections" as opposed to the more imposing "directorates" of its parent organization, the People's Commissariat of Defense. Control of critical programs, including tank production, remained outside the General Staff's mandate. More-

over, as the purges of the mid-1930s gathered momentum, they exacted a fearful but unknown toll among staff officers, including associates and acquaintances of prominent members of the high command, many of whom were liquidated in 1937 and 1938. It was in this atmosphere that Shaposhnikov served his first stint as Chief of the General Staff.

Shortcomings revealed in the course of the Russo-Finnish War cost Shaposhnikov his position and provided additional impulse for change. During the second half of 1940, the sections of the General Staff became directorates, and their number increased from five to eight: operations, intelligence, organization, mobilization, military communications, organization of the rear and supply, troop staffing, and military topographical. In addition, there were four departments: fortified areas, military historical, cadres, and a general department. The number of military personnel assigned to the General Staff doubled, while the number of civilians tripled. Finally, the General Staff was acknowledged to be the most important institution within the Commissariat of Defense.²⁵

The German attack on Russia in June, 1941, and subsequent military reverses precipitated still more change. Indeed, the first months of the "Great Fatherland War" forced a realignment at the top which produced a conflict-managing organization strikingly similar to the one in existence during the late 1970s. The State Committee on Defense (GKO) with Stalin as Chairman assumed responsibility for running the nation as a kind of war cabinet making all necessary decisions on the conduct of the war. The day after Hitler's attack (June 23, 1941), Stavka, the Headquarters of the High Command, was created to assume centralized control of the military effort, including determination of the operational tasks of the various fronts and the monitoring of the accomplishment of those tasks. Thus, Stavka directly controlled the field forces of the

various fronts. Within the reorganized structure of the military establishment at its upper reaches the General Staff's function was to serve as the main executive agency of the Stavka. Only Stalin, who on July 20, 1941, assumed chairmanship of Stavka as Supreme Commander in Chief, could give orders to the General Staff. At the same time, the General Staff was reorganized to discard all functions not concerned with operational direction of the armed forces. Stalin added two directorates, one for the formation and staffing of forces, and the other for rear services.²⁶

Despite the reorganizational flurry, more than a year passed before the General Staff functioned in the way originally envisioned by Shaposhnikov. One of the chief difficulties was that no genuine plan existed to guide governmental and staff organization in the event of prolonged conflict. Another problem was Stalin's practice of dispatching key staff officers to the front both to stabilize uncertain situations and to stiffen resistance. During the first days of the war, the Chief of Staff (G. K. Zhukov), his first deputy (N. F. Vatutin), another deputy (V. D. Sokolovskii), and Chief of the Operations Directorate (G. K. Malandin) were all dispatched to the front. In their absence it was unlikely that Stavka would turn to the more junior staff officers for advice. In addition, the General Staff itself functioned on an improvised basis, with the Operations Directorate housed in makeshift quarters and overworked staff officers having little more than telegraphic communications to track the rapidly disintegrating situation at the front. Not even Shaposhnikov's brief return to the post of Chief of the General Staff during late 1941 and early 1942 appreciably changed the situation.²⁷

Meanwhile, under Stalin's personal control, the General Staff adapted itself a daily routine that was to characterize much of its existence throughout the war years. The Supreme Commander in Chief required three reports daily (1000-1100,

1600-1700, and 000-100) on the course of each day's fighting. For the most detailed of these reports, the midnight briefings, General Staff officers appeared at Stavka with maps on a 1:200,000 scale to support a description of the current situation on the various fronts down to division level. At times there were as many as fourteen fronts, each composed of three to six armies. Requests poured in from each front for replacements, equipment, supplies, and ammunition, all of which were examined, with appropriate directives drafted to be signed at Stalin's midnight meetings with Stavka and selected briefing officers from the General Staff. Because Marshal A. M. Vasilevskii, who served as Chief of Staff for the greater part of the war, often served as Stavka representative to the various fronts, daily direction of the General Staff fell to his first deputy, General A. I. Antonov. At the conclusion of Stalin's midnight meetings, Chief of the Operations Directorate, General S. M. Shtemenko, often received dictated orders from Stalin for direct transmission to front commanders by telephone or telegraph. Other directives were signed both by Stalin and the Chief of the General Staff or his First Deputy. Minor directives did not require Stalin's signature. For action purposes, the Soviet General Staff used color-coded documents, with red signifying highest priority to be checked by Stalin, blue specifying routine but same-day attention, and green denoting papers for honors and awards not requiring immediate actions.²⁸

By mid-1942, thanks to more than a year of wartime experience and the pressures of working closely with Stalin, the General Staff began to function as a well-oiled machine. As General Shtemenko later reminisced, "the war set everything in its place: superfluties were discarded, deficiencies made good."²⁹ The organizational structure of the General Staff now coincided fully with the nature of the work to be done. Personnel had sufficient time to settle into their jobs, and officers of the Staff now enjoyed the breathing space needed

"to think deeply about the situation and the problems it set (the Staff), to calculate times and distances, and to put every operational project, every proposal on a sound basis."³⁰ Communications no longer hung by an uncertain telegraphic or telephonic thread. Perhaps more important, successive Chiefs of the General Staff (Vasilevskii and Antonov) enjoyed Stalin's confidence to a degree that enabled them to fulfill the dual function of trusted adviser and integral great captain, the latter role having been prescribed as the ideal by Shaposhnikov.³¹

Little is known of the Soviet General Staff during the immediate post-war period, except that it appeared to retain the principal characteristics of its post-1942 organization. This in itself was something of an accomplishment, for in the wake of demobilization, much of the military establishment underwent varying degrees of reorganization. Thus, early in 1946, the People's Commissariat of Defense was reorganized and renamed the Ministry of the Armed Forces. A new service, the National Anti-Aircraft Defense, was created. In 1950, there was formed a separate Naval Ministry, but in 1953, after Stalin's death, the two separate defense-related ministries were once again combined to form a single Ministry of Defense.³²

Following the death of Stalin and the onset of N. S. Khrushchev's de-Stalinization campaign, the General Staff's reputation suffered when it was tarred with the same brush applied so liberally to the wartime Supreme Commander in Chief. Because the General Staff had served as the executive for Stavka and Stalin, some criticism was inevitable.³³ Consequently, when Khrushchev deflated Stalin's reputation as wartime leader and military genius, implicit in Khrushchev's remarks and reminiscences was a critique of the General Staff and its most prominent wartime leader, Marshal Vasilevskii. Sometimes

the remarks were explicitly critical of the General Staff. In particular, Khrushchev referred to the ill-fated Kharkov offensive of 1942, in which Stavka apparently ordered the General Staff to permit S. K. Timoshenko and his political officer, Khrushchev, to launch an offensive operation which the General Staff knew could not possibly succeed. When the attack failed spectacularly, Timoshchenko and his political officer were left in the lurch, awaiting the judgment of an irate Stalin with no defense from the General Staff.³⁴

The reputation of the General Staff also suffered from Stalin's practice of using personal representatives from Stavka at the front to insure that local commanders conformed with directives laid down by the Supreme Commander in Chief in Moscow. These representatives, usually hand-picked senior officers, appeared at critical moments either to supervise forthcoming operations or to salvage deteriorating situations. For obvious reasons, the presence of these representatives from Stavka, who in almost all cases were accompanied by specialists from the General Staff, aroused the ire of front-line commanders.

To make matters worse, Khrushchev permitted public airing of the natural resentment felt by field officers against their staff counterparts. One officer referred to the General Staff as "the holy of holies," while Khrushchev himself termed visitors to the field from headquarters "celebrities." Accusations levelled against the General Staff and its officers ranged from charges of elitism to assertions that rear echelon officers enjoyed better living conditions than front-line officers. In view of these and other revelations, it was not surprising that in the official six-volume history of the Great Fatherland War, which began to appear in 1961, the General Staff was rarely mentioned, and when it was, the commentary was often critical in tone.³⁵

After Khrushchev's removal from power in 1964, a number of military monographs

appeared, the purpose of which was both to correct negative impressions of the wartime General Staff and to offer a more balanced account of Stalin's wartime leadership. The outside world owes much of its knowledge of the World War II Soviet General Staff and its officers to these monographs. The more noteworthy include Shtemenko's The Soviet General Staff at War, Vasilevskii's The Business of an Entire Lifetime, Zhukov's Memories and Reflections, and M. V. Zakharov's series of separate journal articles. What emerges from these works is a picture of the General Staff as an organization of dedicated professionals, which after Stalin ceased dispatching its officers to the front, proved itself superior to its German counterpart. Soviet commentators invariably highlighted the tension associated with high-level staff work, something obviously intensified by Stalin's demand for near-perfect knowledge of the military situation at the front. Shtemenko's work also revealed that many staff officers remained with the organization for periods extending to 25 and 30 years. Shtemenko himself remained on the General Staff from 1940 to 1952, after which span his career entered into a yet unexplained decline.

The drive to rehabilitate the General Staff's reputation climaxed in 1974 with the publication of excerpts from Shaposhnikov's The Brain of the Army combined with selected reminiscences. Although the then-Chief of the General Staff, General Kulikov, had not known Shaposhnikov personally, there is reason to believe that Kulikov, just as his predecessor, Zakharov, counted himself a disciple of Shaposhnikov. In fact, Kulikov argued that changes in warfare since Shaposhnikov's day had "increased the role of the General Staff in guaranteeing the security of our Soviet Motherland, broadened the scope of its problems and complicated their content."³⁶

Kulikov's successor, Marshal N. V. Ogarkov, has been more circumspect in making claims for the General Staff. Despite Ogarkov's modesty, there is reason to

believe that the concept of the General Staff has remained essentially unchanged since World War, except that new conditions and new weapons systems have resulted in the creation of new departments. The Soviet General Staff is responsible for the basic strategic planning of the Soviet armed forces and the delineation of each service's mission. The five military services--Strategic Rocket Troops, Ground Troops, Troops of National Air Defense, Air Forces, and Navy--are subordinated to the Ministry of Defense through the General Staff. On the basis of information made public, it would appear that the 1981-version of the General Staff consists of three main directorates and a number of separate directorates. The main directorates include Operations, Intelligence, and Foreign Military Assistance, while the directorates include Organization-Mobilization, Communications, External Relations, Military Science, Armaments, Cryptography, and Topography. In addition, the current table of organization provides for the existence of two separate departments, political and cadres.³⁷

The personnel of the General Staff include a chief, three first deputy chiefs, and several deputy chiefs. Members of the General Staff are drawn from the various services, but they do not seem to assume the role of partisan supporters of parochial service interests. Once officers are assigned to the General Staff, their careers depend upon their effectiveness in staff work and their attention to Communist Party duties. Some senior officers have served a decade or more in their staff assignments. Most slots are filled only by graduates of military academies, while key positions fall to officers who have completed the two-year course of study at the Voroshilov Academy of the General Staff, the highest military school in the Soviet Union.³⁸

Although Ogarkov's role in strategic arms negotiations has propelled the Chief of the General Staff into the limelight, there is little justification to believe that his prominence presages a new era in which staff officers violate Shaposhnikov's

dictum "to be more than you seem." Although the restricted career pattern of staff officers probably facilitates the development of elite attitudes, there is no reason to believe that the General Staff will become the kind of closed corporation so feared by the Bolshevik leadership in the 1920s. Indeed, the presence of a political section, interlocking Party membership, and the entire process of political socialization would seem to preclude the formation of independent policies and politics.

Several conclusions emerge from a survey of nearly three centuries' experience with Russian and Soviet staff-type organizations. One is the realization that staff agencies were the inevitable product of the increasingly complex conditions under which modern wars have been fought. During the eighteenth and much of the nineteenth century, simple command and quartermaster staffs were generally adequate--despite their frequent shortcomings--to discharge basic tasks of planning, co-ordination, and communication. However, as the requirements of modern warfare grew to demand the military mobilization of entire societies, then so too grew basic staff requirements. Even before 1900 the demands of warfare had outstripped the ability of even an enlarged command staff to cope with them. Subsequently, the Russians and then the Soviets were able to fashion a General Staff against the background of twentieth-century wars and revolutions. A second realization is that staff organizations exist within and are shaped by their larger institutional and social environments. Once the Russians and then the Soviets recognized the need for a general staff, forces from within and without the military both retarded and modified the organization that emerged from the dream. Fear, conservatism, and institutional inertia were all brakes which arrested the growth of a modern general-staff type organization in both Russia and the Soviet Union. Once reform and necessity brought that

organization to life, its existence was modified and dominated by personalities and institutions beyond its control.

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Endnotes

1. Sovetskaia voennaia entsiklopediia, s.v. "General'nyi shtab."
2. Ibid.; John Erickson has noted in The Soviet High Command (New York, 1962) p. vii, that "unlike the German Army with its celebrated General Staff, the product of continuity and tradition, the Soviet military leadership cannot be depicted in terms of a single powerful military organ, and identified with that institution . . ." No satisfactory history exists on Russian and Soviet general staff organization. The present survey is based largely on a series of secondary sources, of which the more important are Voennaia entsiklopediia, 1911-14 ed., s.v. "General'nyi shtab;" P. A. Geisman, (comp.), Glavnyi shtab. Istoricheskii ocherk, in D. A. Skalon (ed.), Stoletie Voennogo Ministerstva 1802-1902, 48 pts. in 13 vols. (St. Petersburg, 1902-1914), IV, pt. 1, bk. 2, section 1; Matitiahu Mayzel, "The Formation of the Russian General Staff, 1880-1917," Cahiers du Monde russe et soviétique, XVI, Nos. 3-4 (July-December, 1975), 297-321; William J. Spahr, "The Soviet Military Decisionmaking Process," Parameters, II, No. 2 (1972), 51-62; and William J. Spahr, "The Emergence of the Soviet General Staff During the Brezhnev Era," unpublished paper.
3. Voennaia entsiklopediia, 1911-14 ed., s.v. "General'nyi shtab."
4. L. G. Beskrovnyi, Russkaia armia i flot v XVIII veke (Moscow, 1958), pp. 341-343, 448.
5. L. G. Beskrovnyi, Russkaia armia i flot v XIX veke (Moscow, 1973), p. 199; for a detailed account of the situation, see, Geisman, Glavnyi shtab, pp. 248-414.
6. Beskrovnyi, Russkaia armia i flot v XIX veke, pp. 199-201.
7. N. A. Danilov (comp.), Istoricheskii ocherk razvitiia voennogo upravleniia v Rossii, in Skalon, Stoletie Voennogo Ministerstva, I, 296-297 and 336-337.
8. Beskrovnyi, Russkaia armia i flot v XIX veke, pp. 204-214; a detailed account of the military reforms are found in P. A. Zaionchkovskii, Voennye reformy 1860-1870 godov v Rossi (Moscow, 1952).

9. Quoted in P. A. Zaionchkovskii, Samoderzhavie i russkaia armiia na rubezhe XIX-XX stoletii (Moscow, 1973), pp. 108-109.
10. Voennaia entsiklopediia, 1911-14 ed., s.v. "General'nyi shtab."
11. Zaionchkovskii, Samoderzhavie i russkaia armiia, pp. 93-95.
12. Quoted in Beskrovnyi, Russkaia armiia i flot v XIX veke, p. 206.
13. Zaionchkovskii, Samoderzhavie in russkaia armiia, pp. 110-113.
14. Norman Stone, The Eastern Front 1914-1917 (London, 1975), p. 26; the structure of the Directorate of the General Staff is described in the Voennaia entsiklopediia, 1911-14 ed., s.v. "General'nyi shtab."
15. Stone, The Eastern Front 1914-1917, pp. 24-28.
16. Mayzel, "The Formation of the Russian General Staff 1880-1917," p. 320n.
17. Ibid., 314-316.
18. Erickson, The Soviet High Command, pp. 127-128; see also, Sovetskaia voennaia entsiklopediia, s.v. "General'nyi shtab."
19. Erickson, The Soviet High Command, pp. 292-295.
20. Quoted in Spahr, "The Emergence of the Soviet General Staff during the Brezhnev Era," p. 7.
21. Ibid., 7, 8, 13n.
22. Erickson, The Soviet High Command, pp. 293-294.
23. Ibid., 460, 618, 842-843; see also, Sovetskaia voennaia entsiklopediia, s.v. "Shaposhnikov, Boris Mikhailovich."
24. Harriet Fast Scott and William F. Scott, The Armed Forces of the USSR (Boulder, 1979), pp. 103-104.
25. Spahr, "The Soviet Military Decisionmaking Process," p. 55.
26. John Erickson, The Road to Stalingrad (London, 1975), p. 180.
27. S. M. Shtemenko, The Soviet General Staff at War (Moscow, 1970), pp. 35-37, 117.
28. Scott and Scott, The Armed Forces of the USSR, pp. 106-107; Spahr, "The Soviet Military Decisionmaking Process," p. 56; and Seweryn Bialer (ed.), Stalin and His Generals (New York, 1969), pp. 350-360.

29. Shtemenko, The Soviet General Staff at War, p. 116.
30. Ibid., 116-117.
31. This is Shtemenko's contention, and the available facts seem to support his view; Ibid., 124-128.
32. Spahr, "The Soviet Military Decisionmaking Process," pp. 57-58.
33. Russian Institute Columbia University (ed.), The Anti-Stalin Campaign and International Communism (New York, 1956), pp. 50-53.
34. Strobe Talbot (ed.), Khrushchev Remembers (Boston, 1978), p. 189.
35. Spahr, "The Emergence of the Soviet General Staff during the Brezhnev Era," p. 5.
36. Ibid., 5-6; Sovetskaia voennaia entsiklopediia, s.v. "General'nyi shtab."
37. Scott and Scott, The Armed Forces of the USSR, tables on pp. 109 and 110; and Defense Intelligence Agency, Handbook on the Soviet Armed Forces (Washington, D.C., 1978), pp. 2-4, 2-5, and 2-6.
38. Edward L. Warner, III, The Military in Contemporary Soviet Politics (New York, 1977), pp. 24-26; see also, Scott and Scott, The Armed Forces of the USSR, p. 109.

THE ROLE OF THE SOVIET GENERAL STAFF IN MILITARY MANAGEMENT:
PERSISTENCE AND CHANGE

INTRODUCTION

While the Soviet military establishment has long been the concern of Western analysts, its General Staff has attracted relatively sparse attention. By comparison, far more research has been focused on matters such as Party work in the military and uniformed representation on the Central Committee. Reasons for this orientation can probably be attributed to a number of factors. Until recent years, data on the General Staff were sparse; and social science methodology was attempting to escape from a tradition of institutional analysis. In fact, it is probably not much of an exaggeration to say that many researchers have regarded Soviet institutions, other than the Party itself, to be of only nominal significance. But an even more basic reason for the General Staff's neglect in Western research is the fact that most Western analysts have been predisposed to look for mechanisms of totalitarian control in the Soviet system as opposed to devices of day-to-day management. As a result, the question of civil-military relations became an issue of controlling the military rather than managing it. Needless to say, mechanisms of political control are hardly unimportant in the USSR. But it is equally clear that the Soviet system -- especially in its military sector -- is an increasingly complex one. And this means that political control must ultimately rest on effective managerial ability.

Were one to draw inferences from the German experience, it would not be unreasonable to see the Soviet General Staff as an institution with great potential to acquire an almost unchallenged voice in matters of military policy. In fact, some observers imply that it has already attained nearly this degree of influence. The primary thesis of this report, however, is that the Soviet General Staff has become an elite instrument of military management rather than the "brain of the army" or a powerful bureaucratic spokesman for entrenched

interests in the armed forces. Under Brezhnev, it has been relied upon to substantially augment and perhaps even largely replace the haphazard patron-client approach to military management that had previously existed. Paradoxically, this is a measure that allows the political elite to modernize and rationalize its personal involvement in military affairs and to thereby more effectively cope with the mysteries of military technology, the complexities of contemporary force application, and the requirements of an offensive posture in foreign policy. In other words, the current regime's reliance on the General Staff promises to assist the Politburo in its determination to encourage and direct change rather than fall victim to it.

In his elevation of the General Staff, Brezhnev has undoubtedly been influenced by this organ's traditional role in the imperial and Soviet scheme of military decision-making. While it is a role that was unquestionably influenced by the German General Staff experience, it has also been shaped in fundamental ways by the Russian civic culture's attachment to personal authority and elite prerogative as opposed to legal-rational and constitutional considerations. Accordingly, the Russian culture tends to maintain a distinction between realms of technical proficiency and political choice such that the former may assist but not preempt the latter. By the same token, it encourages the unification of military management at elite rather than subunit levels. And it thereby constrains subunits to a functional rather than "rightful" access to the policy-making collective. While the subunit may therefore supply the decision-making collective with expert advice or useful linkages, it is guarded from acquiring any significant degree of autonomy.

At many points, therefore, the German model presents a misleading comparison.

Though the Soviet General Staff is obviously a military institution with attributes of an elite uniformed service, it has always been more closely associated with the political regime than the armed forces. It has traditionally performed more as a nervous system, linking the political leadership to the armed forces, than as a leading and directing organ itself. With respect to the functions commonly regarded as appropriate general staff responsibilities, such as intelligence, mobilization, war planning and the direction of military operations, the Soviet General Staff experience is ambiguous. Unless embellished, it does not historically legitimize the modern General Staff as an organ for the relatively autonomous unification of military management. The legacy of tsarist rule and the revolution has been diversity in the military establishment. And institutional forces, some within the Ministry of Defense, have been united from the start in their opposition to the idea of a Great General Staff or the General Staff as the "brain of the army" much less the military brain of the entire state. Even during the crisis experience of the Great Fatherland War, the integration of military management took place at elite political levels, not in the General Staff.

Ironically, the fact that the Soviet General Staff has no tradition as the brain of the army makes it more acceptable to the contemporary Soviet leadership as an instrument of military management. Soviet General Staff personnel have a solid record of obedience to the Party leadership, even to a fault. During the Great Fatherland War, enormous losses were experienced and much suffering imposed on Soviet soldiers because the General Staff elected to support the political leadership on occasions when professional military

judgment and a sense of responsibility for the fate of the army clearly indicated otherwise. Furthermore, there is ample evidence that the Chief of the General Staff has never displayed the slightest bureaucratic staying power when policy differences with the Party elite have arisen. In fact, the political leadership may occasionally deal directly with various General Staff departments, thus bypassing the Chief of Staff.

At the same time, however, the Brezhnev regime has certainly been attracted to the General Staff because of the military experience and professional talent that it possesses. Its officers are thoroughly trained and broadly educated. Not without reason, they regard themselves as cultured professionals with the capacity to contribute to all aspects of military policy formulation, including foreign policy and diplomacy. Moreover, nearly all high-level military posts are occupied by personnel who have received training in the General Staff Academy in a curriculum that has always reflected elite policy orientations. There are many sub-formal linkages, therefore, between the General Staff and all officers in the high command. And similar ties have also been created with the research community. Thus, from the point of view of its political reliability, broad expertise, and important channels of influence, the modern General Staff is well suited to contribute to the management of the Soviet military establishment.

Were it not for developments beyond its control, however, the General Staff might nevertheless have remained at the periphery of the military policy decision-making collective. But its access to the policy process has been assisted, first, by an absence of suitable historical circumstances that permit the political leadership to fashion client networks within the armed forces. Second, the military establishment has grown in complexity and technical

sophistication so that it no longer lends itself to orchestration by means of coincidentally recruited prefects. Finally, a shift in the international "correlation of forces" has encouraged the Politburo to pursue a relatively more militarized foreign policy and has simultaneously made the General Staff's undisputed knowledge of combined-arms, limited, "lightening war" more relevant, not to mention its paramilitary capabilities.

This view of the Soviet General Staff contains several important implications for American policy-makers. In the first place, it suggests that the General Staff is perhaps more correctly understood as an instrument of the political elite in the military establishment than as a bureaucratic spokesman for the armed forces. In this capacity, it contributes to the Politburo's intelligent and functional but nonetheless personal orchestration of the military with over-all Soviet policy considerations. Its role does not hold the political leadership captive to a military point of view as much as it helps to prevent such an occurrence. In the second place, Brezhnev's reliance on the General Staff does not signal a sort of decentralization of military management. If the General Staff's highly trained officers can be utilized to replace even part of the need for older type patron-client networks in the military establishment, then it will actually operate to dampen the decentralizing tendencies familiar to Western bureaucracies. In this sense, it assists with the modernization of personal authority rather than its transformation. Third, the presence of General Staff officers on diplomatic delegations should not too readily be interpreted as a sign of military or General Staff influence. It may in fact be a hint that whatever is at issue requires broad political coordination within the military establishment and in relation to adjoining realms of Soviet society. Finally,

the Soviet General Staff system more than likely fails to preclude some sort of ambiguity in modern command and control arrangements, at least with respect to the conduct of large-scale campaigns. Control of more limited operations, however, is probably focused in the General Staff and the coordination of all aspects of military policy is lent sophistication by its professional involvement.

The reader should bear in mind, however, that these observations and others contained in this report have been constructed from the identification of trends and patterns as revealed by historical data. In large measure, their utility rests upon the validity of the author's conviction that traditional patterns like these are a reflection of a society's civic culture. Among other things, the civic culture defines the essence of authority relationships, modes of participation in public policy formulation, rational or reasonable approaches to problem definition and problem solving, and even the circuitry of social and organizational communications. Though the civic culture is not immune to change, it does not change quickly, especially where institutional arrangements are involved. Paradoxically, the traditions to which it gives rise need not retard or constitute an obstacle to modernization. In actual fact, they can sometimes be employed to facilitate it and channel its direction. Needless to say, such a methodology paints with a broad brush. While it has the capacity to provide necessary direction to narrower, more precise kinds of analysis, it is not a substitute for such inquiry.

At the outset of his famous work Mozg armii (Brain of the Army), Boris Shaposhnikov, the former tsarist officer who had turned his loyalties to the new Soviet regime, expressed his conviction that no army can exist without a general staff.¹ That armies once functioned without them is well known. But, according to S.M. Shtemenko, who served as Chief of the Soviet General Staff from 1948-52, staffs are the outgrowth of the complexity that has come to characterize modern warfare and military organization. From mere units of military administration, they have become transformed into ". . . genuine organs for the organization and control of the battle operations of troops at every level."² Moreover, Shtemenko notes, these important components of military organization and management are staffed with "qualified military professionals."³ Through their work in a variety of important areas, we are told, the capacity of the commander is freed from being submerged in a stream of routine concerns.⁴

While such statements hint at the importance that Soviet military thought attaches to the General Staff, they leave much unsaid about its actual development and functioning. In fact, Soviet historiography contains no major works that deal with the Russian General Staff and only a few that treat its modern successor. Even these focus only on portions of its organization and are confined largely to the prewar and wartime periods.⁵ By relying on other

¹Boris M. Shaposhnikov, Mozg armii, Vol. 1 (Moscow: Voennyi Vestnik, 1927), p. 20.

²S.M. Shtemenko, General'nyi shtab v gody voiny, II (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1973), p. 283.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid. p. 284

⁵See, for example, the complaint of A. Kavtaradze, "Iz istorii ruskogo General'nogo shtaba," Voenno-istoricheskii zhurnal, No. 12 (December, 1971), p. 75. S.M. Shtemenko's two volume work General'nyi shtab v gody voiny (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1968 and 1973), though extremely interesting and quite useful, is a memoir that focuses primarily on his wartime duties in the General Staff's Operations Directorate.

sources, however, such as military memoirs, historical studies of the frenetic prewar efforts at military preparation together with studies of the wartime operations, studies of Soviet military art, and analyses of veiled public debates on important military issues, a useful sketch of the role of the Soviet General Staff in military management can be constructed.

The paper that follows represents an assessment and synthesis of the data that these sources provide. As will be seen, the understanding to emerge is one of an expanding, though qualified, role for the General Staff in management of the Soviet military establishment. Moreover, it is a role that appears to be shaped far more by the Soviet regime's unique cultural, historical, and political experience than by the putative universal dynamics of bureaucratic organization, military professionalism, or technological development. In fact, the prevailing Soviet tendency to assign contemporary utility to the study of past military experience is attributable as much to the traditional persistence of certain issues as to the model lessons that might be learned. Viewed in this way, an understanding of the contemporary Soviet General Staff requires an exploration of its origins and the course of its subsequent development.

ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Tsarist Period

The term "General Staff" first appeared in the Russian army in 1763, when it was used to single out the Quartermaster General's department as a special institution.⁶ This was 62 years after Peter the Great, drawing upon the Prussian experience as his model, had first established this department

⁶Kavtaradze, "Iz istorii russkogo General'nogo shtaba," Voenno-istoricheskii zhurnal, No. 12 (December, 1971), p. 75, n. 3.

in his armed forces and charged it, like its Prussian counterpart, with the important functions of operations, intelligence, and engineering.⁷ Later tsars, in their emulation of Western military developments, continued to borrow heavily from the Prussian model and enlisted the services of Prussian officers who brought with them the Prussian staff doctrine. Thus, it is by no coincidence that numerous parallels can be noted in the development of the two staffs and that they actually came to share a close "spiritual kinship."⁸

Despite its indisputable influence, however, and the similarities that this produced, the Prussian model did not enjoy a perfect fit with the Russian political and cultural context. While dissimilarities were not so sharp as to cause its complete rejection, they were clearly sufficient to deflect the model's evolution from the course that it experienced in Prussia. And as far as the present discussion is concerned, the points at which a departure in the two cases can be observed are, in certain respects, more interesting than the similarities. For such departures draw attention to some characteristic features of the Russian political-cultural landscape that appear to exert a long-term influence on that nation's approach to military organization and management.

Probably the most conspicuous contrast between early Prussian and Russian General Staff development concerns the relationship between these institutions and their respective war ministries. In the case of Prussia, the War Ministry was designed in 1807 by Gerhard Scharnhorst, who served on the Quartermaster General's staff and who was well-known for his advocacy of a

⁷James D. Hittle, The Military Staff (3rd. ed.; Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: The Stackpole Company, 1961), p. 222.

⁸Walter Goerlitz, History of the German General Staff (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1953), pp. 41 and 52.

permanent General staff.⁹ Within fifteen years, the Prussian General Staff had gained its independence from the War Ministry and acquired the right of direct access to the sovereign.¹⁰ At about the same time in Russia, however, military reforms of Alexander I created a Headquarters Staff of His Imperial Majesty, or what in fact amounted to a War Ministry. The Quartermaster General's department, which exercised General Staff functions, was to serve as its administrative arm.¹¹ In effect, such a measure made the General Staff subordinate to the War Minister. And the staff reform regulations that were promulgated between 1865 and 1869 only reaffirmed this arrangement. Basically, the Russian military management structure remained unchanged from about 1825 until 1905. In contrast with the Prussian experience, nothing significant in the way of new ideas, social change, or military conflict emerged to challenge it.¹²

Not until 1905, in the revolutionary climate sparked by humiliating defeat at the hands of Japan, were fundamental modifications undertaken. At that time, the Main Directorate of the General Staff was removed from the War Minister's control and made directly subordinate to the tsar. At the

⁹This was shortly after the Peace of Tilsit, when the bulk of Prussian territory was under French occupation. The new ministry was to play an important part in limiting the size of Prussia's forces. See Goerlitz, History of the German General Staff, pp. 29-35. The War Minister was to be chief of the General Staff.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 57-58.

¹¹Hittle, The Military Staff, p. 243.

¹²In Prussia, a gradual accretion in the strength and influence of the General Staff was encouraged by the country's geographic position in relation to other European powers, the political challenge that liberal movements posed to the monarchy, and the availability of new technologies in weaponry and transportation. These factors combined to place a premium on the ability to bring military power into play quickly and decisively. In some respects, such circumstances might be similar to those encountered by the Soviet Union today.

same time, the post of Chief of the General Staff was created, and its occupant became a member of the State Defense Council with the right to participate in the highest government decisions through examination of matters that adjoined his realm of competence.¹³ In general, he was responsible for working out strategic plans in preparation for war, unifying the staff work of the military districts and the military-scientific work of the General Staff, watching over military development in all branches, assisting the growth of military knowledge, and presenting his recommendations for the improvement of the General Staff's work to the tsar.¹⁴

That this new arrangement was not so complete a departure from the past as it might otherwise have been, however, can be seen in several of its provisions. In the first place, budgetary control remained with the War Minister. And the Chief of the General Staff therefore lacked means to implement what he considered to be important measures of military development.¹⁵ In the second place, on certain matters, such as the combat training of troops and the organization of large maneuvers, he was required to reach agreement with the War Minister.¹⁶ And finally, officers of the General Staff did not occupy positions officially assigned to that organization. Although such officers were managed by the Chief of Staff, they were not subordinate

¹³A. Kavtaradze, "Iz istorii russkogo General'nogo shtaba," Voenno-istoricheskii zhurnal, No. 7 (July, 1972), p. 87. See, also, A. A. Zaitsov, Sluzhba General'nogo shtaba (New York: Voeneyi Vestnik, 1961), pp. 7-8.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 88.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 91.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 88.

to him.¹⁷ What is more, the General Staff, or Main Directorate of the General Staff (GUGSh) as it was called, did not even have a mobilization department.¹⁸

What resulted from the 1905 reforms, therefore, has been compared by a recent Soviet military historian to a building made ugly and dysfunctional by the confusion of different architectural styles.¹⁹ Division of power between the Chief of the General Staff and the War Minister was followed by conflict and misunderstanding. And in 1908, the General Staff was again made subordinate to the War Minister. Thus, by the time that World War I erupted, the Prussian General Staff had established itself as a powerful and relatively independent force in management of the military. In Russia, on the other hand, a clear preference for ministerial dominance had revealed itself. It was as though the Russians, while impressed and influenced by the Prussian staff system, had quite deliberately sought to avoid the powerful military caste that it created.

A second point at which the developmental paths of the Prussian and Russian General Staffs diverged from one another can be seen in the different role that each institution played during wartime. While it was once common for a sovereign to act as his own operations commander, in the case of Prussia, such responsibility was gradually acquired by the General Staff. In the late 17th century, this had not yet become a regular institution and had to be assembled anew each time that was broke out.²⁰ By the time of the

¹⁷Ibid., p. 87, n. 7.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 88. It did, however, have partial responsibility for some aspects of mobilization under the Directorate of the General Quartermaster and the Directorate of Military Communications.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 91.

²⁰Goerlitz, History of the German General Staff, p. 31.

Franco-Prussian War in 1870, however, the General Staff was well established as a permanent organization with 135 officers at its disposal.²¹ Moreover, it had also secured the right of direct access to the sovereign in peacetime and the crucial power to issue orders on its own authority.²² Later, during World War I, its power and influence were extended into areas of armaments, food production, the media, and general propaganda.²³

In Russia, the experience of the General Staff was quite different, for it was never permitted to accumulate such influence. Not only did it develop as an institution with limited peacetime responsibilities within the War Ministry, but it was not even called upon as a unit to command in wartime. Unlike the Prussians, whose offensive strategy was reflected in organizational continuity from peace to war, the Russians retained the practice of assembling a special wartime command when it became necessary. In June 1914, for example, in accord with the Regulation on the Field Control of Troops in Wartime, a so-called Stavka was formed under the direction of the Grand Prince. The post of Chief of Staff of the Supreme Command was given to the Chief of the General Staff, who was also head of the Main Directorate of the General Staff. With him, 24 officers (16 of these from the Main Directorate's General Quartermaster's department) were transferred to the Stavka. But the Main Directorate itself remained within the War Ministry, ". . . outside direct dependence on the Stavka and without direct relations with the troops

²¹Ibid., p. 96.

²²Ibid., pp. 86 and 91.

²³Ibid., pp. 182-183.

and institutions in the theaters of military operations, and therefore unable to exert any influence on strategic planning or the control of operations."²⁴

Finally, the Russian General Staff differed from that of its Prussian neighbor in the way that it distributed its personnel. On the eve of World War I, for example, the German General Staff concentrated the majority of its officers at the center on the so-called Great General Staff. In Russia, on the other hand, only 269 out of 835 General Staff posts, or barely 30 percent, were assigned to the Main Directorate of the General Staff.²⁵ From the Russian point of view, staff personnel were to function as professional linkages between the sovereign and his military formations more than as actual managers of the military establishment. With superior education and the cohesive ethos of an elite group, General Staff officers were called upon to assist and cement together the separate components of the Russian army, especially through the application of common principles in the technical

²⁴A. Kavtaradze, "Iz istorii russkogo General'nogo shtaba," Voenno-istoricheskii zhurnal, No. 3 (March, 1976), p. 103. Some contact with the operating armies was effected through the Troop Directorate of the General Staff. This organization was created toward the beginning of the War and consisted of General Staff officers who occupied official posts in the military districts, corps, divisions, and other formations. Such officers were under the authority of the chief of staff of the district. According to A. Kavtaradze, "Voiskovoe upravlenie General'nogo shtaba russkogo armii," Voenno-istoricheskii zhurnal, No. 6 (June, 1978), p. 78, the Troop Directorate functioned as a sort of "peripheral nervous system," linking the "brain of the army" (i.e., Main Directorate) with subordinate organizations of troop control. It seems almost certain that it served as the model for the Officer Corps of the General Staff that was created at the beginning of the Great Fatherland War.

²⁵A. Kavtaradze, "Iz istorii russkogo General'nogo shtaba," Voenno-istoricheskii zhurnal, No. 12 (December, 1974), p. 83; and, by the same author, "Voiskovoe upravlenie General'nogo shtaba russkogo armii," Voenno-istoricheskii zhurnal, No. 6 (June 1978), p. 81. See, also Matitiahu Mazel, The Russian General Staff During the Revolution (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Rochester, 1975), p. 46. Mazel calculates that the Russians maintained only 20 percent at the center.

aspects of troop control.²⁶ Needless to say, with the bulk of its officers assigned to the field, the Main Directorate was less likely to become a powerful bureaucratic influence in its own right.

By the time of the October revolution, therefore, the Russian General Staff had not acquired a powerful and independent role in management of the armed forces. Russian political-cultural preferences, together with historical circumstances and geography, had operated not only to utilize the Prussian model but also to constrain its development to correspond with the imperatives of tsarist rule. This does not mean, however, that the General Staff's work was of no consequence in military management, for quite the opposite is true. In 1909, at a time when the Main Directorate's short period of independence from the War Ministry was ended, its responsibilities were actually expanded. In addition to the General Quartermaster, Military Communications, and Military Topography, it also acquired departments of Logistics and Mobilization. Within the Quartermaster General's Department itself, intelligence work was given higher priority and attached directly to the Quartermaster General.²⁷ And it was at this time, too, that the Main Directorate began to publish its own journal, Sbornik Glavnogo upravlenie General'nogo shtaba, which included important views on a variety of military subjects.²⁸ Once the war began, a Department of Evacuation and Management of War Prisoners was added to the Main Directorate, the Mobilization and Military Communications Departments were expanded, and the 2nd Quartermaster General's

²⁶See, for example, Kavtaradze, "Voiskovoe upravlenie General'nogo shtaba russkogo armii," p. 78.

²⁷Intelligence, however, remained a weakness in General Staff functions. In particular, it lacked a systematic peacetime network of agents. See, for example, Kavtaradze, "Iz istorii russkogo General'nogo shtaba," Voennno-istoricheskii zhurnal, No. 12 (December 1974), p. 85.

²⁸Ibid., p. 84.

Department was created to assume responsibility for all intelligence questions.²⁹ That a successful outcome of the war might have contributed to increased prominence and influence for the General Staff is not an unreasonable speculation. What seems clear from the evidence, however, is that by October, 1917, it had not yet truly become the "brain of the army."

Revolutionary Period

Nowhere was the absence of bureaucratic cohesion in the tsarist military leadership more evident than in response to the Bolshevik seizure of power. For no unified military opposition materialized in defense of the old order or the Provisional Government. In fact, one Soviet author has characterized the War Ministry as being so cooperative that it constituted the single "bright exception" in the Bolshevik effort to subordinate the otherwise recalcitrant tsarist ministries to Soviet power. According to N.M. Potapov, the revolutionary transformation caused neither "jolt nor stoppage" in this organization.³⁰ While Potapov's editors draw attention to the hyperbole in this account, it is nevertheless true that large numbers of tsarist officers, including perhaps well over half of those serving on the General Staff, offered their services to the new regime.³¹ In addition, the Main Directorate of the General

²⁹Kavtaradze, "Iz istorii russkogo General'nogo shtaba," Voenno-istoricheskii zhurnal, No. 3 (March 1976), p. 106.

³⁰N.M. Potapov, "Zapiski o pervykh shagakh sovetskogo voennogo stroitel'stva," Voenno-istoricheskii zhurnal, No. 1 (January 1968), p. 62.

³¹It is noteworthy, however, that the editors' exception is rather mild and is contained in a footnote. It would appear that they are not altogether displeased with the image of organizational continuity that Potapov's exaggerated account conveys. On the allegiance of tsarist officers to the Soviet regime, see Hittle, The Military Staff, p. 269.

Staff became an active participant in the efforts to design a "socialist army."³² At the end of November 1917, for example, the Peoples Commissariat of Military Affairs entrusted the GUGSh with responsibility to draw up plans for a militia-type army.³³ Later, it helped to work out the organization of troop units and participated in Lenin's effort to fashion a strategy for dealing with the invading German army.³⁴

Despite these important elements of continuity, however, the events of 1917 left the military establishment badly fragmented. By November, military authority was in the hands of the Petrograd Revolutionary Committee, the Peoples Commissariat of Military Affairs, and the Revolutionary Staff of the Moscow Military District. In the words of one observer, "There was still no single military organ of organizational and operational control."³⁵ And in the months that followed, authority in military affairs appears to have become even more widely dispersed and confused. On November 23, Lenin ordered the creation of a Revolutionary Field Staff to replace the Stavka. It was charged with operational responsibilities.³⁶ And in early January, the task of directing, training, arming and supplying the army was given to the newly created All Russian Collegia within the Commissariat on Military Affairs. At least a portion of its work must have progressed slowly, however, for in April, the

³²Kavtaradze, "Iz istorii russkogo General'nogo shtaba," Voenno-istoricheskii zhurnal, No. 3 (March 1976), p. 107.

³³M.V. Zakharov, ed., 50 let vooruzhennykh sil SSSR (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1968), p. 24.

³⁴Kavtaradze, "Iz istorii russkogo General'nogo shtaba," Voenno-istoricheskii zhurnal, No. 3 (March 1916), pp. 107-109.

³⁵Zakharov, 50 let, p. 18.

³⁶Ibid., p. 19

Supreme Military Inspectorate was set up to "hasten" the process of forming and training troop units.³⁷ Finally, in March, the Soviet of Peoples Commissars established the Supreme Military Soviet. Under the direction of Trotsky, this organ was entrusted with authority over virtually all military institutions.³⁸

As late as the spring of 1918, therefore, Soviet military management remained in disarray. Responsibilities were spread over a variety of organs whose relationships with one another were strained by lack of experience, a crude definition of powers, and the ongoing chaos of revolution. In May, however, a reorganization of the central military administrative apparatus was undertaken, apparently with the purpose of rationalizing the organizational complexity that had arisen but probably also to "liquidate" or at least make less conspicuous some remnants of the old army.³⁹ Thus, the All Russian Collegia on the Organization and Management of the RKKA (Workers and Peasants Red Army) and the Main Commissariat of Military-Educational Institutions were combined with the Main Directorate of the General Staff, the Main Staff, and the Maintenance Directorate--surviving organs from the old army--into the new All Russian Main Staff.⁴⁰ Of its seven directorates--Command Personnel, Maintenance, Operations, Organization, Military Topography and Military

³⁷Ibid., p. 34

³⁸Ibid., p. 33.

³⁹V. Danilov, "Sozdanie shtaba RKKA," Voenno-istoricheskii zhurnal, No. 9 (September 1977), p. 85. Danilov indicates that the GUGSh ". . . was not in condition to ensure direction of the building of a new type of army."

⁴⁰Kavtaradze, "Iz istorii russkogo General'nogo shtaba," Voenno-istoricheskii zhurnal, No. 3 (March 1976), p. 109. Kavtaradze's account differs in small ways from that of Zakharov. See 50 let, p. 35. In particular, Kavtaradze draws attention to the continuity from the Main Directorate of the General Staff to the All Russian Main Staff.

Communications--the latter four were merely formed from departments of the old Main Directorate.⁴¹

With its authority over all local organs of military administration, the All Russian Main Staff is said to have concentrated leadership concerning questions of Soviet military construction in one place.⁴² In fact, however, many important matters that pertained to the development of the Red Army and military management in general remained beyond the ambit of this organ's authority. Provisioning the Red Army, for example, was entrusted to the Central Supply Directorate, which was created in early June by the Peoples Commissariat of Military Affairs.⁴³ Three months later, when the Revolutionary Military Soviet (Revvoensovet) was formed to unite the administrative and operational control of the armed forces, it ressurected the post of Commander in Chief and created a Field Staff to exercise operational control over the armed forces. At the same time, naval questions were handled by the Peoples Commissariat on Naval Affairs, and the Main Directorate of the Air Force was established to manage the country's fledgling air fleet.⁴⁴ In addition, the Revvoensovet, which actually functioned in place of the Peoples Commissariat of Military Affairs, exercised authority over virtually all military institutions, including the Main Staff. Finally, as the civil war became more intense, a Soviet of Defense was formed under Lenin's direction. Its purpose was to

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Zakharov, 50 let, p. 35.

⁴³This organ assumed control over all supply organs, which appears to have included the Main Artillery Directorate, Central Military-Technical Directorate, Main Military-Engineering Directorate and the Military-Economics Directorate.

⁴⁴The Field Staff, however, controlled operational activities of the RKKA Air Force.

mobilize all resources and to provide central direction to all military departments, including supply, foodstuffs, military transportation and communications. In particular, it focused attention on the production of rifles and ammunition.⁴⁵

What is noteworthy here is the fact that despite the gravity of the military situation and the emphasis placed on unified control and direction of military affairs, the Bolshevik impulse was not toward greater reliance on an exclusive staff. In fact, the approach to military management that gradually materialized in some significant ways resembled that which had existed under the tsarist regime, at least with respect to the design and function of the institutions involved if not in terms of their style and purpose. Operational control remained separate from management of the military's routine concerns, and ministerial influence in the person of Trotsky, Chairman of the Revvoensovet, continued to be dominant in determination of military affairs.

As the civil war drew to a close, however, voices were heard that favored a single organ of military leadership. In their January, 1920, report to the Revvoensovet, the Commander in Chief, S. S. Kamenev, and the chief of the Field Staff, P.P. Lebedev, argued in favor of a ". . . central military organ, namely a Main Directorate of the General Staff or a Great General Staff."⁴⁶ And during the ensuing year, the Revvoensovet explored the matter in a series of meetings with military leaders. Finally, on February 10, 1921, it ordered the unification of the Field Staff and the All Russian Main Staff into a new organ, the Staff of the RKKA. Although it was not given

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 56.

⁴⁶V. Danilov, "Sozdanie Shtaba RKKA," p. 86.

jurisdiction over issues related to the development of a militia system, it did incorporate some twelve directorates and four departments. And these dealt with such common general staff functions as operations, mobilization, organization, communications, topography, military-educational institutions and intelligence. In addition, the Chief of Staff exercised direct authority over the General Staff Academy and the armed forces.⁴⁷

Needless to say, amidst the politics of that period, the formation of a unified staff was a precarious undertaking. In fact, it was even deemed "inexpedient" to refer to the new organ as a general staff.⁴⁸ It is not surprising, therefore, that within a short time the Staff of the RKKA came under sharp criticism. In 1923, deficiencies were noted in its work concerning mobilization, the coordination between operational plans and resources, and cooperation with civilian agencies. At the February, 1924, plenum of the Central Committee, Stalin charged that the Staff knew the Red Army ". . . only in terms of the number of divisions on paper. . . ." and this, he noted, was not a sufficient basis on which to lead.⁴⁹ In that same period, A.I. Egorov, who later became the first Chief of the General Staff, took the position that the structure of the Red Army command was a product of wartime and thereby unsuited to the requirements of peacetime. As for M.V. Frunze, who became Chief of Staff on April 1, the problem was that the Staff had acquired too many functions: "It had, so to speak, sewn itself up in work and was thus unable to sew. . . ."⁵⁰

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 87. According to Danilov, the Staff's intelligence functions were determined by special orders, presumably from the Revvoensovet.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 88.

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰M.V. Frunze, Izbrannye proizvedeniia (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1965), p. 154. Frunze's remarks were contained in an address to the Military Academy on April 18, 1924.

In general, these views were reflected in the recommendation of the commission that the January 14 Central Committee plenum had formed to investigate the status of military personnel and supply. That group, which was headed by Frunze, favored a division of the Staff's functions along these lines: (1) general questions of national defense and military development; (2) daily, routine management; (3) battle training.⁵¹ From his new position as Chief of Staff and Assistant Chairman of the Revvoensovet, and with the endorsement of the March 6 plenum, Frunze proceeded to abolish the post of Commander in Chief and to divide the "unwieldly" staff of the RKKA into three separate organs. Each was responsible to the Revvoensovet. Operational functions continued to be the responsibility of the Staff of the RKKA, which it carried out through directorates of Operations, Intelligence, Organization, Mobilization, Military Communications, Military Topography and through various departments. In addition, a Mobilization Committee and a Committee on Defense Engineering were attached to the Staff.⁵² Frunze, himself, headed the Staff, which he felt ". . . must become not only the brain of the Red Army but also the military brain of the entire Soviet state, supplying those materials that form the basis of the work of the Defense Soviet."⁵³ Administration of the daily needs of the Armed Forces, on the other hand, were

⁵¹Danilov, "Sozdanie Shtaba RKKA," p. 98. In addition to Frunze, the commission included A.A. Andreev, S.I. Gusev, S.K. Ordzhonikidze, I.S. Unshlikht, N.M. Shvernik, A.S. Bubnov and K.E. Voroshilov.

⁵²It can be speculated that these committees may have functioned to coordinate the Staff's work with civilian agencies, thereby dealing with one of the Frunze commission's complaints.

⁵³M.V. Frunze, Izbrannye proizvedeniia, p. 155. Frunze's assistants were M.N. Iukhachevskii and B.M. Shaposhnikov.

placed under the control of the newly created Directorate of the RKKA (later renamed the Main Directorate), which was to handle such matters as recruitment, pre-draft training and personnel. In the autumn of 1924, it also absorbed the functions of the short-lived Inspectorate of the RKKA, which had been established to manage troop training and the military-educational institutions.⁵⁴ Naval, air force and supply questions were handled by separate directorates that were attached directly to the Revvoensovet. The same was true of the Political Directorate, though it also had the status of a Central Committee department.⁵⁵

Despite the military and political rationale that Frunze and his supporters attached to the 1924-25 reorganization of the Red Army command, however, it is clear that many fundamental questions of military management were left unanswered. Although the Red Army Staff was now "freed" from concern with the daily needs of the armed forces and directed to focus on broader questions of national defense and military development, its essential character as an organ of military leadership remained in question. In particular, its place in the state defense decision-making process and its wartime role were undefined.⁵⁶ Considerable acrimony characterized the ensuing debates. Tukhachevskii, who became Chief of Staff after Frunze's death, together with Shaposhnikov and others favored the concentration of broad defense management functions--including supply, armaments, and industrial mobilization--in the

⁵⁴See Danilov, "Ot Shtaba RKKA k General'nomy shtaby Rabocha-Krest'ianskoi Krasnoi Armii," *Voenno-istoricheskii zhurnal*, No. 8 (August 1978), p. 102; and Zakharov, *50 let*, pp. 174-175.

⁵⁵Zakharov notes that the Navy and Air Force Directorates controlled some of their own supply services. See *50 let*, p. 175.

⁵⁶Danilov, "Ot Shtaba RKKA k General'nomy shtaby Rabocha-Krest'ianskoi Krasnoi Armii," p. 103.

RKKA staff. Others, however, such as M.K. Levandovskii, Chief of the Main Directorate, P.E. Dybenko, Chief of Supply and S.M. Budennyi, Inspector of Cavalry were opposed.⁵⁷ They expressed their concern that the staff considered itself to be "an eye over everything" and that it was attempting to establish a "general staff dictatorship." Even the graduates of the Military Academy, they complained, had been "infected with the bacillus of a Great General Staff." Were more authority concentrated in the Staff of the RKKA, an idea that Levandovskii associated with the bourgeois tendencies of Shaposhnikov, the result they feared would be an improper exaggeration of this organ's influence in military management.⁵⁸ Together, Dybenko, Budennyi and Egorov wrote to Defense Commissar K.E. Voroshilov and warned that an expanded staff would tend to dominate all aspects of military operations and development.⁵⁹

It was amidst this controversy that Tukhachevskii took the matter to the Revvoensovet. According to M.V. Zakharov, the Chief of Staff asked for a reorganization that would permit the staff ". . . to function as a unified planning and organizational center and to thereby genuinely influence the development of the armed forces."⁶⁰ What almost certainly contributed a sense

⁵⁷ See M.V. Zakharov, Uchenyi i voyn (Moscow: Politizdat, 1978), pp. 63-64. Zakharov's account also places Egorov in opposition to an expansion of the staff. Danilov, however, makes it appear that all who served as Chief of Staff, including Egorov, favored its exercise of broad responsibilities. See his "Ot Shtaba RKKA k General'nomy shtaby Raboche-Krest'ianskoi Krasnoi Armii," pp. 103-104.

⁵⁸ Danilov, "Ot Shtaba RKKA k General'nomy shtaby Raboche-Krest'ianskoi Krasnoi Armii," p. 104.

⁵⁹ Zakharov, Uchenyi i voyn (Moscow: Politizdat, 1978), pp. 63-64.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

of urgency to Tukhachevskii's proposal was the initiation of military five year planning that had occurred in 1927. Plan objectives were supplied by the Soviet of Peoples Commissars, the Revvoensovet, the Peoples Commissariat of the Navy, the Central Committee and the Politburo. All directorates of the Defense commissariat contributed primary data.⁶¹ While the RKKA Staff was responsible for synthesizing these objectives and data into a coherent plan, some of Tukhachevskii's concern clearly flowed from the Staff's inability to exercise an independent influence on this process in the interest of military rationality. Furthermore, in late 1929, a separate position of Chief of Armaments was created. This was a technical staff with jurisdiction over the Artillery, Chemical, Communications and Telemechanics Directorates. Although this organ is said to have worked closely with the RKKA Staff, it was nonetheless independent from the Staff and charged with handling all questions of technical rearmament in every branch of the armed forces.⁶²

Tukhachevskii's proposal was rejected by the Revvoensovet. It is important to note that one of the primary reason can be attributed to misgivings about the concentration of planning, implementing and inspecting powers in one person--a Chief of Staff--below the leadership: "In the hands of the leadership there would be almost nothing."⁶³ In Tukhachevskii's estimate, the requested reorganization was obviously critical to the Staff's role in

⁶¹M.V. Zakharov, "Kommunisticheskaia partiia i tekhnicheskoe perevooruzhenie armii i flota v gody predvoennykh piatiletok," Voenno-istoricheskii zhurnal, No. 2 (February 1971), pp. 3-4.

⁶²Ibid., p. 4. See, also, Zakharov, 50 let, pp. 196-197. Uborevich was named Chief of Armaments. Actually, the Revvoensovet already controlled military research and development through its Military-Technical Directorate, Motorization and Mechanization Directorate and a number of research and design bureaus. The new post appears to have been aimed at coordinating this work in the interest of weapons development. See 50 let, p. 188.

⁶³Zakharov, Uchenyi i voyn, p. 64.

military development, for he promptly resigned his position. At Stalin's suggestion, Shaposhnikov was named to succeed him. What is interesting to note, however, is the fact that Shaposhnikov, consistent with views that he had recently expressed in the first volume of Mozg armii, promptly continued to press for an expansion of the Staff's responsibilities. In addition, he advanced the view that the Staff should be the fundamental planning and administrative organ of the Revvoensovet. It should control and organize the army's battle preparation in peacetime because, he reasoned, it would have to lead the army in wartime. During the latter half of 1928 and throughout 1929, the question was explored by a special commission. In the end, however, the Revvoensovet was not persuaded. When it announced its decision in January, 1930, the only gain for a unified approach to military management was transfer of mobilization responsibilities to the Staff of the RKKA.⁶⁴

Prewar Period

In September 1935, a Politburo decision transformed the Staff of the RKKA into the General Staff. Although Soviet accounts assure us that this measure reflected the increased importance and complexity of military administration and that it was accompanied by elevated responsibilities for this organ in both peacetime and war, available evidence suggests that the change was largely cosmetic.⁶⁵ In fact, it was part of the broader reorganization of high-level

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 66. Zakharov acknowledges that this decision left the Soviet military without a "comprehensive organ of leadership for the life and battle operations of the Armed Forces of the Soviet Union, e.g., without a General Staff."

⁶⁵V. Danilov, "General'nyi shtab v predvoennye gody," Voenno-istoricheskii zhurnal, No. 3 (March 1980), p. 68. See, also, Zakharov, 50 let, p. 199. William J. Spahr links the renaming of the RKKA Staff with gathering concern over the rise of Hitler and Germany's renunciation of the Treaty of Versailles. See his unpublished paper, "The Influence of B.M. Shaposhnikov on the Soviet General Staff," p. 5. In Spahr's view, this was intended as a demonstration of Soviet military preparedness.

military offices that, if anything, reflected Stalin's increasing influence rather than more authority and prominence for the Staff. In mid-1934, the Revvoensovet had been abolished and the Commissariat for Military and Naval Affairs, still under Voroshilov, renamed the Defense Commissariat. Earlier, probably in 1931, a Defense Commission was established within the Soviet of Peoples Commissars. Under Molotov's direction, its function was to give prior consideration to all questions of national defense. Over all, these do not seem to have been changes that were designed to enhance the role of the General Staff. Moreover, were a stronger staff desired, it is difficult to understand why Egorov was named in April, 1931, to replace Shaposhnikov as Chief of Staff (subsequently Chief of the General Staff). Not only did Egorov lack the talent and professional authority of Shaposhnikov, but, as already noted, he was among those who had earlier opposed Tukhachevskii's recommendation for a unified staff. While the reasons for Shaposhnikov's dismissal are not discussed in Soviet sources, we do know that he had continued to promote an expansion of the Staff's role even after the Revvoensovet's unfavorable decision of January 1930.⁶⁶ Had the intention been to create a stronger, more encompassing staff, it seems likely that Shaposhnikov would have been retained.⁶⁷

⁶⁶See for example, Zakharov, Uchenyi i voyn, p. 68. Zakharov notes that Shaposhnikov continued to prepare the Staff for much wider responsibilities and trained its personnel to think in broad categories. See, also, the introduction to B.M. Shaposhnikov, Vospominaniia, voenno-nauchny trudy (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1974), p. 18, which was written by A.M. Vasilevskii and M.V. Zakharov.

⁶⁷Shaposhnikov's assignment to command the lowly Volga Military District can only be seen as a disciplinary action. But the reason for it is not clear. Some have linked it to Shaposhnikov's public stand on the sensitive issue of the 1920 Warsaw Campaign. And another view attributes it to Shaposhnikov's publication of a book that cast some favorable light on Trotsky. Whatever the case, the ease with which such an action was undertaken and the prolonged silence surrounding it hardly bespeaks of a bureaucratically powerful General Staff.

Like its organizational structure, what we know of the General Staff's responsibilities during the prewar years hardly supports the present Soviet claim that this period saw continued growth in the authority and stature of this organ. While it probably did take on a greater volume of work, there is no convincing evidence that it acquired any significant degree of bureaucratic influence that might have made for a more decisive voice in military management. In fact, the General Staff did not even control the assignment of personnel. Despite the acquisition of a Cadres Department in 1936, staffing the Red Army was carried out through what a former Chief of Staff has characterized as a "peculiar" organizational arrangement with the Administrative-Mobilization Directorate.⁶⁸ This organ was the successor to the Main Directorate of the RKKA and was headed by Assistant Defense Commissar E.A. Schadenko.⁶⁹ His relationship with Shaposhnikov is reported to have been somewhat tense. For, in the final analysis, all of the General Staff's planning with respect to troop organization, military development and strategic deployment rested upon his control of personnel.

With respect to weapons development, the evidence also suggests only a limited role for the General Staff during the prewar years. Edward Warner has concluded that the General Staff assumed broad responsibilities in this area after the post of Chief of Armaments was abolished in 1936.⁷⁰ M.V. Zakharov reports that his duties as an Assistant Chief of the General

⁶⁸See M.V. Zakharov, "Nakanune Vtoroi mirovoi voyny," Novaia i noveyshaia istoriia, No. 5 (September-October 1970), p. 5. See, also, Zakharov, Uchenyi i voyn, p. 79.

⁶⁹The Administrative-Mobilization Directorate was formed in 1934. Despite the Revvoensovet decision of January 1930, its responsibilities apparently included troop mobilization. Thus, Shaposhnikov's victory was apparently short-lived.

⁷⁰Edward L. Warner, The Military in Contemporary Soviet Politics (New York: Praeger, 1977), p. 182.

Staff in 1938 required him to become familiar with the work of weapons designers.⁷¹ But he also tells us that the responsibilities of the Chief of Armaments transferred to the Main Directorate for Armaments and Technical Supply, which was directly subordinate to the Defense Commissar.⁷² Moreover, in early 1938, four new defense commissariats (aviation, ship building, ordinance, and armaments) were set up to improve production management in the related branches of industry.⁷³ Judging from Zakharov's account of his work in relation to development of the Grabin F-2 76-mm gun, the role of the General Staff appears to have been limited to the task of coordinating the final test evaluations of such weapons.⁷⁴ In fact, V. G. Grabin's own account of this gun's development and testing does not even mention Zakharov.⁷⁵ And the memoirs of other persons who were responsible for weapons design and production during the late 1930s point only to modest involvement in this realm on the part of the General Staff.⁷⁶ On the other hand, they also substantiate Marshal Zhukov's complaint that Stalin's direct involvement ". . . naturally infringed on the initiative of the Peoples Commissar of Defense and his assistants who managed the Red Army's armament questions."⁷⁷

⁷¹Zakharov, "Nakanune Vtoroi mirovoi voiny," p. 19.

⁷²Zakharov, "Kommunisticheskaia partiia i tekhnicheskoe perevooruzhenie. . . ," p. 4, n. 4.

⁷³The directorates of artillery, chemical warfare, motorization and mechanization, air defense and battle training also existed outside the General Staff. For a brief period, the General Staff controlled the latter two.

⁷⁴Zakharov's reference is apparently to the Grabin F-22.

⁷⁵V.G. Grabin, "Oruzhie pobedy," Oktiabr', No. 8 (August 1974), pp. 159-194. The so-called Tactical Technical Requirements (TTT) for Grabin's gun were set by the Main Artillery Directorate, not the General Staff.

⁷⁶See, for example, the memoirs of Boris L. Vannikov, "Oboronnaia promyshlennost SSSR nakanune voiny," Voprosy istorii, No. 10 (October 1968), pp. 114-123 and No. 1 (January 1969), pp. 122-135. Vannikov served for over twenty years as Commissar of Armaments.

⁷⁷G.K. Zhukov, Vospominaniia i razmyshleniia, (Moscow: Novosti, 1969), pp. 296-297.

While this involvement often took the form of direct, personal contacts with designers and production officials, many accounts point to the decisive voice of the Defense Commission in these matters.⁷⁸ Still under the chairmanship of Molotov, it was elevated to the status of a committee in April 1937. Although the Chief of the General Staff did sit on the Main Military Soviet, there is no indication that he also enjoyed a position on the Defense Committee.⁷⁹ During the prewar years, therefore, weapons development hardly seems to have been a significant responsibility of the General Staff.

As for operations, however, there is no doubt that the General Staff had direct responsibilities for drawing up strategic and operational plans for development and utilization of Soviet forces. Such duties are reported to have been part of the expansion in authority that accompanied its 1935 redesignation as the General Staff.⁸⁰ And from memoir accounts, it is clear that it drew up plans for a campaign against Finland and for defensive prewar deployments against Germany. Having been renamed to head the General Staff, Shaposhnikov took the position that a war with Finland could become drawn out and perhaps require several months.⁸¹ Other estimates in the Defense Commissariat, however, anticipated a campaign of no more than ten to twelve days.⁸² When the General Staff's plan was discussed in the Main

⁷⁸See, for example, Aleksandr S. Iakovlev, Tsel zhizni (Moscow: Politizdat, 1968), especially pp. 206-208.

⁷⁹The Main Military Soviet did consider weapons development matters. It was chaired by Defense Commissar Voroshilov.

⁸⁰Danilov, "General'nyi shtab RKKA v predvoennye gody," p. 68.

⁸¹Shaposhnikov was returned to lead the General Staff upon the arrest of Egorov in May 1937.

⁸²See, for example, N.N. Voronov, Na sluzhbe voennoi (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1963), p. 136.

Military Soviet, probably during early 1939, it was rejected. At that point, Stalin charged K.A. Meretskov, commander of the Leningrad Military District, with formulating new plans that would make for a "short, swift" operation.⁸³ Meretskov's plan was approved, and he worked directly subordinate to Stalin rather than through the General Staff or the Defense Commissar.

The campaign against Finland was, of course, anything but short and swift. In fact, Stalin later admitted to Shaposhnikov that the General Staff's estimates had been correct. But prescience in such matters did not help the Chief of Staff, for Stalin removed him, along with Defense Commissar Voroshilov, ostensibly as a signal to Germany that measures were being taken to correct the Red Army's conspicuous shortcomings.⁸⁴ One cannot help but think, however, that Stalin might have had additional motives for dismissing his Chief of Staff. For when the General Staff's plan for strategic deployments was presented to the Defense Committee in September 1940, none of its original authors were present to defend it.⁸⁵ Subsequently, K.A. Meretskov, the new Chief of Staff, was charged with reformulating the deployment plan to correspond more closely with Stalin's views concerning the likely direction of a German attack.

Given the terror of that period and the compliant posture of Shaposhnikov and Meretskov, the General Staff did not seek to become a forceful spokesman for the concepts of modern warfare that had been developed in the Frunze and General Staff academies and which, according to some, correctly anticipated

⁸³ See Meretskov's account in his memoir Na sluzhbe narodu (Moscow: Politizdat, 1969), pp. 178. See, also, the account of A.M. Vasilevskii, Delo vsei zhizni (Moscow: Politizdat, 1978), pp. 87-88. At the time, Vasilevskii was Assistant Chief of the Operations Department of the General Staff.

⁸⁴ Vasilevskii, Delo vsei zhizni, pp. 93-94. This explanation is said to have come straight from Shaposhnikov. Voroshilov remained on the Defense Committee and was elevated to the post of chairman.

⁸⁵ Ibid., pp. 91-92.

the German attack and its characteristics.⁸⁶ Even in the related areas of troop organization, intelligence and communications, evidence clearly points to limited authority and capabilities for the General Staff during the prewar years. It is little wonder, therefore, that when Zakharov was assigned to the General Staff in May 1938, he found that it had not yet become the "brain of the army."⁸⁷ In fact, only one year later the Main Military Soviet reached the conclusion that the General Staff and lower staffs were incapable of exercising the proper command and control of combat operations. In the words of Defense Commissar Voroshilov, "Even in peacetime maneuvers and training exercises, the staffs are unable to ensure uninterrupted leadership of the troops."⁸⁸ Not only were operations the responsibility of authorities in addition to the Chief of Staff, but staffs were also denied direct access to the organs of communication and to intelligence data. As formulated by one Soviet observer, staffs ". . . had essentially become transformed into technical apparatus."⁸⁹ In fact, it is charged that during the prewar

⁸⁶ See, for example, V.A. Anfilov, Bessmertnyi podvig. (Moscow: Nauka, 1971), pp. 149-160. The Frunze Academy was the original General Staff Academy. In 1936, a new General Staff Academy was established.

⁸⁷ Zakharov, Uchenyi i voyn, p. 80.

⁸⁸ Cited in Danilov, "General'nyi shtab RKKA v predvoennye gody," p. 69.

⁸⁹ Ibid. Complaints concerning the lack of intelligence data are common in the memoirs. See, for example, Vasilevskii, Delo vsei zhizni, pp. 86-87. As for communications, better access to them by the General Staff would probably not have helped, for they remained quite primitive into the first period of the war. See B.A. Platonov, "Uzel svyazi General'nogo shtaba v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi voyny," Voprosy istorii, No. 2 (February, 1978), pp. 93-105. The organizational structure of combat troops was determined in the Main Military Soviet, not the General Staff. See Anfilov, Bessmertnyi podvig, pp. 105-106.

years, the leading and organizational work of staffs as a whole was "humiliated."⁹⁰

In view of these findings, the Main Military Soviet undertook another reorganization of the General Staff. What had been mere departments were reorganized into more prestigious directorates.⁹¹ In addition, the Operations Directorate and lower operations departments were given responsibility for operations communications and for the analysis of intelligence data, and operations chiefs became assistant chiefs of staff.⁹² Later, after the March 1940 plenum of the Central Committee, the General Staff is reported to have consisted of eight directorates: Operations, Intelligence, Organization, Mobilization, Military Communications, Logistics and Supply, Staffing, and Military Topography. It also included the departments of Fortified Areas, Military History, Cadres, and General.⁹³ Indeed, were one to judge from its composition in early 1941, it might be concluded that the political and cultural reservations associated with a strong General Staff had finally been overcome, perhaps in response to the gathering threat of war and the Red Army's poor showing in Finland.⁹⁴ In fact, Zakharov refers to the General

⁹⁰Ibid. Danilov's reference, no doubt, is aimed at more than organizational problems. For the Purge not only destroyed nearly the entire Red Army high command, but in doing so it erased a great deal of organizational knowledge and subformal coordinating expertise necessary to effective command and control.

⁹¹Spahr, "The Influence of Shaposhnikov on the Soviet General Staff," pp. 28-29. See, also, Istoriia vtoroi mirovoi voyny, III (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1974), p. 417.

⁹²Danilov, "General'nyi shtab RKKA v predvoennye gody," p. 69.

⁹³Istoriia vtoroi mirovoi voyny, III, p. 417.

⁹⁴This is the common Western interpretation of the reforms that were undertaken by the new Defense Commissar, S.K. Timoshenko, who was appointed to his post on May 8, 1940.

Staff at this time as "the most important organ of the NKD [Peoples Commissariat of Defense]."⁹⁵ Its military personnel had been doubled and its civilian personnel tripled.⁹⁶ Moreover, some of its members were included in diplomatic negotiations with France, Britain, and Germany; and its new Chief, G.K. Zhukov was elected to candidate status on the Central Committee and permitted direct access to the government on matters related to the Defense Commissariat.

On the other hand, it is important to note that changes in the formation and composition of the General Staff were the product of Politburo decisions. They cannot be attributed to the supine personality of Meretskov, who served as Chief of Staff until January 1941. Actually, Meretskov was removed from his post after he demonstrated considerable incompetence in his handling of map exercises that were presented to a number of Politburo members in mid January 1941. The decision to relieve him of his duties and name Zhukov in his place was made in the Politburo and undoubtedly reflected new conclusions on the nature of a future war with Germany.⁹⁷ What is more, when the Central Committee and Soviet of Peoples Commissars (e.g., the Politburo and Defense Committee) defined internal Defense Commissariat responsibilities on March 8, 1941, certain important aspects of military management remained outside the General Staff but linked to Stalin through the persons placed in charge of them. Operational responsibilities were indeed focused in the General Staff. Zhukov was also responsible for

⁹⁵ M.V. Zakharov, "Stranitsy istorii Sovetskikh Vooruzhennykh sil nakanune Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny, 1939-1941, "Voprosy istorii, No. 5 (May 1970), p. 39.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ For a discussion of this meeting, see Anfilov Bessmertnyi podvig, p. 147, and M.I. Kazakov, Nad kartoi bylykh srazhenii, (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1965), pp. 57-62. The German demonstration of blitz warfare made Zhukov's highly successful campaign at Khalkin-Gol more relevant than the experience in Finland.

the General Staff Academy together with the Communications, Fuel Supply and Air Defense Directorates. Work in other areas, however, such as medicine, artillery, chemical warfare, air power, combat training, engineering and fortifications was managed by S.M. Budennyi, G.I. Kulik, P.V. Rychagov, K.A. Meretskov and B.M. Shaposhnikov. Like Zhukov, all of these men were Assistant Defense Commissars, except for Budennyi, who was a First Assistant Defense Commissar with direct access to the government, and several outranked Zhukov.

Directly under the Defense Commissar Timoshenko, who held the rank of marshal and full membership on the Central Committee, were the Main Tank, Financial, and Cadre Directorates. As for naval affairs, they had been handled through a separate commissariat and staff since 1937.⁹⁸ Although one General Staff historian indicates that naval operations were determined by the General Staff's operational plan, G.K. Zhukov recalls that ". . . in general, when naval questions were discussed with J.V. Stalin, neither the Peoples Commissar of Defense nor the Chief of the General Staff was invited."⁹⁹

Notwithstanding the concerns voiced by the Main Military Soviet, the 1939-41 military reforms cannot be understood as a departure from tsarist and early Bolshevik practice with respect to military management. Even in the face of a growing threat from Germany and the Wehrmacht's recently demonstrated capabilities in modern warfare, these traditions resisted greater reliance on a stronger General Staff system. Although operations planning

⁹⁸N.G. Kuznetsov was the Naval Commissar. He became a full member of the Central Committee in 1939. It was in 1939 that the Naval Staff, like the General Staff, received new emphasis on its operational responsibilities. See S.K. Kurkotkin, ed., *Tyl Sovetskikh vooruzhennykh sil v Velikoi Otechestvennoi voine, 1941-1945* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1977), pp. 923-424.

⁹⁹See Danilov, "General'nyi shtab RKKA v predvoennye gody," p. 71; and Zhukov, *Vospominaniia i razmyshleniia*, p. 241.

responsibilities were concentrated in the General Staff, the sum total of military management duties remained spread over a wide range of offices and personalities. Moreover, Stalin dealt with each one directly as the circumstances required. In reality, access to the government was only on the basis of Stalin's invitation and did not result from constitutional provision or an increase in the Staff's bureaucratic influence. And it certainly did not imply that the Chief of the General Staff had acquired a status equal to that of the Defense Commissar. If anything, the Defense Commissar may have been able to exercise some small influence in the selection of his Chief of Staff. Given this dispersal of defense related functions together with the fate of the General Staff's operations plans during 1939 and 1940, it seems safe to conclude that on the eve of the Great Fatherland War, the General Staff had not improved upon its role as a "technical organ." In fact, it was but one component in what can be described as a matrix or prefectural approach to military management. This laid open all organs of the military establishment to elite scrutiny and prevented bureaucracy from "concealing and idling" the social system's "clossal resources"--a concern that Stalin had addressed at the 16th Party Congress in 1930.

Wartime Period

Despite the recent emphasis that had been given to the General Staff as an organ of operational control, traditional patterns of wartime management asserted themselves at the outbreak of hostilities. Instead of relying on the General Staff to handle operations, a Stavka was established. And the State Defense Committee (GKO) was created with absolute powers to direct the war effort. Stalin served as chairman of both bodies in addition to becoming the Supreme Commander in Chief and replacing Timoshenko as Defense Commissar.

Except for Voroshilov, the GKO consisted of a small number of civilians. The Stavka, however, included Timoshenko, Zhukov, Budennyi, Voroshilov and V.M. Molotov. According to Vasilevskii, this organ merely served to permit Stalin authoritative access to particular problems and activities associated with the military effort. It did not function as a deliberative, standing body and probably never met once as it had been originally constituted.¹⁰⁰

In addition to the formation of a special wartime high command, the Politburo also established three sector high commands to correspond to the main directions of the German attack: Northwestern, Western, and Southwestern. This was done on July 10, 1941, well before the General Staff's operational abilities might have been tested. To head these commands, Stalin dispatched Voroshilov, Timoshenko, and Budennyi, some of his most trusted followers. Within the General Staff's Operations Department, designated sector chiefs were to operate as liaisons, reporting developments in their respective areas directly to Stalin.¹⁰¹ Although this arrangement proved far too inflexible to cope with the rapidly changing military situation and the dynamics of mechanized warfare, it persisted until the summer of 1942. At that point, the work of the sector high commands was gradually assumed by the Stavka's representatives to the operating forces.

In the General Staff, both the volume and complexity of work increased with the onset of war. To make matters worse, its organizational structure was immediately modified. As formulated by Shtemenko, "Not everything that had seemed suitable in peacetime continued to be satisfactory. We had to reorganize along the way."¹⁰² Mobilization and staff duties were transferred from

¹⁰⁰A.M. Vasilevskii, "Delo vsei zhizni," Novyi mir, No. 4 (April 1973), p. 205.

¹⁰¹S.M. Shtemenko, General'nyi shtab v gody voiny, I (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1968), pp. 47-49.

¹⁰²Ibid., p. 30.

the General Staff to the Glavupraform, a separate directorate under Schadenko. And the Military Logistics Directorate was moved to the newly created Main Directorate of the Rear, which was headed by A.V. Khrulev. Both measures clearly displeased the General Staff and have since been singled out for unfavorable comment in the memoirs of Shtemenko and Vasilevskii.¹⁰³ On the other hand, with the creation of the Officer Corps of the General Staff in December 1941, the linkage between the General Staff and the operating forces was strengthened. The purpose of this body, which at its height in late 1942 numbered approximately 240 personnel, was primarily to gather information and to ensure the implementation of Stavka orders through the provision of trained expertise to lower, less experienced staffs. In contrast to the Stavka's representatives, whose status and authority apparently required no special explanation, officer-representatives of the General Staff functioned according to well defined provisions.¹⁰⁴ While these empowered access to operating command groups and ensured their cooperation, they also required subordination to any Stavka representative who happened to be on the scene. As the expertise of lower staffs increased, the need for the Officer Corps of the General Staff declined and its number dwindled. It was finally abolished in January 1946.

¹⁰³Ibid., pp. 9-11; and Vasilevskii, Delo vsei zhizni, pp. 484-485. According to Zhukov, the Glavupraform even controlled the dispatch of reinforcements from reserves and training units to the operating armies. See G.K. Zhukov, Vospominaniia i razmyshleniia, I (2nd. ed.; Moscow: Novosti, 1974), p. 338.

¹⁰⁴See, for example, "Polozhenie i instruktsiia po rabote Korpusa ofitserov-predstavitelei General'nogo shtaba Krasnoi Armii," Voenno-istoricheskii zhurnal, No. 12 (December 1975), pp. 67-71. An elaboration of these orders was apparently necessitated with the introduction of edinonachalie or one-man command in October 1942. See, especially, pp. 62-63.

Although the Officer Corps of the General Staff definitely reinforced the capacity of the Operations Department to feel the pulse of battlefield developments and to enhance the coordination of tactical units, it did not strengthen the General Staff as a cohesive bureaucratic unit. In this regard, it is interesting to note that between 1935 and 1942, the position of Chief of Staff changed hands six times. And a similar absence of stability characterized leadership of the Operations Department. As a result, no one occupied these positions long enough to learn them, and one observer recalls that as a result ". . . there was created an atmosphere of nervousness that not infrequently led to inefficiency in the work."¹⁰⁵ What is more, the Supreme Commander frequently sent his Chief of Staff and other capable General Staff workers to the front as his personal representatives. As formulated by Vasilevskii, who became acting Chief of the General Staff on May 11, 1942:

[Stalin] only needed to learn that some worker of the Peoples Commissariat of Defense had a good grasp of the problems of waging modern warfare, of the organization of combined arms operations, or of certain combat equipment for him to send this person to the front at the first occasion that it became necessary.¹⁰⁶

In Vasilevskii's absence, General Staff Commissar F.Y. Bokov was left in charge. Shtemenko remembers Bokov as ". . . a fine fellow, a good party worker, but unprepared for fulfilling operations functions."¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵Shtemenko, General'nyi shtab v gody voiny, I, p. 53.

¹⁰⁶A.M. Vasilevskii, "K voprosu o rukovodstve vooruzhennoi bor'boi v Velikoi Otechestvennoi voine," Voprosy istorii, No. 5 (May 1970), pp. 68-69. See, also, S.M. Shtemenko, General'nyi shtab v gody voiny, p. 41. Shtemenko records that young officers were left behind in place of the experienced General Staff personnel who had been assigned to the front. One such assignment was V.V. Kurasov, Assistant Chief of the Operations Directorate, who became chief of staff of an army.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., p. 53.

When the personnel situation in the General Staff became especially difficult during late 1942, Vasilevskii asked Stalin's permission to strengthen the General Staff with the addition of qualified people. The Supreme Commander, however, was not concerned about this matter, and his reply is recalled by Vasilevskii as "characteristic:" Stalin explained that, "on the whole, now, you ought not to assist the General Staff as much as it ought to assist you."¹⁰⁸ Judging from Vasilevskii's concern about personnel and from the relatively small quarters that General Staff workers occupied at various times during the war, it appears that even a grave threat to the nation's existence was not permitted to become an occasion for this organ's bureaucratic expansion.¹⁰⁹ In the realm of operations planning and implementation, Marshall Zhukov has written that without the participation of the General Staff, ". . . not one operation of an operational-strategic scale would have been conducted."¹¹⁰ With a more sober assessment, however, M.V. Zakharov tells us that the wartime authority of the General Staff developed only gradually.¹¹¹ A.M. Vasilevskii recalls that, "before becoming an effective organ of the Supreme Command, it traveled a path in search of its place

¹⁰⁸Vasilevskii, Delo vsei zhizni, p. 474. Stalin did agree to let Vasilevskii's friend A.I. Antonov become Chief of the Operations Departments. But he then proceeded to ignore him, and Antonov requested to be returned to the front. Earlier, Vasilevskii had recruited his friend V.D. Sokolovskii to the General Staff. Within only a few days, Stalin returned him to the front.

¹⁰⁹The Soviets do not discuss the size of the General Staff, even in reference to the wartime period. Bits of evidence, however, seem to indicate that it was quite small, perhaps embarrassingly small in relation to its subsequent claim of wartime influence. Given its nearly three-fold expansion just prior to the war, its number of personnel during the late 1930s must have been very small indeed.

¹¹⁰Zhukov, Vospominaniia i razmyshleniia, p. 421. This observation is contained in the original, 1969, edition. But it is missing from the 2nd edition, which appeared in 1974.

¹¹¹Zakharov, Uchenyi i voen, p. 94.

in the strategic leadership, its organizational structure, and its methods of work."¹¹² In fact, the onset of war with Germany did virtually nothing to change Stalin's disregard for the General Staff as an operations planning organ. A few days after the German attack, for example, Stalin approved Timoshenko's directive that called upon the splintered Soviet forces to mount a counteroffensive and ordered that Chief of Staff Zhukov's name be attached. Zhukov, who had been dispatched to the Southwestern Front, was informed of these decisions by radio.¹¹³ One month later, when the General Staff recommended withdrawal of the Southwestern Front and abandonment of Kiev, Stalin angrily dismissed Zhukov as Chief of Staff and recalled Shaposhnikov in his place. As one member of the General Staff acknowledges:

We obviously did not have enough of the necessary hardness to withstand these [Stalin's] outbursts of irrepressible anger or the proper understanding of our responsibility for the inevitable catastrophe in the Southwestern sector.¹¹⁴

Despite its lack of "hardness," however, the General Staff nevertheless did endeavor to influence the operations planning process. Once the German threat to Moscow diminished, it disagreed with Stalin's idea for a general offensive.¹¹⁵ And it also advised against plans for offensive operations during the spring and summer of 1942, such as Timoshenko's proposal for defeat of the German group at Khar'kov. What the General Staff favored was a defensive posture that would permit the consolidation and replenishment of

¹¹² Vasilevskii, Delo vsei zhizni, p. 484.

¹¹³ Zhukov, Vospominaniia i razmyshleniia, p. 251.

¹¹⁴ Vasilevskii, "Delo vsei zhizni," Novyi mir, No. 4 (April 1973), p. 215.

¹¹⁵ Calculations for the offensive were already in progress when Shaposhnikov and the majority of General Staff workers returned to Moscow from their month long evacuation. Shortly thereafter, Shaposhnikov was briefly replaced by Vasilevskii.

Soviet forces.¹¹⁶ Stalin, however, had other ideas, and in the case of Timoshenko's plan, which surfaced in late March, the General Staff was instructed to regard it as an internal matter of the Southwestern sector and not to "butt in."¹¹⁷ At about the same time, the General Staff also expressed its disapproval of plans to combine the Leningrad and Volkhov fronts on grounds that the result would be an unmanageable formation. But its opposition was again to no avail. Shortly thereafter, on April 24, Vasilevskii received word that he was to replace Shaposhnikov as Chief of Staff. The reason given was Shaposehnikov's failing health. But, in addition to the fact that he was subsequently named to head the General Staff Academy, we are told by Zakharov that Shaposhnikov had been blamed by Stalin for having failed to more forcefully defend the General Staff's recommendation against offensive operations. It therefore seems more than likely that Shaposhnikov's departure resulted from differences over operational issues.¹¹⁸

Not until after the battle of Kursk in July and August 1943 did the General Staff find a somewhat more comfortable place in the operations decision-making process. Victory at Kursk decisively tipped the strategic initiative in favor of Soviet forces and thereby helped to create a new operational environment. In addition, it was at about this time that significant improvements in lower command and staff personnel could be seen, material supplies reached

¹¹⁶ Zakharov, Uchenyi i voin, p. 97.

¹¹⁷ Vasilevskii, Delo vsei zhizni, p. 195. According to Vasilevskii, "The leaders of the General Staff were passive and therefore responsible for the failure of the offensive operation in the Southwestern sector." See his "Delo vsei zhizni," Novyi mir, No. 5 (May 1973), p. 250.

¹¹⁸ See Zakharov, Uchenyi i voin, pp. 97-98.

comfortable levels, and previous shortcomings in the General Staff's intelligence work were overcome.¹¹⁹ For the first time in the war, complex offensive operations that employed large-scale mechanized formations could now be undertaken by the Red Army.

What this meant for the General Staff was an expanded involvement in operations planning and implementation. The views of Deputy Supreme Commander Zhukov and Chief of Staff Vasilevskii were now regarded with more confidence, especially in view of the great success at Stalingrad only a few months earlier. Indeed, it was the General Staff's recommendation for a strategic defense at Kursk that prevailed over proposals by some of the front commands for a preemptive attack. In general, details of the Bagration and Vistula-Oder offensives of 1944 and 1945 plainly show that during the latter half of the war, the tendency was to leave much more in the way of operations planning up to the General Staff in consultation with the front commands.¹²⁰ In fact, plans for the August 1945 Manchurian campaign against the Japanese Kwantung Army were almost entirely the product of General Staff thinking. It is thus by no accident that contemporary General Staff writers advance this offensive as a model with modern applications.¹²¹

¹¹⁹On lower command and staff capabilities, see N.N. Popel', V.P. Savell'ev, and P.V. Shemanskii, Upravlenie voiskami v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1974), especially pp. 89-102. Improvements in the General Staff's intelligence work are noted by Vasilevskii, "K voprosu o rukovodstve vooruzhennoi bor'boi v Velikoi Otechestvennoi voine," p. 57.

¹²⁰In specific reference to the planning process utilized for Bagration, General I.S. Ivanov has noted that, "such methods for preparing large-scale operations embodied not only centralization but also another important Leninist principle of management--collegiality." See I.S. Ivanov, O nauchnykh osnovakh upravleniia voiskami (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1975), p. 55.

¹²¹Stalin gave this planning assignment to the General Staff with only one stipulation: that the campaign be as short as possible. The idea to attack the Kwantung Army arose in the General Staff and was only gradually accepted by Stalin. See Shtemenko, General'nyi shtab v gody voiny, I, pp. 333-304.

Even with an appreciable growth in its operations responsibilities, however, the General Staff continued to be but one organ among a matrix of institutions concerned with management of the war effort. Representatives of the Stavka, for instance, continued to function as Stalin's personal emissaries in the field. As operations became larger and more complex, their number was correspondingly increased. Except for its work in relation to the establishment of so-called national armies (e.g., Czechoslovakian, Polish, Romanian and Bulgarian formations), the Officer Corps of the General Staff was permitted to decline as an operations unit.¹²² Moreover, beginning in May 1943, the Party's involvement in the armed forces was expanded. Primary Party and Komosomol organizations were extended to the battalion level and the army press was strengthened.¹²³ Although organs of military transport were returned to the General Staff in early 1943, within 36 days they were again made subordinate to the Chief of the Rear.¹²⁴ Likewise, the Navy, Main Artillery Directorate and NKVD retained separate institutional identities throughout the war, while military finances were the work of Gosplan and the Finance Commissariat.¹²⁵ Besides its interdependence with other organs,

¹²² Shtemenko, General'nyi shtab v gody voiny, I, p. 138.

¹²³ See Iu. P. Petrov, Partiinoe stroitel'stvo v sovetskoii armii i flote, 1918-1961 (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1964), p. 411.

¹²⁴ Kurkotkin, Tyl Sovetskikh vooruzhennykh sil v Velikoi Otechestvennoi voine, 1941-1945, pp. 114-115. Vasilevskii complains (Delo vsei zhizni, p. 485) that each time an operation was prepared it was necessary to meet with A.V. Khrulev.

¹²⁵ One of the NKVD's main functions was to provide rear security. This was carried out by the Main Directorate of Troops for Rear Security of Operating Armies that was formed within the NKVD. See Zakharov, Uchenyi i voyn, p. 274. In addition, the NKVD also supplied secure, redundant communications for the GKO, Stavka and Politburo and assisted the General Staff with intercepts of enemy communications. See John J. Dziak, "Soviet Intelligence and Security Services in the Eighties: The Paramilitary Dimension," Orbis, No. 4 (Winter 1981), pp. 773-774. For commentary on wartime finances, see Vasilevskii, Delo vsei zhizni, pp. 491-492; and Kurkotkin, Tyl Sovetskikh vooruzhennykh sil, p. 359.

however, any inclination that the General Staff might have had to expand its bureaucratic influence as a result of operations work was undoubtedly nipped in the bud when Vasilevskii was named to command a front and then dispatched to the Far East as Commander in Chief in charge of the Manchurian campaign. A.I. Antonov, who replaced him as Chief of the General Staff on February 20, 1945, is recalled by Marshal K.K. Rokossovskii as someone who ". . . seldom took it upon himself to advocate an issue before the Supreme Commander."¹²⁶ Thus, while the role of the General Staff took on more importance as the war progressed, its work remained confined largely to the realm of operations planning and implementation. But even in this regard it shared responsibilities, and it was always necessary to coordinate with other crucial organs within and apart from the Defense Commissariat.¹²⁷ In any case, it is quite evident that the General Staff remained directly subordinate to the Supreme Commander in Chief throughout the conflict and never acquired the slightest degree of bureaucratic autonomy.

One noteworthy exception to the General Staff's operations work was its involvement in wartime diplomacy. As mentioned above, the General Staff figured prominently in the Soviet Union's prewar efforts to conclude a military pact with Britain and France. Concrete variations for such an alliance,

¹²⁶K.K. Rokossovskii, Soldatskii dolg (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1968), p. 257. Rokossovskii notes that Antonov commonly replied to requests with the words, "Let this question be decided by Comrade Stalin himself."

¹²⁷For comments on coordination with the Main Artillery Directorate, see Kurkotkin, Tyl Sovetskikh vooruzhennykh sil, p. 165. With respect to the General Staff's relationship with the Air Force, see M.N. Kozhevnikov, Komandovanie i shtab VVS Sovetskoi armii v Velikoe Otechestvennoi voine, 1941-1945 (Moscow: Nauka, 1977), pp. 256 and 263. See, also, M.N. Kozhevnikov, "Coordinatsiia deistvii VVS predstaviteliami shtaba VVK po aviatsii," Voenno-istoricheskii zhurnal, No. 2 (February 1974), p. 31.

which had obviously been worked out in the General Staff, were presented by Chief of Staff B.M. Shaposhnikov to the British and French delegations at an August 1939 meeting in Moscow.¹²⁸ Once war broke out, reciprocal military missions were established with the United States, Britain, France, allied headquarters in the Mediterranean, and Tito's partisan forces. Although the work of these missions was apparently coordinated with the Foreign Affairs Commissariat, they were directly responsible to Stalin through the General Staff.¹²⁹ Later in the war, the Officer Corps of the General Staff contributed to the formation of so-called national armies; and a General Staff representative was attached to each of these units.¹³⁰ Finally, the General Staff prepared military related materials and provided secure communications for Soviet leaders who attended the wartime conferences at Teheran, Yalta and Potsdam.¹³¹

¹²⁸See Anfilov, Bessmertnyi podvig, pp. 79-85. Present at this meeting, also, were Defense Commissar Voroshilov, Naval Commissar Kuznetsov, Air Force Chief A.D. Loktionov, and assistant chief of the General Staff I.V. Smorodinov. One might easily have concluded that such military professionals constituted a power to be reckoned with in the Soviet regime.

¹²⁹Shtemenko, General'nyi shtab v gody voiny, II, p. 22. See, also, V. Kulikov, Voenno-istoricheskii zhurnal, No. 6 (June 1975).

¹³⁰Shtemenko, General'nyi shtab v gody voiny, I, p. 138.

¹³¹Shtemenko, General'nyi shtab v gody voiny, II, p. 33. Shtemenko devotes an entire chapter of volume I to the Teheran conference. As chief of the Operations Department, he accompanied Stalin and provided him with regular reports on the fighting and with draft orders for his signature.

PERSISTENCE AND CHANGE

Among its different functions, culture mediates a society's approach to reality by supplying an understanding of what is reasonable or "rational."¹³² It provides categories into which empirical concerns can be sorted and thereby given meaning. Some aspects of culture, such as those that involve a technical appreciation of the physical world, can be tested and oftentimes successfully challenged. Others, however, such as social organization and institutions are seen as sacred. Although these are subject to confirming or disconfirming events, they are not easily challenged and are therefore more likely to persist for long periods of time. If the preceding reconstruction of the Soviet General Staff's organizational and operational evolution is not wide of the mark, then several such trends can be identified. Given their persistence through different regimes, technical environments, political thickets and major challenges to national survival, they can be considered features of the Soviet bureaucratic culture, at least with respect to military management. In the absence of memoir accounts of the postwar General Staff, they can serve as benchmarks against which this institution's current status might be gauged.

The Chief of Staff

In contrast to the German experience, the rise of the Soviet General Staff cannot be understood as the product of strong and purposeful Chiefs of Staff. With the possible exception of Tukhachevskii, the history of the Soviet General Staff includes no figures such as Scharnhorst, Moltke or

¹³²See, for example, Edwin Hutchins, Culture and Inference: A Trobriand Case Study (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1980).

or Ludendorff. For the most part, Soviet Chiefs of Staff have been much closer to the "amanuensis" that the German emperor is said to have preferred but seldom got. As an indication of the traditional weakness of the Soviet Chief of Staff, it is only necessary to briefly examine the biography of this position.

Between 1924 and Stalin's death in 1953, the post of Chief of Staff changed hands thirteen times. Except for A.I. Egorov who served from 1931 until 1937, no one held the position continuously for more than three and one half years. The average length of service was about 26 months, and several appointments lasted less than one year. Among the nine who served as Chief of Staff during this period, only Vasilevskii seems to have enjoyed Stalin's unbroken confidence. Aside from Antonov, who was clearly only a caretaker, policy differences can be associated with each of the remaining cases. Even the venerated and durable Shaposhnikov was dismissed on more occasions than is commonly thought. For some, dismissal was apparently regarded as insufficient. According to John Erickson, M.V. Frunze may have been the victim of medical murder engineered by Stalin.¹³³ Tukhachevskii was arrested and executed in 1937, and Egorov's arrest came the following year.

Shortly before Stalin's death, V.D. Sokolovskii, a trusted friend of Defense Minister Vasilevskii, was named to replace Shtemenko as Chief of the General Staff.¹³⁴ Given the fact that this appointment endured for nearly eight years, one might conclude that the vicissitudes of the Soviet Chief of Staff were merely a product of the Stalin era. But most would agree that

¹³³ John Erickson, The Soviet High Command (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1962), pp. 199-200.

¹³⁴ The reason for Shtemenko's dismissal is unclear. He was, however, demoted in rank and sent to the Caucasus.

Khrushchev did not consolidate his power until perhaps 1958. It was at that time that the First Secretary's nuclear emphasis came into conflict with the General Staff's commitment to conventional, combined arms warfare.¹³⁵ When Sokolovskii voiced his opposition to the planned reduction in conventional troop strength, Khrushchev is reported to have dismissed him and named M.V. Zakharov in his place.¹³⁶ Despite his long tenure as Chief of the General Staff, Sokolovskii appears to have accumulated virtually no bureaucratic staying power.¹³⁷ As for Zakharov, he was dismissed in March 1963, possibly in connection with opposition to Khrushchev's Cuban venture. After Khrushchev's fall from power, Zakharov obliquely referred to the move as one of Khrushchev's "harebrained schemes."¹³⁸ In retort, Khrushchev let it be known that he had always considered Zakharov to be among those who were "out of step with the times."¹³⁹

As if attempting to ensure General Staff support for his stress on nuclear arms, Khrushchev appointed S.S. Biriuzov to succeed Zakharov. Not only was Biriuzov a missile expert, having served as commander of the Strategic Rocket

¹³⁵ See Peter Kruzhin, "The Restoration of the High Command of the Soviet Land Forces," Bulletin, No. 3 (March 1968), pp. 25-27.

¹³⁶ Oleg Penkovskiy, The Penkovskiy Papers (New York: Doubleday, 1965), p. 260. Marshals Timoshenko and Konev, who were also dismissed from their position at this time, are reported by Penkovskiy to have supported Sokolovskii's opposition to Khrushchev.

¹³⁷ Sokolovskii's position on troop reductions appears not to have been shared by Defense Minister R. Ia. Malinovskii. This would suggest independent access by the Chief of Staff to the government.

¹³⁸ Krasnaia zvezda, February 4, 1965.

¹³⁹ N.S. Khrushchev, Khrushchev Remembers: The Last Testament (Boston: Little-Brown, 1974), p. 17. Khrushchev attempts to portray Zakharov as senile and accuses him of falling asleep during meetings of the Council of Ministers, which both the Chief of Staff and the Defense Minister appear to have attended.

Forces, but his career had not been made in the General Staff. Unfortunately, however, Biriuzov was killed in a plane crash, coincident with Khrushchev's fall from power. Once again, Zakharov became Chief of Staff. He served until September 1971 when poor health apparently forced his resignation. Although claims of poor health are occasionally true, they are also routinely employed to mask a dismissal over policy differences. In Zakharov's case, it is perhaps worth noting that in late 1969 he was mentioned as a likely candidate to head the Soviet SALT negotiating team. But he was known to have no enthusiasm for such negotiations and wanted them to be confined to the ABM issue.¹⁴⁰ When the Soviet delegation was finally named, it was headed by Deputy Foreign Minister Vladimir S. Semonov, a seasoned diplomat. Zakharov was not included. Its second ranking member, however, was Colonel-General N.V. Ogarkov, First Deputy Chief of the General Staff. According to some, this effectively weakened the General Staff's ability to limit SALT to a discussion of technical issues.¹⁴¹ Subsequently, in September 1971, General V.G. Kulikov, whose accelerated career points to favor at high political levels, was named Chief of Staff.¹⁴² Some five and a half years later, only months after Dimitri Ustinov succeeded Marshal Grechko as Defense Minister, Ogarkov became Chief of the General Staff and Kulikov was assigned to command the Warsaw Pact.

¹⁴⁰Kenneth A. Meyers and Dimitri Simes, "Soviet Decision Making, Strategic Policy, and SALT," (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies of Georgetown University, 1974), p. 49.

¹⁴¹Ibid., p. 54.

¹⁴²Meyers and Simes see Kulikov as too weak to have galvanized General Staff opposition to SALT. See ibid., p. 56.

When we compare the position of Chief of Staff during the 25 years before Stalin's death with the 25 years that followed, it is obvious that the average tenure in office has expanded and relatively more stability seems to be associated with this post. Five different Chiefs have served as compared to nine. On the other hand, if we consider the fact that the political and military environments have become far more stable, then a difference of four Chiefs does not appear so great. Moreover, all available evidence seems to indicate that the post-Stalin Chiefs, despite political moderation in the regime, have been no more successful than their predecessors in asserting what might be regarded as a General Staff position. There is good reason to conclude, therefore, that the tradition of a weak Chief of Staff persists.

Technical Role

Another defining tradition of the General Staff is that it has functioned mainly as a technical organ. This is evident in each of the periods explored. Whereas the German General Staff gradually acquired significant line authority in the planning and conduct of war, the Soviet case does not demonstrate such a pattern. The location of the Soviet General Staff on the periphery of strategic planning and operational control in 1941 recalls the situation of its forerunner, the GUGSh, in 1914. And despite the vast military mobilization that it elicited, the Great Fatherland War did not appreciably alter this position. Customary resort to special, ad hoc organs of wartime leadership ensured that the role of the General Staff would be a distinctly subordinate one. It is worth noting, for example, that Zhukov, not the Chief of Staff, was selected to serve as Deputy Supreme Commander. In the standard language employed to describe its wartime duties, the General Staff is merely referred to as the "working organ of the Stavka."

This is not to argue that the role of the General Staff was unimportant. As explained earlier, its work with respect to large-scale, offensive operations after 1943 was obviously indispensable. Nevertheless, it functioned as only one component in the wartime management matrix. At the heart of this system, at least in the realm of combat operations, was the Stavka representative. Militarily talented and fully indebted to Stalin for their careers and very lives, the men who served in this capacity permitted the Supreme Commander to extend himself physically, and with added technical expertise. Not only did the field presence of Stavka representatives permit Stalin to retain detailed control over the strategic battle effort, but their crucial part in the coordination of formations and arms actually allowed him to intelligently define and supply much of the Red Army's "standard" operating procedures. Paradoxically, this gave standard operating procedure an ad hoc or dynamic quality and thereby helped Stalin to avoid some of the decentralizing pathologies so common to Western bureaucracies.¹⁴³ Stalin could not, of course, escape the need for an organ that would handle the hour to hour technical minutia of operations research. He made such work the responsibility of the General Staff. Its membership and even its work routine were carefully defined by the Supreme Commander. Although the General Staff accumulated considerable talents in the technical aspects of military management, there is no evidence that it ever forcefully influenced the operations decision-making process on its own initiative or even perceived that to be its proper role.

¹⁴³For a discussion of these pathologies, see Michel Crozier, The Bureaucratic Phenomenon (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), pp. 178-187.

Whether this somewhat diminutive, technically confined work tradition has persisted sufficiently to describe the post-Stalin General Staff cannot be established with certainty. The conclusions of some Western analysts, however, would indicate that it has not. Judging from Harriet F. Scott's description, for example, the modern General Staff is an organ with very broad powers and responsibilities in military management.¹⁴⁴ Scott compares it to the pre-World War II German General Staff, with a role that ". . . would encompass many of the functions of both the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, some of the work of the National Security Council, plus many of the activities of the Departments of the Army, Navy, and Air Force."¹⁴⁵ Similarly, Benjamin Lambeth sees the General Staff as exercising an "exclusive prerogative" in the establishment of force posture requirements and the schedule of their implementation,¹⁴⁶ and Edward Warner attributes to it a "predominant role" in strategic planning and mission assignment to the various services.¹⁴⁷ In addition, one could add to these observations the fact that the General Staff's wartime role in the formation of "national armies" has since grown into dominance of the Warsaw Pact through interlocking staff arrangements, the control of military theory, and training provided by the General Staff Academy to military personnel from all member countries.¹⁴⁸ Furthermore, close ties also appear to exist between the

¹⁴⁴Harriet F. Scott, "The Soviet High Command," Air Force Magazine (March 1977), p. 54.

¹⁴⁵Ibid., p. 55.

¹⁴⁶Behamin S. Lambeth, "Soviet Strategic Conduct and the Prospects for Stability," The Rand Corporation, R-2579-AF, December 1980, p. 8.

¹⁴⁷Warner, The Military in Contemporary Soviet Politics, p. 25.

¹⁴⁸See, for example, G.F. Vorontsov, Voennye koalitsii i koalitsionnye voiny (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1976), pp. 287-296.

General Staff and the various research centers, such as the Institute for the Study of the USA and Canada and the Institute of World Economy and International Relations. Thus, from this point of view, the modern Soviet General Staff appears to have successfully broken away from its confining work traditions and to have finally become the "brain of the army," serving perhaps as a bureaucratic spokesman for the Soviet armed forces to the political elite.

Judging from the past, however, there may be several important problems with such reasoning. In the first place, it focuses more on nominal General Staff assignments than upon detailed consideration of decision-making processes. Given the scarcity of data, this is quite understandable. But it has never been a solid gauge of General Staff functions, and it is not surprising, therefore, that efforts to examine related decision-making processes seem to result in a different, more limited appreciation of the General Staff's contemporary role. Arthur Alexander's analysis of modern Soviet weapons development procedures, for example, credits the General Staff Operations Directorate and Scientific-Technical Committee with important functions in the weapons procurement process. He also notes that other high-level offices beyond the General Staff, such as the Defense Ministry's Armaments Directorate, the Military-Industrial Commission (VPK) under the Council of Ministers, the Main Military Council, the Defense Committee, and probably the Defense Industries Department of the Central Committee, play key roles as well.¹⁴⁹ Similarly, analysis of Soviet decision-making with respect to SALT I point to the strong involvement of General Staff personnel whenever technical

¹⁴⁹ Arthur Alexander, "Decision-Making in Soviet Weapons Procurement," Adelphi Papers, Nos. 147-148 (London: Institute for Strategic Studies), pp. 32 and 40.

military information was concerned.¹⁵⁰ But they also conclude that the final product on the Soviet side was the work of many different offices, which Brezhnev, like his predecessors, had no significant difficulty articulating with one another.¹⁵¹ Although the General Staff's ostensible control of technical information can be seen as a basis for its dominance of military issues, it can also be interpreted as the Staff's traditional confinement to a relatively technical domain. Since no policy issue is ever purely military, especially from the Soviet perspective, such compartmentalization has customarily been employed by the political elite to ensure control of the final policy product through dominance of the interface points at which its separate components must be related to one another.

In the second place, there is reason to be cautious about attributing too much in the way of bureaucratic solidarity to the General Staff. Notwithstanding appearances of extensive bureaucratization, the Soviet system has always been highly personal at all levels. Not only did Stalin customarily deal directly with the General Staff's various offices, but he also closely controlled personnel assignments to them. As for Khrushchev, he seems to have continued these practices. According to Penkovskiy, for example, Khrushchev appointed Shtemenko to head the Main Intelligence Directorate despite Shtemenko's disfavor among General Staff officers.¹⁵² In addition,

¹⁵⁰ See, for example, Marshall D. Shulman, "Salt and the Soviet Union," in Salt: The Moscow Agreements and Beyond, ed. by Mason Willrich and John B. Rhinelander (New York: The Free Press, 1974), pp. 111 and 115; and Kenneth A. Meyers and Dimitri Simes, "Soviet Decision Making, Strategic Policy, and Salt," p. 30.

¹⁵¹ Meyers and Simes, "Soviet Decision Making, Strategic Policy, and Salt," p. 107. These analysts argue (p. 37) that the Soviet political leadership and foreign policy establishment did, in fact, have access to expertise on strategic issues other than that supplied by the General Staff, Ministry of Defense, and defense industries.

¹⁵² Penkovskiy, The Penkovskiy Papers, p. 90.

he is reported to have secured S.S. Varentsov's promotion to Chief Marshal of Artillery over the objection of the Defense Minister and officers of the General Staff.¹⁵³ These and similar events in the past reflect the long established practice of nomenklatura. As far as we know, General Staff and other high military assignments continue to be handled by the Party Secretariat or the Politburo.¹⁵⁴ Thus, while Western observers have noted the General Staff's dominant presence on the SALT I delegation and detected what appears to have been its separate channels to the political elite, the defense industries and the academic community, a somewhat less bureaucratic explanation is more consistent with the past. In view of the fact that bypassing is a well documented feature of Soviet organizational behavior, it seems quite possible that what we are witnessing in such cases are manifestations of personal ties between General Staff officers and their patrons in the political elite. Looking back, it clearly would have been a mistake to interpret the presence of General Staff officers at the August 1939 Moscow talks or the wartime alliance conferences as an indication of the General Staff's institutional influence in the Soviet foreign policy process.

In the third place, there is evidence that the potential wartime role of the General Staff continues to be ambiguous. Soviet statements indicate that in the event of war, ad hoc leadership institutions like those employed in the Great Fatherland War would be created. As explained by contributors to V.D. Sokolovskii's Voennia strategii, leadership of the country would be carried out by the Party Central Committee and "possibly" an organ similar to

¹⁵³Ibid., p. 300.

¹⁵⁴See Bohdan Harasymiw, "Nomenklatura: The Soviet Communist Party's Leadership Recruitment System," Canadian Journal of Political Science, No. 4 (December, 1969), pp. 497-498.

the former State Defense Committee. In addition, a Stavka would "evidently" be responsible for direction of military operations; and, "as in the years of the Great Fatherland War, the basic organ of the Stavka of the Supreme Commander in Chief will be the General Staff."¹⁵⁵

Such an arrangement, however, could hardly be expected to please professional officers in the General Staff. Despite efforts by Zakharov, Shtemenko and others to embellish the General Staff's historical record, all concerned must surely be aware that the Stavka was not a collegial body and that even as its so-called "working organ," the General Staff (except for the Manchurian campaign) never enjoyed a prominent role in wartime decision-making. Thus, were a return to this customary Russian-Soviet wartime leadership arrangement actually contemplated, especially in light of the modern Soviet interest in "lightning war," the General Staff might be expected to voice misgivings and disapproval. In fact, what appear to be expressions of such concern can be found in recent war memoirs and in General Staff articles dealing with command and control. Whether they are aimed at the reinstitution of the Stavka, which may have taken place sometime in 1966-67, or at the prevention of such a move is not clear.¹⁵⁶ Whatever the case, it seems that the matter remains very much alive.

¹⁵⁵V.D. Sokolovskii, ed., Voennaia strategiiia (3rd ed.; Moscow: Voenizdat, 1968), p. 434. The first edition of this work did not mention the possible reestablishment of the Stavka and made no reference to the General Staff's role in a future war.

¹⁵⁶John A. McDonnell, "The Organization of Soviet Defense and Military Policy Making," in Soviet Naval Influence: Domestic and Foreign Dimensions, ed. by Michael McGwire and John McDonnell (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1977), p. 82

In April, 1978, for example, Voenno-istoricheskii zhurnal published an article in which Germany's wartime leadership organs were discussed.¹⁵⁷ The parallel with the Soviet experience is unmistakable, especially with respect to reliance on exceptional decision-making bodies. In the authors' view, this resulted in the German Supreme Commander and his staff being bypassed and thereby relegated to mere chores of an administrative and organizational nature--as opposed to their normal duties of war planning and strategic leadership. Such an arrangement, it is argued, ". . . created an opportunity for voluntaristic decisions and prompted questions in the military."¹⁵⁸ In summing up their discussion, the authors note that there are different paths to the achievement of centralized wartime leadership, and the ". . . creation of exceptional organs in time of war as well as in peacetime" is but one of them.¹⁵⁹ An alternative, of course, would be a broader role for the General Staff and continuity between its work in peacetime and its anticipated role in war. Given the frequency with which this theme occurs in General Staff related literature, one is led to speculate that, at best, such arrangements are presently in the balance or, more than likely, have yet to be achieved.¹⁶⁰

Another concern expressed by General Staff writers focuses on the war-time role of Stavka representatives. This is not surprising, for it was through the use of such personnel that Stalin managed to deprive the General Staff of a more central role in the formulation of grand strategy and broad

¹⁵⁷G. Mikhailovskii and I. Vyrodov, "Vysskii organy rukovodstva voinoi," Voenno-istoricheskii zhurnal, No. 4 (April 1978), pp. 16-26.

¹⁵⁸Ibid., p. 20.

¹⁵⁹Ibid., p. 26, Emphasis mine.

¹⁶⁰Emphasis on the need for organizational continuity from peace to war is a conspicuous feature of the articles by A. Kavtavadze and V. Danilov cited earlier.

coordination of the battlefield effort during the Great Fatherland War. That the sort of linkage provided by Stavka representatives between the fronts and the Supreme Commander in Chief remains essential does not seem to be questioned. Rather, what is at issue is who will perform this important function. Accordingly, General Staff writers stress the view that the "institute" of Stavka representatives was an expedient, "temporary" body that did not last out the war. On the other hand, the General Staff is portrayed as a continuing organ whose work load actually increased toward the end of the war and after. In fact, Shtemenko tells us that Stalin consulted the General Staff for its opinion before abolishing the use of Stavka representatives.¹⁶¹ Not by some accident, the Officer Corps of the General Staff has been "discovered" and is credited for its wartime duties in maintaining direct contact between the General Staff and the operating armies.¹⁶² Moreover, a recent article on the Stavka representatives clarifies the fact that not all such persons were members of the Stavka and that in at least one case, the work of a Stavka representative was performed by a commander who

¹⁶¹Shtemenko, General'nyi shtab v gody voyny, II, pp. 33-35. It is noteworthy that the first edition of Marshall Zhukov's memoirs (1959) relates the abolition of the Stavka representative to a dispute with Stalin over a tactical matter. The reference is missing from the second (1974) edition, however. Editors, it seems, wish to leave no doubt that the Stavka representative was abolished for functional reasons and not because of Stalin's caprice. In fact, the first volume of the second edition has added an entire chapter on the Stavka of the Supreme Command. In it, Zhukov explains (p. 329) that, "I.V. Stalin highly regarded the work of the General Staff and completely trusted it. As a rule, he did not make important decisions without first listening to its analysis and considering its suggestions."

¹⁶²Several articles on the Officer Corps of the General Staff appeared during 1975 and 1976. In addition, it is discussed in the second edition of Zhukov's memoirs but not in the first.

was not accorded this special designation.¹⁶³ When the authors of the article go on to compare the personalities and work styles of Zhukov and Vasilevskii, there can be no mistake that in their view the creative, flexible, and cultured personnel of the General Staff are best equipped to maintain direct contact with the troops.¹⁶⁴

That there are those who do not share the General Staff's lack of enthusiasm for the Stavka can be seen in the observations of K.V. Krainiukov, a former political officer and wartime associate of Brezhnev and former Defense Minister Marshal A.A. Grechko. According to Krainiukov, "In the postwar years, some comrades did not entirely correctly elucidate the role of the Stavka, attempting even to diminish its significance. This, of course, does not correspond to the truth."¹⁶⁵ In Krainiukov's view, the Stavka played an important role in setting objectives and coordinating the utilization of available forces toward victory. While we cannot be certain of the precise issues that are included in the Stavka debate, it seems likely that they involve the persistence of institutional arrangements that threaten the modern General Staff with something less than a full "collegial" role in the wartime management of Soviet forces--especially with respect to the determination of strategic priorities. Seen through this lense, the General Staff may well play a more constrained part in Soviet military management than has been attributed to it by many Western observers.

¹⁶³The commander was L.A. Govorov. See I. Kh. Bagramian and I. Vyrodov, "Rol' predstavitelei Stavka VGK v gody voiny: Organizatsiia i metody ikh raboty." Voenno-istoricheskii zhurnal, No. 8 (August 1980), p. 29.

¹⁶⁴Ibid., p. 32. Zhukov is characterized as quick to react, unbending, strong willed, and constantly making high demands on subordinates.

¹⁶⁵K.V. Krainiukov, Oruzhiie osobogo roda (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1977), p. 38.

Change

It would be erroneous to conclude from the foregoing observations, however, that the place of the General Staff in Soviet military management is permanently locked into a sort of holding pattern defined by tradition. In tandem with the persistence of certain institutional arrangements that tend to proscribe an avenue of development similar to that experienced by the German General Staff, important areas of change can also be detected. Although it may be denied a fully collegial voice in matters of strategic policy formulation and prevented from exercising sole authority in military management, the modern General Staff is in some respects a far more important organ than its predecessor. Ironically, this has probably resulted more from historical developments beyond its control than from its own institutional dynamic. In particular, the military-industrial bureaucracy, elite recruitment opportunities, military strategy, and foreign policy are areas that reflect changes with the prospect to enhance reliance on the General Staff's capabilities by the Politburo elite.

The modern Soviet military-industrial establishment, for instance, is far larger and considerably more complex than it was under Stalin or Khrushchev. Although the use of personally loyal prefects was once sufficient to penetrate and synchronize its various operations, the diversity and technical sophistication that have accompanied modernity now render such an approach less and less likely to yield the desired results. In addition, the circumstances of revolution, war and terror that once permitted such a personal following to be identified and recruited have not existed for some time. Close associations formed during the Great Fatherland War have long since thinned out or become irrelevant in the face of advanced technologies and new problems. In late 1964, for example, when Khrushchev was deposed, commanders of the mili-

tary districts averaged fifty-eight years of age and the deputy ministers of defense sixty-two. On the Supreme Military Council, the senior military members were all beyond sixty years old, the point at which they were legally required to be transferred to the reserve. These men were politically reliable, and there is no reason to doubt Penkovskiy's observation that Khrushchev's control of the military was strong.¹⁶⁷ Control of the military is not the same as management of it, and we can therefore understand the charges of "subjectivism" that were directed at Khrushchev after his fall, for continued reliance upon this aging wartime coterie plainly increased the likelihood that his personal involvement in military affairs would produce dysfunctional rather than integrative consequences.

Despite the seriousness of this problem and Khrushchev's emphasis on certain aspects of force modernization, it was not until Brezhnev assumed power that new approaches to military management were undertaken. In addition to a broad-based review of the entire officer corps that lowered its age and significantly increased its content of modern technical skills, the Brezhnev regime has noticeably moved to refurbish the General Staff. According to some, judgments and views of the General Staff are now accorded relatively more weight in military policy formulation.¹⁶⁸ Perhaps as a reflection of this elevation in prestige, the Chief of the General Staff is now ranked ahead of the Commander in Chief of the Warsaw Pact forces and may even

¹⁶⁵See Jerry Hough, Soviet Leadership in Transition (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1980), p. 100; and John Erickson, "Rejuvenating the Soviet High Command," Military Review (July, 1970), pp. 83-84.

¹⁶⁷Penkovskiy, The Penkovskiy Papers, p. 233.

¹⁶⁸See, for example, John Erickson, Soviet Military Power (London: Royal United Services Institute, 1971), pp. 26-27; and David Holloway, "Technology, Management, and the Soviet Military Establishment," Adelphi Papers, No. 76 (April 1971), p. 37.

enjoy a seat on the important Defense Council.¹⁶⁹ Moreover, efforts to apply cybernetics and related scientific management techniques to defense programs and troop control appear to have been made largely the responsibility of the General Staff.¹⁷⁰ Also, insofar as the October 1967 law on military service succeeds in hastening the turnover of upper-level command personnel, then the potential of the General Staff Academy to shape the outlook of the Soviet high command will be somewhat enhanced. Education at the academy, after all, has become a virtual prerequisite for access to leading assignments in the military.¹⁷¹

In essence, revitalization of the General Staff signals the present regime's willingness to place greater reliance on professional General Staff officers rather than a haphazard collection of personal clients to serve as its prefects in the armed forces. Brezhnev appears confident that a cultured professional ethic in the General Staff, together with this organ's long tradition of subordination, will ensure its loyalty to the political elite

¹⁶⁹On the new protocol listing, see James W. Wold, "Rapid Rise to Marshal," Air Force Magazine (August 1977), pp. 5-6. It should be noted, however, that this arrangement began with Ogarkov's appointment as Chief of Staff in January 1977. Thus, it may have more to do with personal connections with Defense Minister Ustinov than with any fundamental shift in the General Staff's influence. Also, the Chief of Staff was occasionally invited to Defense Committee meetings even under Stalin. Whether the present arrangement reflects a shift to something more permanent is not clear.

¹⁷⁰See Alexander, "Decision-Making in Soviet Weapons Procurement," p. 18. To some extent, these responsibilities appear to be shared with the Military-Industrial Commission and the armaments directorate of the Ministry of Defense. There is some hint that the General Staff may not have accepted this work with great enthusiasm. In addition, given traditional resistance to a wider role for the General Staff, such duties probably spearhead opposition from other quarters as well.

¹⁷¹The 1967 law, however, may not be having the desired effect. See, for example, Hough, Soviet Leadership in Transition, p. 102. The average age of leading military officials rose again during the 1970s. But General Staff officers have remained young by comparison.

and simultaneously enhance its competence to assist with integration of the technical and political aspects of military management. Needless to say, Brezhnev is undoubtedly hoping that this move will also contribute to the routinization of political succession, at least with respect to management of military policy and the military establishment.

Another area of change that has had the effect of heightening the Soviet regime's reliance on the General Staff is that of military strategy. Ironically, the strategic arms development programs that were initiated under Khrushchev, and which met with opposition in some sectors of the military because of the resources that they diverted from more traditional concerns, have since matured to effectively deprive the United States of the strategic advantage that it had enjoyed in the early 1960s. While preoccupation with nuclear arms tended to obscure the distinction between military and political spheres and thereby diminished a distinct operations leadership role for the General Staff, the new "correlation of forces" has made conventional conflict far more plausible, especially were it to be geographically contained, swift and decisive.¹⁷² It is as though the clock were turned back to an earlier time when the General Staff's experience in combined-arms conventional warfare was relevant.

In this new environment, the General Staff has repeatedly emphasized the applicability of past lessons to present military problems.¹⁷³ In particular,

¹⁷²It is possible that the Soviet stress on nuclear war fighting in some measure reflects institutional trade-offs designed to provide a mission for the General Staff and other operations-related organs, not unlike American attachment to the "triad" concept.

¹⁷³See, for example, V. Kulikov, "Strategicheskoe rukovodstvo vooruzhennymi silami," p. 24.

the General Staff has returned to its highest accomplishment of the Great Fatherland War, the Manchurian campaign, as a possible model for modern, conventional, combined-arms warfare. This, of course, is a prescription for surprise "lightening war" conducted within distinct geographic confines.¹⁷⁴ According to a study edited by General S.P. Ivanov, the 1945 campaign of Soviet troops in the Far East made a large contribution to the development of Soviet military art, especially with respect to the "... preparation and delivery of the first crushing blow to an enemy at the beginning of a war."¹⁷⁵ In comparison to other operations of the war, the Manchurian campaign is singled out by Ivanov as having achieved the greatest results in the shortest time.¹⁷⁶

What is doubly significant to the modern General Staff, however, is the fact that unlike other operations during the Great Fatherland War, in this one it played the primary role. By the time that the campaign was launched in August 1945, the Stavka representatives had already been abolished. In fact, this form of leadership was specifically rejected for the Manchurian campaign because of conditions posed by the Far Eastern theater. Instead, a special command arrangement under Vasilevskii was set up.¹⁷⁷ Furthermore,

¹⁷⁴The following remarks draw heavily on the work of Lilita I. Dzirkals, "Lightening War in Manchuria: Soviet Military Analysis of the 1945 Far Eastern Campaign," Rand Corporation, P-5589, January 1976.

¹⁷⁵S.P. Ivanov, ed., Nachal'nyi period voyny (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1974), p. 299. Ivanov was Chief of Staff of the Far East High Command during the campaign and later served as Chief of the General Staff Academy.

¹⁷⁶Ibid., p. 283.

¹⁷⁷See Shtemenko, General'nyi shtab v gody voyny, I, p. 357; and Vasilevskii, Delo vsei zhizni, p. 515. As reasons for this special command, Vasilevskii gives the long distance from Moscow, the large number of formations, and the vastness of the territory. In an earlier publication, however, he noted the desire of the political leadership to have an authoritative figure on the scene to negotiate with Japan and the Allies. See Dzirkals, "Lightening War," p. 39. For the General Staff's present purposes, this point is perhaps considered best left unstressed.

Shtemenko reports that the idea to strike a surprise, crippling blow at the Japanese Kwantung Army, which later served as the basis for the entire campaign, was conceived in the General Staff and only gradually acquired acceptance by the Stavka.¹⁷⁸ Subsequently, the General Staff developed several variants of this operation and planned the campaign in great detail. In fact, even the implementation of the Far Eastern campaign was largely the work of commanders with close ties to the General Staff. In addition to the leading role of Vasilevskii, for example, K.A. Meretskov commanded the First Far Eastern Front and M.V. Zakharov was Chief of Staff of the Transbaikal Front. In the General Staff's Operations Directorate, N.A. Lomov, former assistant chief of staff of the Far Eastern Front, served as head of the Far Eastern section, while F.I. Shevchenko was sent from the General Staff to take his place.

The contemporary military balance, therefore, tends to redirect attention to types of armaments in which the General Staff can claim an undisputed professional expertise. Furthermore, it also seems to favor a mode of operations in which a key role is played by the General Staff and to which the General Staff holds the historical patent, the German lessons notwithstanding.

Finally, the new military balance has clearly encouraged the Brezhnev regime to assume a far more offensive design in its foreign policy. Insofar as the United States has been deterred by political reversals at home and abroad together with a relative decline in its capacity to project power, the Soviets have been attracted by increased opportunities and decreased risks in the international system. Combined with problems of political instability in Eastern Europe and the ever-present border tension with China, what is inter-

¹⁷⁸Ibid., p. 340.

preted as a new "correlation of forces" has contributed to a militarization of Soviet foreign policy. More precisely, the Soviets are now openly committed to the utilization of military involvement as a way to defend, consolidate and advance what they regard to be their interests in the international arena. Since the late 1960s, various types of Soviet military presence, ranging from aid and advisors to deterrence and occasional combatants, have been applied in behalf of the security interests of Third World clients in the Middle East, Africa, and Indochina.¹⁷⁹ Most recently, of course, the Soviets have employed military power to consolidate gains in Afghanistan and to preserve them in Poland.

It seems quite unlikely that the militarization of Soviet foreign policy also means the militarization of the Soviet regime's foreign policy decision-making processes, though arguments to the contrary have been made.¹⁸⁰ But it has, however, undoubtedly led the Politburo elite to draw more heavily on the kinds of advice and calculations that the General Staff is best equipped to formulate. In addition, Soviet military aid personnel are reported to be controlled by the General Staff's Military Assistance Directorate.¹⁸¹ The subtle tactics necessary to ensure that military involvement does not have the undesirable consequence of sparking significant anti-Soviet opinions among international onlookers has probably done much to reinforce a role for the special paramilitary and intelligence capabilities of the General Staff's

¹⁷⁹ See Harry Gelman, "The Politburo's Management of its America Problem," Rand Corporation, R-2707-NA, April, 1981, pp. 59-68.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 60. Gelman argues that the 1973 elevation of the Defense Minister to Politburo membership has legitimized a role for the defense establishment in foreign policy-making that it previously did not enjoy.

¹⁸¹ John J. Dziak, "Soviet Intelligence and Security Services in the Eighties: The Paramilitary Dimension," *Orbis*, No. 4 (Winter 1981), pp. 783-784.

Main Intelligence Directorate (GRU). In the event that occasions might call for a more overt form of military action, even in a distant theater, the General Staff's Manchurian model of limited lightning war would unquestionably have application. Inasmuch as there would probably be no time for special command institutions to be established in this type of engagement, operational command and control would probably rest with the General Staff. Even in the case of Soviet military exercises designed specifically or collaterally to intimidate its neighbors, the General Staff plays a direct role through its control linkages with the Warsaw Pact as well as dominance of the Pact's strategic concepts.

CONCLUSIONS

Viewed in developmental perspective, the role of the Soviet General Staff in military management reveals considerable stability. Even the vicissitudes of revolutionary transformation seem not to have appreciably deflected its institutional momentum and in some respects actually reinforced it. Despite unquestionably strong influences and amply borrowings from the German model, the Soviet General Staff has been shaped by distinct features of the Russian civic culture and has therefore acquired its own particular characteristics. While there is a tendency for Western analysts to understand the Soviet General Staff in terms of its Prussian counterpart, the historical record of institutional development casts strong doubts on the validity of such a comparison.

In this regard, the most significant factor is probably the continuity in civic culture and related political institutions that the Soviet case displays. The Prussian General Staff's rise to the status of a "state within a state" took advantage of an emerging constitutional and rational-legal

climate. By contrast, however, the Soviet system remains strongly attached to traditional patterns of personal, absolutist rule; economic development, bureaucratization, and a new constitution notwithstanding. While this in no way precludes the General Staff from rendering very important services to the regime, it has tended to confine its work to a technical, advisory and compartmentalized role in military management. In the past, at any rate, unification of military management has taken place at elite political levels, not in the General Staff. As a corollary, Soviet Chiefs of Staff have not been known for their inclinations to become involved in political issues or even for too forceful a defense of their professional convictions. Recent attention given to Shaposhnikov as a model Chief of Staff seems designed to reinforce these traditions rather than change them. In any case, were contrary tendencies to appear in a Chief of Staff, all evidence points to the likelihood that the General Staff itself would not afford him a bureaucratically cohesive basis of support.

Even with respect to such central issues as strategic and operational leadership, the General Staff is hard pressed to claim for itself a prominent historical role. Recent attempts to embellish its past cannot hide the fact that its peacetime recommendations have often been ignored or altered by the designation of a new Chief of Staff, and related functions such as personnel, military transport, intelligence and mobilization have at critical times been placed outside its direct control. During wartime, the customary creation of ad hoc institutions has deprived it of a leading role, both with respect to the selection of strategic objectives and the over-all coordination of battle-field formations. Judging from the treatment of this issue in the post-Khrushchev memoir literature, it constitutes a major point of contention in the Brezhnev regime, probably in connection with attempts to reform and routinize high-level command and control provisions.

Nevertheless, it would be quite mistaken to understand the Soviet General Staff as a politically suppressed institution whose ambitions constitute a prospective threat to the regime. In particular, such an interpretation might cause us to overlook potential contribution that the General Staff is in a position to make to the modernization of Soviet military management. As noted earlier, Stalin's approach to managing the military establishment was prefectural--based upon patron-client networks formed in political struggle and through the use of terror. In an attenuated fashion, Khrushchev endeavored to emulate his predecessor. If such a system is to dominate change, however, rather than fall victim to it, then it will always be necessary to redefine those entities that comprise the management matrix, especially insofar as new activities arise or are undertaken that must be meshed with the policy landscape. But circumstances such as revolution, terror and war are unreliable grounds for the continued formation of suitable patron-client networks within the military establishment. Moreover, the evolution of an expanded military bureaucracy, advanced technologies, modern strategic complexity and an offensive foreign policy combine to make so primitive an approach to military management uncertain and perhaps dangerous as well.

As a partial solution to this problem, the Brezhnev regime has turned its attention to the General Staff. Ironically, it is precisely the fact that the General Staff has never served as the "brain of the army" in the Prussian sense that makes it suitable for this new assignment. For its long traditions identify it far more with obedient and dedicated service to the political elite than with bureaucratic advocacy on behalf of the armed forces. At the same time, however, it is definitely a military institution whose members display the pride and comradeship of an elite uniformed service. And while its conduct since the revolution has legitimized it to the Party,

the General Staff's record under tsarist rule and during the Revolution itself can be employed as evidence of this enduring commitment to the nation. Together with these qualifications, of course, the modern General Staff unquestionably possesses the professional knowledge and talent necessary to assist with managing the Soviet Union's diverse military capabilities in the interest of the Politburo's policy objectives.

The rise of the General Staff can therefore be seen as a paradoxical attempt to modernize, routinize, and professionalize the patron-client approach to military management that was utilized by Stalin and Khrushchev. It is not something that has resulted from the General Staff's own capacity to inject itself into the mainstream of Soviet military and foreign policy-making. If it is successful in its modern assignments, the General Staff will assist the political elites with maintenance of control over policy direction as they continue their patristic function of promoting domestic and international change. More precisely, it will help to sustain the essence of fluid, personal rule and thereby prevent the military establishment from crystallizing into a mere system of bureaucratic rules and regulations with all the decentralization of power and control that such a development would imply.

The question remains, however, as to the potential for success in Brezhnev's opening to the General Staff. While the measure is definitely prompted by long-term policy requirements and substantive changes in the complexity of the Soviet military establishment, it remains in large respects more personal than "constitutional." Thus, there may be little to prevent Brezhnev's successor from once again relegating the General Staff to the periphery. Although well known arguments have advanced the view that the internecine conflict of political succession favors the military, such circumstances may ironically work to the disadvantage of the General Staff.

Insofar as traditional patterns of military organization do not favor a broad role for the General Staff, the balance of domestic political forces during leadership transition might easily tilt toward those who discretely cloak themselves with orthodoxy in this regard.

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