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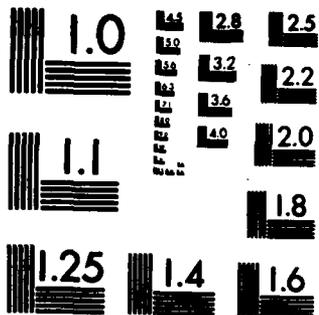
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THE AFFECTS OF A CHANGING SOVIET MILITARY STRATEGY ON THE
KHRUSHCHEV REGIME: 1954-1964

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A Thesis (Plan B Paper) submitted to Utah State University, Logan,
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THE AFFECTS OF A CHANGING SOVIET MILITARY STRATEGY
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1954-1964

by

David L. Ottley

A report submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

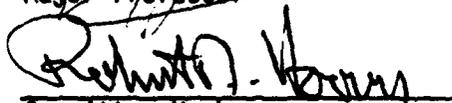
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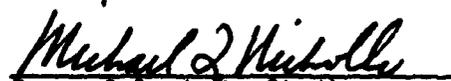
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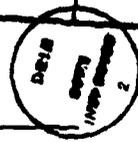
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David L. Ottley

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INTRODUCTION

For almost two decades scholars have researched, written and hypothesized over a unique happening in Soviet history - the fall of Nikita Khrushchev in October 1964. Although many theories have been put forth as to why and how this happened, it is doubtful, because of the secretive society that we are dealing with, if we will ever know for certain the mechanics of this "palace revolution" or the real reasons why it took place.

Some of the reasons put forth by kremlinologists include the political plans of Khrushchev, agricultural and economic failures, foreign policy failures, and others. The purpose, however, of this paper is to search the available literature to determine whether the changes in the Soviet military after the death of Stalin had an important effect on the downfall of Nikita Khrushchev in 1964. Of particular interest will be the interaction of two conflicting interest groups. One group supported a change in emphasis toward missiles and nuclear deterrence while the other espoused the idea of a more traditional large ground army.

I would not be so brazen as to claim that this interest group conflict was the only reason, or even the most important. I would, however, hypothesize that the changes in the military that were put forth by Khrushchev were important by themselves, and also as catalysts for other problems that eventually lead to his ouster.

According to the image of collective leadership put forth by the Soviet government, this interest group conflict should not be a problem because of the harmonious leadership at the top of the Party and governmental bureaucracies. However, there are two diametrically opposed views of the Soviet governing system which thrive today. One is that view put forth by the Soviets themselves, and the other is a view maintained in one form or another by most western students of Soviet politics. The best word to describe the model put forth by the Soviet government both internally and externally is "monolithic." There is no lack of evidence to this belief as it is used in virtually all discussion concerning Soviet politics. Examples are constantly put forth of the "unity," "monolithic purpose," etc., of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union - particularly during times of internal crisis. For example, prominently displayed at the top of the October 16, 1964 issue of Pravda was the following slogan:

The Communist Party of the Soviet Union is firmly and consistently carrying out the Leninist general line worked out at the 20th and 22nd Congresses of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. The Soviet people, closely rallied around their party, are fighting heroically for the accomplishment of the great tasks of communist construction.

Under the banner of Marxism-Leninism, under the leadership of the Communist Party - to new victories of communism.

The Soviet leadership would have us all believe that the ruling echelon of the Communist Party rule in unity and harmony with the good of the people and the progression of the revolution foremost in their unified actions. Interestingly enough, to demonstrate the fallacy of this concept, the same October 16, 1964 edition of Pravda had another important article:

The plenary session of the Central Committee of the C.P.S.U. granted the request of Comrade N.S. Khrushchev that he be released from the duties of First Secretary of the Central Committee of the C.P.S.U., member of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the C.P.S.U. and Chairman of the U.S.S.R. Council of Ministers in view of his advanced age and deterioration in the state of his health. ²

Thus read the political obituary of Nikita Sergeyevich Khrushchev, the man who served as First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union for over a decade. Very little of a positive nature was ever mentioned of him again. In fact, N.S. Khrushchev, leader of the Soviet Union, was now N.S. Khrushchev, unperson.

This event serves as an interesting introduction to a theory (or really theories) of conflict within the Soviet leadership. Among Western observers of Soviet politics there seems to be little argument concerning the idea that Khrushchev did not actually step down because of "advanced age and deterioration in the state of his health." "Everything seems serene, the Party declares itself to be united behind its leadership 'as never before'. And then, suddenly," according to Michel Tatu, "the news breaks that a group of leaders have been in opposition for months or even years, or that the man believed to be a venerated leader has for a long time been execrated by those around him."³

This is precisely what happened. The day after the first official announcement of Khrushchev's ouster, an editorial appeared in Pravda (October 17, 1964) and was reprinted in Izvestia the following day. This editorial, entitled, "Unshakable Leninist General Line of the C.P.S.U.," emphasized the important role of the

Communist Party, the importance of collective leadership, and the many good and wonderful things that were happening - all of which were directed by the party. Most interestingly, the editorial praised the "monolithic unity of the Party" and its actions during the plenary session held October 14, 1964 (at which Khrushchev was ousted). Although Khrushchev was never mentioned by name, this was, at best, a thinly veiled attack on the former leader, adding strong credence to the idea that he did not actually step down for the reasons listed earlier. Among other things, this editorial pointed out that:

The Leninist party is an enemy of subjectivism and drift in communist construction, wild schemes; half-baked conclusions and hasty decisions and actions, divorced from reality; bragging and bluster; attraction to the rule by fiat; unwillingness to take into account what science and practical experience have already worked out - these are alien to the Party. The construction of communism is a living, creative undertaking; it does not tolerate armchair methods, one-man decisions, disregard for the practical experience of the masses....

In carrying out its general line, the Party has opposed and opposes uncompromisingly and consistently the ideology and practice of the cult of personality.⁴

If this wasn't enough, a week or so later, reference was being made to an "official" document shown to many communist leaders (particularly those from outside the U.S.S.R.) who were pressing for an explanation of the ouster. Some sources mentioned a list of 29 "errors," claiming they were a compilation of the charges made against Khrushchev in the now famous October 14 plenary session. In its November 9, 1964 issue, Newsweek mentioned that, "For the benefit of inquiring comrades both at home and abroad, the new men in the Kremlin last week began to leak a lengthy list of specific

political errors and acts of personal misconduct committed over the years by their former boss." These accusations included: (1) Nepotism; (2) undignified conduct; (3) cult of personality; (4) foreign failures; and (5) economic and domestic errors.⁵

Even though the communist governments of Russia have been, to a great extent, authoritarian, most western authors see the Soviet political scene as a continuing struggle. However, there are two opposing views as to the extent of this struggle. One school of thought stresses the element of continuing conflict in Soviet leadership politics at the highest levels, while another school emphasizes the stability of the Soviet leadership process once a person rises to the top and gains recognition as the leader. The important difference between the two approaches is their differing view of the duration and level at which conflict is conducted.

The first school of thought, known as the "conflict" school sees conflict as a "continuous and crucial fact of Soviet Political life." Carl Linden and several other authors (Robert Conquest, Robert Tucker, and Wolfgang Leonhard to name a few),⁶ see the Soviet political scene (particularly in the absence of a terror-imposed discipline in the leadership as was the case under Stalin) as "dynamic and unstable", because of the competing forces involved at the highest levels. Linden describes the conflict as being similar to those among political men everywhere except that, in the Soviet Union, it is generally concealed from public view. He emphasizes, however, that the battles are fought in the party press by "indirection, ambiguous allusions, and subtle manipulation of

ideological and policy formulas." It is only when the conflict reaches culmination that it breaks into the open "in the form of a political shake-up or the purge and denunciation of the losers by the victors."⁷

The second school, which I will call the "two-phase" school, sees conflict at the highest level playing a part only during the initial phase or battle for succession. Once the leader has been designated, dictatorial rule and stability prevails and conflict is relegated to the lower levels. As Thomas H. Rigby, a supporter of this school (along with Richard Lowenthal) explains:

It seems reasonable to assume that there are frequent disagreements in Presidium discussions; that Khrushchev actively participates in these discussions and finds himself from time to time at odds with other members; and even that he occasionally gives way on matters that he regards as major issues. But it seems equally reasonable to assume that he would not tolerate any persistent posture of opposition involving basic questions on the part of any of his Presidium "colleagues," or any sign of recurrent configuration of opposition on the part of two or more of them.⁸

My purpose in this paper is not to argue for or against these schools of thought, for these men have committed numerous years of study and have access to much more information than I. However, if I am to proceed, I must establish the basis on which my study will be presented. Therefore, I must side with the conflict school. I take the position that in the Khrushchev regime there were always those who disagreed with him and many who fought openly (by Soviet standards) with him. As Robert C. Tucker points out, "Even when his career reached its peak, ... Khrushchev remained a challengeable leader. He never became an absolute dictator over the Soviet ruling group."⁹

Another supporter of the conflict theory, Wolfgang Leonhard, provides an interesting discussion of the competing groups within the Soviet society. He prefaces his comments on "the five pillars of Soviet society," by emphasizing that, like many politicians, members of the Soviet Hierarchy have a common interest in maintaining their own power. This common interest does not, however, prevent serious conflict of interest within the ruling class. In essence, these groups want to make sure their interests are taken care of and many times find their individual and group interests in conflict with other individuals and/or groups.

These groups, then, include:

1. The Party machine which is composed of officials of the Soviet state party. The party machine was and is the essential "pillar" of Soviet society. Since Stalin's death, its importance has increased as it directs not only the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, but also the most important mass organizations. These organizations include youth and trade organizations as well as those within the military. Leonhard describes the party's functionaries as "the political shock troops of the regime, the driving force in political campaigns, and in the continuation of revolution from above."

2. The economic machine. This economic "pillar" consists of probably around 2 million people (directors of undertakings, industrial managers, senior engineers, technicians, members of central planning staff, etc.). This group leans particularly strong towards reform as long as public ownership and economic planning are

retained. This group is basically one that desires independence without constant suppression from the secret police or interference from the Party.

3. The state governmental apparatus, which forms part of the central state machinery as well as the Republics and Soviets in the regions and districts, is another important pillar.

4. The state police. This organ has risen above the Party on several occasions (particularly during Stalin's regime) but has more recently been put back under state control.

5. The army. Although a high percentage of army officers (Leonhard gives 86%) are supposedly members of the Party, quarrels constantly occur between the army and the Party. The army and the economic bureaucracy are similar in that both resist constant interference from the Party and state security.¹⁰

It is this last "pillar", the army (or really the armed forces), that this paper addresses. We will see this group as a distinct interest group, in competition with other groups as well as in conflict within itself.

Another point we must be concerned with is methodology - not necessarily mine, but those of the authors used. There was in the 1960s, an ongoing debate concerning how best to study the Soviet Union. This debate centered on the question of whether one must study all phenomenon (economical, political, sociological, etc.) within the Soviet Union or if one may ascertain what is going on by focusing on the highest levels of government. These two schools are labeled "sovietology" and "kremlinology".

Arthur E. Adams defines "sovietology" as, "The study of all matters that help us to understand the meaning of current, politically significant Soviet communist behavior and to forecast its future."¹¹ He goes on to indicate that kremlinology is a part of sovietology but must be considered along with other aspects of Soviet life and culture.

A good definition of "kremlinology" would include: "The methods of analysis which lays great stress on a careful study of the promotion, demotion, and interaction of personalities, and also on the exact wording of pronouncements of certain conventional or formal kinds."¹² Also, "it relies heavily upon the art of breaking the code of Soviet Jargon, but its attention centres primarily upon the power struggle at the top levels of the party and government and upon the rise and fall of the party and state leaders."¹³

My purpose is not to debate the difference between sovietology and kremlinology nor decide the rightness or wrongness of the issue. What I must say is that, for my purposes in this paper, it is not necessarily important how the information was derived but, more importantly, the conclusions. I will use the term "kremlinologist" to refer to those who study the Soviet Union by studying the political interrelations at the highest levels of the Soviet leadership.¹⁴ It must be noted that, as far as I am concerned, the terms are interchangeable.

This work will be divided into four major areas. The first two sections will provide historical background material. First, an

historical overview of the rise and fall of Khrushchev will provide insight into the important events, actions and players that participated in the Khrushchev regime. Most of these events were significant to the relationship between Khrushchev and the military and show some of the problems within the Soviet ruling elite. Beginning with the death of Stalin, the discussion will follow Khrushchev through the "collective leadership," his rise to ultimate power in 1957, and his departure in 1964. Some of the events that have proven to be politically important, as well as pivotal in the development of the strategic military debate, include the "secret speech," the Anti-Party Group, the Cuban missile crisis and others.

Second, in order to understand the deep significance and nature of the military debate, we must take a look at the major shifts in military policy that took place during the Khrushchev era. An emerging nuclear doctrine will be outlined utilizing the expertise of such outstanding authors as Harriet Fast Scott, William F. Scott, Lidell Hart, Michel Gardner and others. They have already sifted through the myriads of Soviet historical documentation to present a fairly straight-forward historical approach which will provide a basis on which to discuss the actions of political and military leaders throughout the Khrushchev regime.

With the important events of the Khrushchev era presented in the first section in mind, one must consider them along with the changes in the military presented in the second section. This, in turn, will develop into a discussion of how these forces interacted to fuel the growing military debate. The third section will look at

how these forces of change and crisis were viewed by the military leadership and how their views differed with each other and the Party line. We will see the development of at least two distinct "interest groups" and how this split developed.

It is always difficult to ascertain differences of opinion between various groups and the leadership within the Soviet Union. When this difference is among the military leadership, and at times, between various military factions and their "commander-in-chief," it becomes even more arduous. However, even within a closed society like the Soviet Union, these differences can be seen. Michel Tatu points out:

It must be realized that, in a system where monolithism is the supreme principle, any dissent can be expressed only in an extremely oblique way. Any changes in the balance of power at the top must be the result of delicate manoeuvres and tacit alliances that can become visible only by equally subtle signs. At the same time, these signs cannot fail to become apparent in some way. The press does not merely relay directives, but also serves as the only peephole offering a glimpse into the closed world of power. Nuances of emphasis and silence itself are also signs for students of the press.¹⁵

Two major schools of thought were particularly important in the debate between Khrushchev and the military. The first school may be labeled the "modernist" school while the other view may be called the "traditionalist" school. The argument focuses on the question of a strategy emphasizing nuclear weapons at the expense of ground forces (as espoused by Khrushchev and the modernists) versus those who espoused a more traditional ground army with less emphasis on nuclear weapons. These two groups are of particular importance and will be emphasized in this third section.

The final section will tie these events together and ascertain the influence these divergent views had on the downfall of Khrushchev and what role the military played in his ouster. By determining the intensity of certain situations and which side the major military spokesmen took, *some conclusions may be drawn*. For example, it is generally felt that the military under Marshal Zhukov, Minister of Defense, played a significant role in the Khrushchev push for power in 1957. However, as will be pointed out, the military support was not the same in 1964 during a similar leadership struggle.

Endnotes

¹"Khrushchev Out, Brezhnev and Kosygin Appointed," The Current Digest of the Soviet Press 16(October 28, 1964): 3. This slogan appeared alongside the logotype of Pravda, October 16, 1964, p. 1.

²Ibid., p. 3. This appeared in Pravda and Izvestia on October 16, 1964, p. 1, as "Communique on Plenary Session of the Central Committee of the C.P.S.U."

³Michel Tatu, Power in the Kremlin: From Khrushchev to Kosygin, trans. Helen Kate) (New York: Viking Press, 1969), p. 15.

⁴"Khrushchev Out", The Current Digest, pp. 3-4. This editorial, entitled, "Unshakable Leninist General Line of the C.P.S.U.," appeared in Pravda on October 17, 1964, and was reprinted in Izvestia the following day.

⁵"Elevator Mates," Newsweek, November 9, 1964, p. 48. The New York Times (Henry Tanner, "29 'Errors' Laid to Khrushchev," October 30, 1964, p. 1, 13) and On Record ("Soviet Union - Khrushchev's Fall," 2(No. 8): 38-40) discuss this list in more detail. There are numerous charges mentioned in these articles, although all 29 are not discussed. The areas covered include: (1) Cuba and the missile crisis; (2) The Chinese-Soviet conflict - particularly the personal rivalry between Khrushchev and Mao Tse-tung; (3) The use of Khrushchev's son-in-law, Alexei Adzhubei on official business; (4) Personal misconduct in Scandinavia (June 16-July 4, 1964); (5) Disruption of Comecon; (6) The split between the Soviet Union and Rumania; (7) Major errors in Soviet economic policy; (8) Errors in Soviet agriculture; (9) Khrushchev's own cult of personality; (10) Unfit personal behavior; (11) Hasty decisions and speeches without consulting his colleagues; (14) Building of five-story apartment buildings instead of skyscrapers; and (15) Arbitrarily dismissing people from both party and government.

⁶A sample of the argument of the "conflict" school is provided in a series of articles and commentaries in Problems of Communism. There are additional articles supporting the "two-phase" school listed in footnote 8. The following authors supported the "conflict" theory: Robert Conquest, "The Struggle Goes On," 9(July-August 1960): 7-11; Carl A. Linden, "Khrushchev and the Party Battle," 12(September-October 1963): 27-35; Robert Conquest, "After Khrushchev: a Conservative Restoration?" 12(September-October 1963): 41-46; Carl A. Linden, "Facts in Search of a Theory," 12(November-December 1963): 56-58; Robert C. Tucker, "The 'Conflict Model,'" 12(November-December 1963): 59-61; Wolfgang Leonhard, "An Anti-Khrushchev Opposition?" 12(November-December 1963): 61-64;

Robert Conquest, "After the Fall: Some Lessons," 14(January-February 1965): 17-22; Carl A. Linden, "No Room for Radicalism," 14(May-June 1965): 37-40.

⁷Carl A. Linden, Khrushchev and the Soviet Leadership: 1957-1964, with a Forward by Robert C. Tucker (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1966), p. 10.

⁸Thomas H. Rigby, "The Extent and Limits of Authority (A Rejoinder to Mr. Linden)," Problems of Communism 12(September-October 1963): 39. This article (pp. 36-41) along with several others published in Problems of Communism represent the basic argument for the "two-phase" theory. Additional articles include: Richard Lowenthal, "The Revolution Withers Away," 14(January-February 1965): 10-17; Richard Lowenthal, "The Nature of Khrushchev's Power," 9(July-August 1960): 1-7; Thomas H. Rigby, "How Strong is the Leader?" 11(September-October 1962): 1-8.

⁹Linden, Khrushchev and the Soviet Leadership, p. 4.

¹⁰Wolfgang Leonhard, The Kremlin Since Stalin, trans. Elizabeth Wiskemann and Marian Jackson (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Inc., 1962), pp. 11-15.

¹¹Arthur E. Adams, "The Hybrid Art of Sovietology," Survey 50(January 1964): 154.

¹²Alec Nove, "The Uses and Abuses of Kremlinology," Survey 50(January 1964): 174.

¹³Adams, "Sovietology," p. 160.

¹⁴It is interesting to note that in an article by Robert Conquest he defends kremlinology by basically saying that, even though it is centered on the highest levels of the Soviet leadership, other aspects such as sociology, economics, etc., are taken into consideration. In the article, he seems to defend a merging of the terms "kremlinologist" and "sovietologist" as eventually meaning the same thing. "In Defense of Kremlinology," Survey 50(January 1964): 163-173.

¹⁵Tatu, Power in the Kremlin, p. 16.

THE RISE AND FALL OF KHRUSHCHEV -
AN HISTORICAL OVERVIEW¹

Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev was born of peasant beginnings in 1894. His life spanned some of the most significant events in Russian history, of which he was a participant in many of them. Edward Crankshaw gives us this insight:

There was nothing in his peasant background to distinguish him from 100 million other peasants, so primitive and backward in their attitudes and standards that they belonged to a different world from ours. Sixty years later, nevertheless, he was to become the autocrat of the Soviet empire...²

The life of Khrushchev is a subject on which numerous books have been written. The purpose of this section is to outline what most authors agree are the more significant events in Khrushchev's career and discuss which events (none of the authors agree on all of the events) may have led to his ouster and relegation to unperson status.³

Carl Linden, in one of a myriad of articles discussing the downfall of Khrushchev, mentions that Khrushchev's zeal for reform and the many risks he took to try and complete them, offended too many vested interests within the regime too often.⁴

Who were the interest he may have offended? To appreciate Khrushchev's problems with the vested interests within the Party, one must examine his rise to power.

To say that Khrushchev had no power before Stalin's death or that his rise to power was somehow meteoric would not be true. His

rise was a study of party politics (even though there was only one party) as he made his way through the party machinery to end up sitting at it's pinnacle.

Stalin's final months had a certain weird quality to them... With international tension high, dark clouds gathered at home. In January 1953, nine doctors were accused of having assassinated a number of Soviet leaders, including Zhdanov. Beria's police were charged with insufficient vigilance. The press whipped up a campaign against traitors. Everything pointed to another great purge.⁵

It is not certain who would have fallen victim had Stalin not died in March 1953, but there is general agreement that some of the top figures would have been purged. Nevertheless, at the death of Stalin, a new, streamlined Soviet government appeared,⁶ with Malenkov at its head. Just exactly what the order of importance was in the leadership was debated extensively. Khrushchev was definitely down the list with probably Malenkov, Molotov, Beria and possibly Bulganin and Kaganovich ahead of him. Malenkov made the initial move as he was named both Premier and First Secretary of the Party.

Malenkov's dual leadership role lasted for little more than a week. On March 14, 1953, Malenkov resigned as First Secretary and was succeeded by Khrushchev.⁷ This appeared to limit the struggle for power to Khrushchev and Malenkov although Malenkov still had Beria, Molotov and other very powerful influences behind him. In July 1953, Beria, another rival, and the former secret police chief, was arrested along with many of his top aides and was subsequently executed.

Then, on February 8, 1955, Malenkov was removed as Prime Minister while retaining his position on the Presidium and continuing to wield significant power. The initial scrimmage lines were drawn as Malenkov was espousing more emphasis on consumer goods at the expense of heavy industry and the military while Khrushchev espoused heavy industry and increased military spending.⁸ Malenkov was still a power and a threat and Khrushchev certainly knew it. So, by 1955, it was obvious that Khrushchev's star was rising. Let's now take a look at several critical events as Khrushchev rose and fell from leadership.

In February 1956, the Twentieth Party Congress of the CPSU was held. Although there were important changes made in the model of Communism, the speech remembered by most was delivered to a secret session of the congress during which Khrushchev castigated and condemned Stalin and the dictator's heavy-handed tactics. The primary purposes of the speech were probably to: (1) expose the tactics of Stalin and emphasize that it was a product of the man and not the party; (2) to assure the people that this type of rule would not happen again; and (3) for Khrushchev to use it for his own political gain. Riasanovsky reflects on the significance of this attack on Stalin:

Khrushchev's explosive speech remains difficult to explain: After all, it was certain to produce an enormous shock among Communists and do great damage to the communist cause - to say the least, the transition from years of endless adulation of Stalin to Khrushchev's revelations was bound to be breathtaking; besides, Khrushchev could not help but implicate himself and his associates, at least indirectly, in Stalin's crimes and errors. The answer to the riddle of the speech lies probably in the exigencies of the struggle for power among Soviet leaders.

Khrushchev's sensational denunciation of Stalin struck apparently at some "old Stalinists," his main competitors.⁹

Crankshaw explains that some of the "mistakes" and excesses attributed to Stalin were also cleverly linked to his political enemies, particularly Malenkov, in order to discredit them.¹⁰

This secret speech set a theme of de-Stalinization which persisted in varying degrees throughout the Khrushchev reign.¹¹ It seemed, at times to be an obsession as Khrushchev would again and again bring up Stalin and try to rid the country of what he felt to be a dark chapter in the history of Russia.¹²

Some insight might be gained by these comments attributed to Khrushchev himself:

Even today you can find people who think that we have Stalin to thank for all this progress. Even after his massive crimes were exposed and his guilt indisputably proved at the Twentieth Party Congress, there are those who still quake before Stalin's dirty underwear, who stand at attention and salute it, never questioning that all the deaths caused by Stalin were historically inevitable and relatively insignificant compared to the greatness of our leader, "the Dear Father of the Soviet People," the Genius and Master... I consider Stalinism a bad quality.

How much of a genius was Stalin really? What sort of a "Dear Father" was he to us? How much blood shed by our country was Stalin personally responsible for? The covers over the answers to these and other questions should be ripped away. Stalin should be shown to the Soviet people naked, so that he can occupy his proper place in history.¹³

The "secret speech," the subsequent de-Stalinization and "liberal" reforms which seemed to promise more personal freedoms may be seen as important contributing factors to many significant events, such as, the unrest in satellite countries Hungary and Poland; internal unrest particularly among the intelligentsia; and the split between China and the Soviet Union.

In 1957, the "old Stalinists," struck back. A faction led by Malenkov, Molotov and Kaganovich convened a session of the Presidium and succeeded in obtaining a supportive vote for the overthrow of Khrushchev. Dmytryshyn summarizes the events of June 1957 in this manner:

"Old Bolsheviks" Malenkov, Molotov, Kaganovich, and Saburov made an attempt to strip Khrushchev of his powers. Taking advantage of Khrushchev's official visit to Finland, they convened a meeting of the Party Presidium and demanded his resignation. Khrushchev fought back their demands and, supposedly with the help of Marshal Zhukov, succeeded in transferring the question of his resignation to the Central Committee where he had many allies and where, after a week of bitter struggle (June 22-29), he won. Malenkov, Molotov, Kaganovich and Saburov were dismissed from their party and government posts.¹⁴

Lazar Pistrak blames the downfall of Molotov, Kaganovich and Malenkov on their fight against economic decentralization to which Khrushchev represented the opposition.¹⁵

In essence, Khrushchev had finally succeeded in ridding himself of his major opposition block and immediately reorganized the party and government hierarchy with emphasis on his supporters. Bulganin had already succeeded Malenkov as Premier in 1955 and remained until, in March 1958 he was also ousted and Khrushchev was installed as Premier.

Khrushchev was now head of the Party and the government and it was during this series of events that he also gained some significant influence over the military. As a result of the support rendered by the military during the June 1957 affair,¹⁶ Marshal Zhukov, then Minister of Defense, was appointed as a full-fledged member of the Party Presidium (the first military man thus

honored). Some authors noted the increasing influence the military was gaining but it seemed to be short-lived as Zhukov was ousted a few months later. Wolfgang Leonhard presents this summary of the ouster:

Only on 3 November, almost a week after Zhukov had been dismissed, did Pravda announce that at the end of October a full session of the Central Committee had dealt with the improvement of the Party's political work in the army. The Central Committee had criticized the unsatisfactory political work of the Party in the army. It was said unequivocally, Pravda stated, that the organizations of the Party had an important part to play in the army... Recently the former Minister of Defence, Zhukov, had pursued a policy aimed at removing Party control over army and navy. Zhukov had encouraged a cult of his personality and had exaggerated his own role during the war. He had shown himself to be a politically unsound person and a bit of an adventurer in his approach both to foreign policy and questions of defence. 17

This particular action will be dealt with in more detail in the next section. It had a significant impact on the development of Soviet military strategy.

Khrushchev's self-proclaimed area of expertise was agriculture. It was through various agricultural positions that he rose to power. Even before Stalin's death he was the agricultural expert within the party. During the Premiership of Malenkov, Khrushchev also played the leading role in agriculture.

With all Khrushchev's reforms and innovations (the virgin lands project; the Machine Tractor Station reforms, etc.) he was never able to overcome an important contradiction in the Soviet agricultural model. The contradiction was (and is) that the "private" sector (the peasants' individually owned plots) always seemed to outproduce the "socialist" sector (the state and

collective farm lands). Most of the measures to increase the socialist output seemed to increase the private with no significant increase on the socialist lands.¹⁸

Nevertheless, Khrushchev established numerous programs and made important promises of catching the United States in agriculture, boasting that the Soviets would be eating as well as the Americans by 1970, and that "communism" would be achieved by 1980. This distinctive Khrushchev approach to agriculture is summed up by Frankland:

Only a man of great daring would have chanced his reputation on solving the Soviet farm problem; but Khrushchev, quite apart from the political advantage he calculated that success would bring, had, since his days in the Ukraine, been captivated by the prospect of agricultural abundance. All the radical measures designed to improve agriculture since Stalin's death, from the virgin lands scheme to the abolition of the Machine Tractor Stations and the massive use of chemicals, were Khrushchev's brain children. He expounded them in hundreds of speeches (his agricultural pronouncements were eventually published in an eight-volume collection) and he traveled thousands of miles round the country checking on their progress.¹⁹

However, this promised "agricultural abundance" never came about and some of his pronouncements and schemes later came back to haunt him.²⁰

On May 1, 1960, an American U-2 spy plane was shot down over Russia and the pilot captured.²¹ This event came at a very inopportune time for Khrushchev and produced some long-lasting ramifications. For example, detente, the plan so carefully nurtured during Khrushchev's visit to the United States, was marked a severe, if not fatal, blow. This and other effects were outlined by Linden:

The dramatic events of the spring of 1960 exposed the fragile props of Khrushchev's Camp David strategy; the downing

of the U-2 over Sverdlovsk on May Day marked its collapse. Whatever the exact circumstances behind the Soviet decision to exploit the U-2 affair, Khrushchev's prestige and political strength within the Soviet party suffered visibly. The episode coincided with the major leadership changes. Most of the coterie Khrushchev had brought into the top leadership in 1957 departed or lost ground.²²

There is not space nor time to discuss the details (see the footnotes for further references) of these events, but, a few important happenings can be attributed (either completely or partially) to the U-2 affair: (1) A re-shuffling of the top leadership causing a net decrease in influence for Khrushchev; (2) the destruction of the Paris Summit Conference that he had worked so hard to bring about; and (3) a questioning of Khrushchev's strategy to cut defense spending and divert the emphasis to consumer goods.

The Twenty-Second Party Congress was another important event. This Congress, like most, was put forth in the advanced party press as the usual image of a united party leadership leading the way to a Marxist Utopia. The main order of business was to be the ratification of the third party program, the first since 1919. Then, from Khrushchev's opening remarks, the tone changed: "With little forewarning, however, the meeting's focus was abruptly shifted from the prospects of a happy Soviet future to a lurid recounting of the horrors of the Stalinist past."²³

Khrushchev and his followers turned loose an attack on Stalin which ended in his remains being removed from the mausoleum on Red Square. Interestingly enough, the congress did not go as far as Khrushchev wanted. This pointed out the growing rift within the leadership.

For example, Khrushchev and others demanded that the Anti-Party Group now be removed completely from the party ranks - this did not happen. Khrushchev also did not receive the support he desired in condemning the Chinese and increasing the emphasis on consumer goods over heavy industry. At the same time, a new "cult of personality" seemed to be building around Khrushchev as speaker after speaker bestowed tributes on him.²⁴

The full significance of this congress cannot be discussed in detail here.²⁵ Suffice it to say that it demonstrated Khrushchev's weakened position after the U-2 affair and set the stage for the "coup de grace" - The Cuban Missile crisis.

Khrushchev later opened another attack on Stalin and a drive to prepare the ground for a major re-structuring of the Communist Party. It produced the Cuban missile crisis.²⁶ Linden points out that:

The masterstroke of Khrushchev's unfolding strategy was the plan to install intermediate-range nuclear missiles in Cuba. Success in this boldest and riskiest of all his foreign ventures would have won for him not only a momentous political victory over the United States but also would have given him a powerful handle for subduing his critics both in Peking and Moscow. Its failure, however, removed the linchpin from the broad political offensive he had been developing toward the end of 1962.²⁷

The plan, however, didn't work, and placed the world on the brink of a nuclear war. Not only was this a significant event in world history, but it had an important effect on the political structure of the Soviet Union both with its dealings with the West and its internal functioning. As Michel Tatu points out: "The hasty withdrawal of the weapons under American pressure...may have

been a prudent act or a shameful capitulation, but it was assuredly a set-back - a spectacular and bitter one - for Soviet diplomacy."²⁸

On October 22, 1962, President Kennedy announced to the world that the Soviet Union was in the process of installing medium-range missiles with nuclear warheads in Cuba and he demanded their immediate withdrawal (some say that the United States knew about the missiles during the first part of October, or even earlier, but the first outward sign was the October 22 announcement). There was much bargaining, threatening, presentation of plans, changing of plans, etc. until, on October 28, the Soviets agreed to withdraw the missiles under threat of war from the United States. Both sides claimed victory although it seemed that Khrushchev's victory was less than complete. Tatu again points out that:

Altogether, these events show that the turmoil in Moscow was at least as great as in President Kennedy's entourage. Probably even greater, since this time a threat hung over the Soviet leaders, the reverse of what had so often happened in the past. Moreover, Kennedy had the last word in any American decision, which Khrushchev did not: clearly the Presidium was not content to resign itself to a consultative role.²⁹

Why would Khrushchev do such a thing? There are many answers to this question, but most rule out this explanation by Khrushchev himself as only a small part of the answer:

The main thing was that the installation of our missiles in Cuba would, I thought, restrain the United States from precipitous military action against Castro's government. In addition to protecting Cuba, our missiles would have equalized what the West likes to call "the balance of power." The Americans had surrounded our country with military bases and threatened us with nuclear weapons, and now they would learn just what it feels like to have enemy missiles pointing at you; we'd be doing nothing more than giving them a little of their own medicine.³⁰

Politically, Khrushchev certainly suffered from this setback, although he was able to recoup some power and was somewhat back in the saddle by mid-1963. However, as Crankshaw points out, "The Cuban affair,... was Khrushchev's last great fling. It was also, for him, the beginning of the end."³¹ It was only a matter of time until the growing dissension within the leadership would find expression that culminated in Khrushchev's ouster almost two years after the beginning of the Cuban Missile Crisis.

Authors and researchers are still trying to determine exactly how the ouster of Khrushchev came about, as well as what the reasons and workings were. However, this information of the inner workings of the Soviet government will probably never be known for sure by the outside. Some things are, however, known. We do know that the ouster was no accident or spontaneous series of events because most of the Khrushchev supporters were out of Moscow on that fateful day in October 1964. Here are some other items that most authors seem to agree on:³² (1) It came as a surprise for Khrushchev as he was relaxing in southern Russia, meeting with visitors and anticipating the return of the Russian Cosmonauts. (2) While Khrushchev was in his dacha in southern Russia, several members of the Presidium were meeting in Moscow and insuring their power base so as not to have a repeat of the 1957 Anti-Party Group affair. (3) Khrushchev did not have the support in the Central Committee to overthrow a negative vote of the Presidium. (4) The military, while not actively supporting the overthrow, did nothing to prevent it.

The real question that keeps coming up is, why his removal? Khrushchev had certainly made some mistakes and had made numerous enemies among the party and governmental elite, but it appeared that he was still in control of the situation. However, one can also look ahead at what he was about to do. Without going into detail, Khrushchev was planning for the near future: (1) An important change in the structure of the Party that would put even more power in his hands and lessen the influence of some of the other members of the Presidium; (2) Khrushchev was going to escalate his attack on the Communist Chinese (in particular Mao) with a proposed conference of all communist countries at which he would propose the expulsion of the Chinese (and also the Albanians with them); (3) Khrushchev was bent on the idea of increasing the quality of life for the Soviet citizens which meant increasing the emphasis on consumer goods (as well as agriculture) at the expense of heavy industry (and therefore the military). None of these sat well with many of his comrades at the highest levels. So, they had to act now!

There were various sporadic actions designed to sabotage his great design. Then, while he was far away on the Black Sea, they met and made their decision. All those who had ever opposed the old master on anything drew together to bring him down. They did not, most of them, oppose the main line of his policy (their subsequent actions proved this), but they were against his suddenness and his precipitance; they were against the hostages he was preparing to give to fortune; they were against the muddle he was making of the economy, the endless "hare-brained" schemes, which led nowhere, which had no systematic direction; above all they were against his final assumption of absolute authority.³³

Although he fought back valiantly, Khrushchev was unable to muster the support that carried him through the 1957 crisis. No

Central Committee was summoned, no military support stepped forward, and in the end, he lost.

Carl Linden provides a fitting tribute in the final analysis of the Khrushchev ouster:

In sum, Khrushchev succeeded in carrying the party through its perilous post-Stalin transition and left it intact as the dominant institution of Soviet society. But his effort to transform it failed. He sought to scourge the party of Stalinist practices yet could not free himself from them. He helped make unlikely a return to primitive Stalinism and shifted the center of gravity in the battle between reform and orthodoxy, but he did not overthrow the forces of orthodoxy and conservatism rooted in the regime. Similarly, in the external sphere his effort to reorient the world Communist movement in favor of his political lines only deepened the rift between orthodoxy and reform within the parties. Finally, he did not succeed in removing the underlying instability of Soviet leadership politics, which infected the political atmosphere during his own incumbency and infects that of his successors. Khrushchev left his successors an ambiguous legacy.³⁴

Endnotes

¹My primary sources for the historical sequence, importance of events, and interpretations of Khrushchev's rise and fall come from: Edward Crankshaw, Khrushchev: A Career (New York: The Viking Press, 1966); Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, A History of Russia, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969); and Basil Dmytryshyn, USSR - A Concise History, 2nd ed. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971). Numerous additional references have been utilized to gain insight into specific events and their impact. These references will be sighted in conjunction with the particular events to provide the reader sources for additional research.

²Crankshaw, Khrushchev: A Career, pp. 4-5. The author goes on to give a very interesting account of the young Khrushchev's progress and accomplishments which eventually propelled him into positions of leadership and responsibility (pp. 1-159). Additional insight is provided in: Mark Frankland, Khrushchev (New York: Stein and Day, 1966), pp. 14-89; Nikita Khrushchev, Khrushchev Remembers, ed. and trans. by Strobe Talbott with an intro., commentary and notes by Edward Crankshaw (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1970), pp. 3-320; and Robert Conquest, Power and Policy in the U.S.S.R. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1961), pp. 79-193.

³It is interesting to note that in the 1973, Third Edition of the Great Soviet Encyclopedia (New York: Macmillan, Inc., 1976), the only reference to Khrushchev (who is listed as a "Soviet State Party figure") is found in volume 12, page 289: "The October 1964 plenum of the Central Committee of the CPSU exposed and condemned subjectivism and voluntarism in solving economic problems. The plenum released N.S. Khrushchev from the posts he held." References to other key figures include: Lenin (over 1,000 references); Khrushchev's heir presumptive and protege, Brezhnev (7); Stalin, whom Khrushchev worked so hard to downgrade and expose (19).

⁴Linden, "No Room for Radicalism," p. 39.

⁵Riasanovsky, A History of Russia, p. 596.

⁶Stalin had greatly increased the membership in the ruling bodies shortly before his death. The new leadership sacked five members of the Secretariat and the thirty-six-man Presidium was brought down to fourteen.

⁷It is not certain why Malenkov did this. Some authors say he was forced to choose between the two jobs and selected the government position as having the most potential for power. This, however, did not prove to be a good choice for Malenkov.

⁸It is generally believed that these two men's thoughts were not that far apart but that Khrushchev was forced to take an

opposition viewpoint as a political expedient. This is very believable when one sees Khrushchev's economic policies after coming to power and notes that when he was falling out of favor, one of the points of contention was his support of consumer goods at the expense of heavy industry. Mark Frankland in his book, Khrushchev, gives a good presentation on this area. He mentions that, "Khrushchev's struggle with Malenkov concealed the remarkably similar analysis made by the two men of the problems facing their country... An artificial difference was created by the logic of political battle which compelled Khrushchev to take a publicly opposing view. But fundamentally, both men agreed that the Soviet Union could not go on as it was. They saw above all that its economy was seriously out of balance. (p. 98).

⁹Riasanovsky, A History of Russia, p. 599.

¹⁰Crankshaw, Khrushchev: A Career, p. 229.

¹¹For additional information on the de-Stalinization process and its effects see: Crankshaw, Khrushchev: A Career, pp. 227-244; Frankland, Khrushchev, pp. 120-128; Dmytryshyn, USSR - A Concise History, pp. 270-275; and J.N. Westwood, Russia: 1917-1964 (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), pp. 169-172; Leonhard, The Kremlin Since Stalin, pp. 63-241; Myron Rush, The Rise of Khrushchev (Washington D.C.: Public Affairs Press, 1958), pp. 40-70; and Conquest, Power and Policy, pp. 263-291.

¹²For a complete text of the "secret speech" and an exhaustive commentary and analysis, see Bertram D. Wolfe, Khrushchev and Stalin's Ghost (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Inc., 1957).

¹³Khrushchev, Khrushchev Remembers, p. 4.

¹⁴Dmytryshyn, USSR - A Concise History, p. 269. For a more detailed analysis of the Anti-Party Group see: Frankland, Khrushchev, pp. 129-140; Alec Nove, Stalinism and After (New York: Crane Russak & Company Inc., 1975), pp. 138-145; and Conquest, Power and Policy, pp. 292-328.

¹⁵Lazar Pistrak, The Grand Tactician: Khrushchev's Rise to Power. New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Inc., 1961, p. 247.

¹⁶Zhukov was said to have provided military aircraft to fly in supporters of Khrushchev for the meeting of the Central Committee that eventually overturned the vote of the Presidium and retained Khrushchev. Zhukov also spoke in the Central Committee in favor of Khrushchev. It has even been rumored that he may have threatened to reveal information the military had uncovered concerning certain members of the Anti-Party Group.

¹⁷Leonhard, The Kremlin Since Stalin, pp. 257-258.

18Westwood, Russia: 1917-1964, p. 188.

19Frankland, Khrushchev, p. 147.

20For a more detailed discussion on Khrushchev and agriculture, see: Frankland, Khrushchev, pp. 146-153, 188-206; Dmytryshyn, USSR - A Concise History, pp. 277-281, 311-322; Linden, Khrushchev and the Soviet Leadership, pp. 58-71; George W. Breslauer, Khrushchev and Brezhnev as Leaders: Building Authority in Soviet Politics (Boston: George Allen & Unwin, 1982), pp. 27-34, 52-55, 63-66, 92-98; and Conquest, Power and Policy, pp. 329-345.

21For an in-depth discussion of the U-2 crisis and its ramifications, see: Linden, Khrushchev and The Soviet Leadership, pp. 90-116; and Tatu, Power in the Kremlin, pp. 41-125.

22Linden, Khrushchev and the Soviet Leadership, p. 91.

23Ibid., p. 118.

24Excerpts from the speeches with commentary may be found in Harry Schwartz, ed., Russia Enters the 1960s (New York: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1962). Also, Tatu, Power in the Kremlin, pp. 178-181.

25Extensive discussion may be found in Tatu, Power in the Kremlin, pp. 127-229; and Linden, Khrushchev and the Soviet Leadership, pp. 117-145.

26The Cuban Missile crisis is discussed in detail in Tatu, Power in the Kremlin, pp. 230-362; and Linden, Khrushchev and the Soviet Leadership, pp. 146-173.

27Linden, Khrushchev and the Soviet Leadership, p. 147.

28Tatu, Power in the Kremlin, p. 229.

29Ibid., p. 272.

30Khrushchev, Khrushchev Remembers, p. 494.

31Crankshaw, Khrushchev: A Career, p. 279.

32Khrushchev's Fall is presented in numerous books and articles. Here are a few of them: Tatu, Power in the Kremlin, pp. 364-427; Linden, Khrushchev and the Soviet Leadership, pp. 202-230; Conquest, "After the Fall: Some Lessons," pp. 17-22; Merle Fainsod, "Khrushchevism in Retrospect," Problems of Communism 14(January-February 1965): 1-10; Petr Kruzhin, "The Techniques of the 'Palace Revolution,'" Institute for the Study of the USSR: Bulletin 11(December 1964): 3-14; Leopold Labedz, "The End of an Epoch,"

Survey 53(January 1965): 3-28; Linden, "No Room for Radicalism," pp. 37-40; Lowenthal, "The Revolution Withers Away," pp. 10-17; Howard R. Swearer, "Cults, Coups and Collective Leadership," Current History 49(October 1965): 193-244; P.B. Reddaway, "The Fall of Khrushchev: A Tentative Analysis," Survey 56(July 1965): 11-30.

³³Crankshaw, Khrushchev: A Career, p. 286.

³⁴Linden, Khrushchev and the Soviet Leadership, p. 221.

THE GROWING MILITARY DEBATE

Military thought in the Soviet Union plays a significantly different role than in the Western world. Military thought in the Soviet Union is a major field of study with advanced degrees being offered to military officers in military and naval science.¹ The importance of military thought and the relationships and meanings of the various levels requires at least an understanding of how the Soviets view the terms and how they will be used in this paper.

How do the Soviet define military strategy? What is its relationship to other areas of Soviet military thought? Harriet Fast Scott and William F. Scott have discussed these interactions in considerable detail.² They emphasize that:

In the United States and other NATO nations, such expressions as doctrine, strategy, tactics, military science, military art (or the art of war) may have very general meanings. In the Soviet Union these expressions have precise definitions. If the meanings of these terms are not understood, the reader of Soviet military writings may arrive at entirely erroneous conclusions.³

Put in simple terms, military doctrine is the highest level of analysis as put forth by the Party as the official line. The Soviet Officer's Handbook explains that:

Present-day military doctrine is the political policy of the Party and the Soviet government in the military field. This is an expression of state military policy, a directive of political-military strategy representing a true union of politics and science in the interests of the defense of the country and the whole socialist community against imperialist aggression.⁴

Below military doctrine is military science. It is a broad study of military affairs which include: "The theory of military science; the theory of military art (strategy, operational art, and tactics); force posture (organization, materiel, personnel, and mobilization); military training and education; Party-political work; military economics (military support, fiscal support, and technological support); military history (history of wars and history of military art); and military-technical sciences."⁵

Military art is the most important component of military science.

The theory of military art, as the most important element of Soviet military science, studies and elaborates actual methods and forms of armed combat. It represents a complex of direct military disciplines, which, like all the remaining branches of military science, is constantly changing and being creatively enriched.

The theory of military art consists of strategy, operational art, and tactics, each of which represents a whole field of scientific knowledge. Strategy, operational art, and tactics are interrelated, interdependent and supplement each other. Among these, strategy plays the predominant role.

The military art of the Services of the Armed Forces, based on a single military strategy, common to all the armed forces, incorporates the operational art and tactics of these Services of the Armed Forces.⁶

Military strategy is the major element of military art and is defined as "the part of military art that studies the foundations of the preparation and conduct of war and its campaigns as a whole. In practice, it is policy's direct weapon. With respect to strategy, policy plays the leading and directing role.... Strategy is general and common for all the services of the armed forces."⁷

Raymond Garthoff further explains that Soviet military strategy "has a series of tasks, which may be summed up in four parts":

(1) Evaluating the probable forms, means, and methods of future war to determine the strategic concept which will guide the employment of the armed forces in possible future wars so as

to achieve victory and the objectives set for the given war most effectively; (2) elaboration of the doctrine, structure, organization, size and allocation of the armed forces to implement the requirements of the strategic concept for achievement of victory; (3) preparation of alternate war plans to meet various contingencies for possible future defensive or offensive wars against prospective enemies; and (4) the deployment of military forces and reserves in relation to the geostrategic priorities determined by the location of key objectives for neutralization by seizure or destruction, including the prospective enemy's armed forces and other strategic objectives specified in the war plans.⁸

Soviet military strategy is basically the carrying out of Soviet military doctrine. So, why make the distinction? Military doctrine emanates from the highest authority (the Party) and therefore is not subject to open discussion (although we will see in later sections how certain aspects of Khrushchev's military doctrine did receive criticism in the Soviet press). On the other hand, military strategy is subject to some open discussion by competent authorities (although to a limited extent and within certain bounds, depending on the situation). Therefore, I will look at Soviet military strategy as being interchangeable with Soviet military doctrine in most cases as the expression of that doctrine.

The debate over Soviet military strategy may be summed up quite briefly and due to one major factor - technology. According to Marxist-Leninist dialectical terminology, the end of World War II through about the mid-1950s, brought a qualitative jump in military affairs with the introduction of nuclear weapons, missiles, and the necessary guidance systems.⁹ It was this major technological breakthrough that ushered in the "military revolution" that was in full force during the Khrushchev regime.

For the purpose of this presentation, development of Soviet military strategy can be divided into three distinct phases. These phases I will call (although somewhat unoriginal): (1) the pre-Stalin phase, (2) the Stalin phase, and (3) the post-Stalin phase. Each one may be further divided into several smaller developmental periods but it is not within the purpose nor scope of this paper to discuss the strategy in detail. The inquiring mind may find additional information in the references provided in the footnotes.

It is important, however, that one have a basic understanding of these three phases in order to view the changes that have come about, and be able to comprehend the significance of the increased discussion which emerged in the post-Stalin phase.

The 1917 revolution virtually destroyed the Russian Army. As Leonard Schapiro points out:

The destruction of the old Army was the avowed aim of the Bolsheviks.... Lenin could never have hoped to win the Army over to his side, as an ally; what he could do, and did, was to convert it into a neutral force by destroying its will to fight. With this object in mind, the Bolsheviks, as their influence in the Army grew, encouraged the setting up of political committees and the demand for election of officers and for "democratization" - in fact for all those disruptive practices which they would themselves put down when the time came to form a new Red Army.¹⁰

And form a new Red Army they did. This new Red Army received a "baptism of fire" in the Russian Civil War, the Polish War in 1920, and finally in World War II. J.M. Mackintosh describes the Red Army of the mid-1920s as, "A vast, straggling, loosely organized force, resembling an overgrown partisan army, with few common factors

binding it together in the way that discipline and tradition bound the professional armies of the Continent."¹¹

Interestingly enough, it was during this chaotic period that much of the current military strategy was developed.

Soviet officers found that many current military concepts, such as deep operation, echeloned formation in the attack, the primacy of the meeting engagement, were formed during the first two decades of Soviet rule. According to Marshal Zakharov, the writings of these early military theorists, "contain the most precisely formulated fundamental positions on Soviet military-theoretical thought." They form the basis on which Soviet military doctrine, strategy, operational art and tactics of the 1970s and early 1980s were developed.¹²

If today's strategy is based to a great extent on the writings of the 1920s and 1930s, why must we discuss changes during the 40s, 50s and 60s? The answer to that question lies basically in the hands of one man - Stalin. It was in the late 1930s that Stalin unleashed the "great purge." The army suffered a massive loss during the purges as most of the top military leaders were lost and most of the earlier writings destroyed or suppressed. The army, its leadership, its strategy and its every action, was subject to Stalin. Garder tells us that:

...by the autumn of 1938, the army was, from the military point of view, nothing but a shadow of what it had been in early 1937, henceforth it was completely integrated into the system and was to remain so even after Stalin's death. The dictator no longer need fear an inclination towards independence among his terrorized generals, even though he did not have their complete devotion.¹³

As a result of this massive repression, the Soviet Army suffered heavy losses during World War II which caught them (mostly because of Stalin and his directives) unprepared. As a result of his experiences and recommendations of his new corps of officers, Stalin

developed a theory of what was important to win a war. These basic rules were originally compiled and issued on February 23, 1942, and they remained unquestionably (as most of Stalin's edicts were), the basic expression of Soviet military doctrine until around the mid-1950s. These "permanently-operating factors which decide the course and outcome (or fate) of wars," were: (1) the stability of the rear, (2) the morale of the army, (3) the quantity and quality of divisions, (4) the armament of the army, and (5) the organizing ability of the command personnel. Garthoff explains that:

The permanently-operating factors were contrasted with transitory or temporary factors, which it was admitted might be significant at some stage of a war (especially at the beginning), and which might even affect importantly the outcome of the war, but which were not considered to be decisive in determining the ultimate outcome of the war. The most important of the transitory factors was surprise.¹⁴

These permanently-operating factors remained the central point of all discussion concerning military strategy. Stalin continued to profess the inevitability of war with the capitalist nations and these factors came in very handy to explain how Russia was able to overcome Germany and would win any war with non-communist countries because of their (the imperialist) inferiority in the permanently-operating factors. However, one major problem arose at the end of World War II, and that was the advent of nuclear weapons. Numerous questions arose that, because of the obligation to present Stalin's formula and not dwell on the transitory factors as having any decisive bearing on the outcome of the war, were not answered. Dinerstein points out that:

Stalin, though old and intolerant of new ideas, was not a lunatic. He did not commit the cardinal error of neglecting the

development of nuclear weapons. Nevertheless, he failed to understand their true importance, clung to dogmatic, old-fashioned theories, and prevented the emergence of a military doctrine suited to the nuclear age. Stalin's personal conception of the nature of warfare governed Soviet military planning and was presented in the Soviet military press without debate, variation, or development.¹⁵

Stalin, then, had a stagnating effect on Soviet military strategy during a period of tremendous technological advancement throughout the world. This did not stop the Soviets from taking advantage of these advances as they worked hard and put high priorities on moving into the nuclear age. They were not, however, able to effectively integrate these advancements into their strategy. By controlling the military so tightly, Stalin was laying the groundwork for what would prove to be a problem for his successors. Kolkowicz points out that:

In Stalin's lifetime, the military remained a thoroughly controlled elite, with a semblance of professional autonomy, which, in response to pressures, was allowed to play a limited role in Party politics. However, by keeping the military a closed institution, a condition that favors the development of elitist propensities and practices, Stalin was laying the groundwork for its future emergence as a cohesive institutional organism that would claim a more prominent role in Soviet life.¹⁶

And "claim a more prominent role," it did. Even before the death of Stalin, there was movement towards increased influence of military leaders. Several works detail these activities.¹⁷ Of particular significance is the movement of Marshal Zhukov, war hero of the Soviet Union. He was removed from prominence in 1946, only to re-enter in 1952 as a possible move to placate the military on the eve of the "doctor's plot" and a probable purge of military and civilian leaders (with apparent emphasis on civilians). This purge, however, was cut short by the death of Stalin in March, 1953.

The death of Stalin unleashed a series of events in the political realm that ended up with Nikita Khrushchev at the head of the Soviet government and Communist Party as outlined in the previous section. The movement in the military sector was no less frantic. Almost immediately after Stalin's death, military leaders began questioning Stalin's military strategy, particularly the permanently-operating factors and their significance in a nuclear environment, as well as a more realistic presentation of the role of various military leaders during the war (Stalin was given virtually all the credit for anything good that happened during World War II).¹⁸

Gradually at first, military men began to speak out publicly, as representatives of a professional group, criticizing the dead dictator's military thought as sterile, calling for a correct historical appraisal of the military's role in World War II, and demanding greater freedom to practice their profession without interference from ignominious controls.¹⁹

Articles began to appear in military journals with specific criticism and recommendations, but the discussion was still somewhat subdued and kept within certain unspecified limits. For example, in September 1953, Military Thought published an article by its editor, General Major N.A. Talenskiy, entitled, "On the Question of the Laws of Military Science." His discussion was down to earth and emphasized that the battle is what counted. Although his approach was quite moderate, he emphasized some very important ideas: (1) That the military planner had to break away from his "slavish-adherence" to the permanently operating factors put forth by Stalin. (2) The military planners had to resist dogged adherence to the

political conclusion that the Soviet Union would always win in a war and restrict his thinking to military matters. (3) He had to insist on the same principles of war operating for both sides.²⁰

Numerous other articles were published in this same journal. In June 1954, however, Talenskiy was removed and reassigned to a minor assignment.

In February 1955, Marshal Zhukov replaced Marshal Bulganin as Minister of Defense and the military influence grew even stronger. Zhukov began exerting himself. The Scotts mention that, "It has been reported that on the eve of his taking command he gave a secret address to his leading officers, in which he strongly criticized Stalin's permanent operating factors and stressed the need for a new look at military affairs.... Within the year, Stalin's military views appear to have been rejected by the majority of Soviet military theoreticians."²¹

Zhukov and the military also became more involved in the political scene as they fell behind Khrushchev in his political battle with Malenkov and his supporters. There are several reasons for the support of the military for the Khrushchev group. First, Malenkov advocated an increase in consumer goods production which would decrease heavy industry (and therefore the military). Second, he proposed a decrease in the military budget. Third, he exaggerated claims of military capabilities, and in turn, used these claims to support the reduced military spending.²²

After the ouster of Malenkov, Zhukov and other members of the military were rewarded with promotions and important positions. As

Minister of Defense, Zhukov began to challenge the Party in certain areas. As Deane points out:

Under Zhukov's example, professional military leaders began to debate with the Party on three major issues: (1) the Stalinist trend of crediting the Party and Stalin for the military victory in World War II, (2) the stagnation that Stalin had imposed on military thought, and (3) the authority of political officers over the commander.²³

Zhukov's moves against the party, particularly in the area of party control within the military, caused a good deal of concern. However, he proved his support in the 20th Party Congress as he supported Khrushchev in his de-Stalinization actions and again in 1957, during the Anti-Party Group affair. It was after this affair, that was discussed in the previous section, that Zhukov was made a member of the Presidium, the first military person to thus be honored. However, a few months later (October 1957) he was quickly removed. Wolfgang Leonhard summarizes the official reasons for Zhukov's removal:

Only on 3 November, almost a week after Zhukov had been dismissed, did Pravda announce that at the end of October a full session of the Central Committee had dealt with the improvement of the Party's political work in the army. The Central Committee had criticized the unsatisfactory political work of the Party in the army. It must be said unequivocally, Pravda stated, that the organizations of the Party had an important part to play in the army. The directives of the Party and its Central Committee must form the foundation of the policy of the military authorities and of all other offices. Recently the former Minister of Defence, Zhukov, had pursued a policy aimed at removing Party control over army and navy. Zhukov had encouraged a cult of personality and had exaggerated his own role during the war. He had shown himself to be a politically unsound person and a bit of an adventurer in his approach both to foreign policy and questions of defence.²⁴

Why was Zhukov politically done away with? A wide variety of reasons have been postulated: (1) Khrushchev did not want to be

obligated to Zhukov for his previous support; (2) Zhukov was not very bright and lacked tact; (3) Zhukov was over-zealous in his attacks on his former commander-in-chief (Stalin); and (4) Zhukov was promoting his own "cult of personality" (which was a dubious accusation at best).

If these were not the real reasons (although each one probably played a part in the final decision), why was Zhukov out? Herein lies a very important part of the conflict that led to the downfall of Nikita Khrushchev in October 1964. It was the meat of a military debate that had been progressing openly since Stalin's death. The downfall of Marshal Zhukov reflected an underlying problem that ran from the beginning of the Khrushchev reign to the end, and, to some extent, even today. Konrad Kellen summarizes the problem quite well:

Khrushchev was aware that a sputnik was about to be launched, that the world had entered the age of the ICBM, and that armies were not hardly more than instruments of internal suppression or colorful toys for display on holidays. But Zhukov probably pressed mightily in the councils for millions of men and hundreds of thousands of aircraft, for bigger tanks and heavier cannons. Even if Khrushchev had no mind to heed such obsolete thinking, it probably bothered him. He wanted heavy industry, but not for the reasons Zhukov wanted it. The two men were out of tune, and Zhukov, the big hero with his medals, prestige, clumsy honesty, and obsolete ideas, was a burden to be jettisoned.²⁵

The Zhukov affair brought to the surface a discussion (one might classify it as more of an argument) that had permeated the military for some time. We will look at this discussion in the next section as we narrow in on the real nature of the conflict.

Endnotes

¹Raymond L. Garthoff wrote two books which provide an extremely detailed look at the development of Soviet military thought. Soviet Military Doctrine (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1953) provides insight into the early development of Soviet military thought through World War II and most of the Stalin era. Soviet Military Policy (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Inc., 1966) discusses the revolutionary changes in Soviet military thought after the death of Stalin and under Khrushchev.

²See Harriet Fast Scott and William F. Scott, The Armed Forces of the USSR (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1979), pp. 69-72, and Scott and Scott ed., The Soviet Art of War: Doctrine, Strategy and Tactics (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1982), pp. 1-13.

³Scott and Scott, The Armed Forces of the USSR, p. 69.

⁴Scott and Scott, The Soviet Art of War, p. 5. (S.N. Kozlov, ed., Spravochnik Ofitsera [Officers Handbook], p. 75).

⁵Scott and Scott, The Armed Forces of the USSR, p. 69. (Kozlov, Spravochnik, p. 57).

⁶Scott and Scott, The Soviet Art of War, p. 7. (Kozlov, Spravochnik, p. 68).

⁷Scott and Scott, The Armed Forces of the USSR, p. 70. (Kozlov, Spravochnik, p. 68).

⁸Raymond L. Garthoff, Soviet Strategy in the Nuclear Age (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Inc., 1958), pp. 9-10.

⁹A qualitative jump represents several quantitative jumps. For example, the introduction of gunpowder brought a whole new era to warfare, and thus, a qualitative jump. Further development of gunpowder and weapons systems brought further quantitative jumps until the advent of the nuclear weapon and delivery system which brought a veritable "military revolution". A better appreciation of the development of the Soviet military strategy, and the impact of the "military revolution" can be gained by reading: Scott and Scott, The Armed Forces of the USSR, pp. 1-62; Raymond L. Garthoff, The Soviet Image of Future War (Washington, D.C.: Public Affairs Press, 1959); Garthoff, Soviet Strategy; Michel Garder, A History of the Soviet Army (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Inc., 1966).

¹⁰Leonard Schapiro, "The Birth of the Red Army," in The Red Army, ed. B.H. Liddell Hart (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1956), p. 25.

¹¹J.M. Mackintosh, "The Red Army, 1920-1936," in The Red Army, ed. B.H. Liddell Hart (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1956), p. 52.

¹²Scott and Scott, The Soviet Art of War, p. 18.

¹³Garder, A History of the Soviet Army, pp. 96-97.

¹⁴Garthoff, Soviet Image, pp. 24-25. Garthoff and others give a detailed discussion concerning these "permanently-operating factors." For more information see: Garthoff, Soviet Image, pp. 23-59; Herbert S. Dinerstein, War and the Soviet Union (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Inc., 1959), pp. 1-27; and Garder, A History of the Soviet Army, pp. 108-137.

¹⁵Dinerstein, War and the Soviet Union, p. 6.

¹⁶Roman Kolkowicz, The Soviet Military and the Communist Party (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1967), p. 77.

¹⁷See Kolkowicz, The Soviet Military, pp. 73-79; Michael J. Deane, Political Control of the Soviet Armed Forces (New York: Crane, Russak & Company, Inc., 1977), pp. 51-68; and Conquest, Power in the Kremlin, pp. 163-191.

¹⁸For a detailed discussion of the progress and participants in this discussion, see: Garthoff, War and the Soviet Union, pp. 1-63; Garthoff, Soviet Strategy, pp. 18-39; "Russia's New Strategy for War," U.S. News and World Report, June 10, 1955, pp. 45-48+; "The Soviet General Staff Takes Stock - Changes in Military Doctrine," World Today 11(November 1955): 492-502; Herbert S. Dinerstein, "The Revolution in Soviet Strategic Thinking," Foreign Affairs 36(June 1958): 241-252; "Changing Military Thought in the Soviet Union," World Today 13(December 1957): 517-528; and Allan S. Nanes, "The Russian Military," Current History 34(January 1958): 7-13.

¹⁹Kolkowicz, The Soviet Military, p. 79.

²⁰Dinerstein, "The Revolution in Soviet Strategic Thinking," pp. 243-244.

²¹Scott and Scott, The Armed Forces of the USSR, p. 40.

²²Details of the rise and fall of Zhukov are covered in Garthoff, Soviet Strategy, pp. 21-32; Deane, Political Control, pp. 58-68; Kolkowicz, The Soviet Military, pp. 113-134; Timothy J. Colton, Commissars, Commanders, and Civilian Authority: The Structure of Soviet Military Politics (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), pp. 175-195; and Raymond L. Garthoff, "The Military in Soviet Politics," Problems of Communism 6(November-December 1957): 45-48.

²³Deane, Political Control, p. 58.

²⁴Leonhard, The Kremlin Since Stalin, pp. 257-258.

²⁵Konrad Kellen, Khrushchev (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Inc., 1961), p. 213.

THE NATURE OF THE CONFLICT

This section will focus on the conflict that was developing not only within the Soviet military, but between the military and political structure, over military strategy. One should not draw the conclusion from this discussion that the primacy of the Communist Party was threatened nor that the military at any time seriously entertained a takeover of the government. The Party remained in control as it has in the past and does in the present.

What was shocking to some students of the Soviet Union was the unmasking of the monolithic facade as the military debate became quite apparent almost immediately after the death of Stalin. Stalin, who held a tight (almost strangulating) hold on all aspects of Soviet power (both external and internal) prescribed the military strategy as was discussed previously.

The discussion began cautiously, although almost immediately, as the army tried to rid itself of the shackles of control placed on it by Stalin. As the political succession struggle between Khrushchev and Malenkov developed, the military influence began to grow. Through the numerous crises of the years following the death of Stalin (i.e., the liquidation of Beria and his supporters, the removal of Malenkov, the de-Stalinization drive at the 20th Party Congress, and finally, the removal of the Anti-Party Group in 1957) the organized efforts of the army increased its influence. Nikolai Galay points out that, after the death of Stalin:

...Military units in Moscow and throughout the country were the main factor in preserving order. Despite the enhanced importance of the army at a time of danger for the authorities, it was unable to emancipate itself from the Party and become an independent political force.

...With each crisis the importance of the armed forces automatically increased, as that of the two other sources of power, the Party apparatus and the political police, diminished.¹

It was really after the installment of Marshal Zhukov in 1955 as the Minister of Defense, that the discussion really took wing. Zhukov seemed to see in his assignment the mandate to develop a new professionalism within the military and reduce the Party control soundly established by Stalin. This challenging of Party control was certainly a factor in his ouster in 1957. However, as was mentioned at the end of the previous section, Zhukov's ouster presented another important development - that of an increasing split in Soviet military and Soviet Party-military thinking. As Thomas W. Wolfe points out:

As for the military debate itself, the mainstream has been fairly well-defined since the late 1950's, when the consolidation of Khrushchev's political primacy coincided with the prospect that the Soviet Union might soon count on having advanced weapons in some numbers. From that time, the debate has centered essentially on the efforts of the political leadership, including particularly Khrushchev himself, to reorient Soviet military doctrine and forces in a direction considered more suitable for the needs of the nuclear-missile age. These efforts have met with varying degrees of resistance and dissent from some quarters of the military, perhaps with tacit backing among other elements of the party-state bureaucracy whose interests were engaged in one way or another.²

The two competing forces have been labeled under numerous names but I choose to utilize the idea of the "modernist" (also known as "radical" or "liberal") versus the "traditionalist" (which has been presented as the "conservative" view). With the two competing

forces at each end of the spectrum, one must also take into consideration the middle view which at times swayed from one side to the other, not committing to either side, but trying to find some middle ground on which to compromise. This "centrist" position, espoused quite well by Marshals Malinovsky (the Minister of Defense who replaced Zhukov) and Sokolovsky, are of particular interest.

The modernist line was one espoused by Khrushchev. His proposals were that the missile was where the emphasis in military spending and development should be placed. He believed that less money could be spent and the same, or higher, firepower maintained with a smaller expenditure of funds through the use of nuclear weapons. This would also allow a decrease in the size of the military and increased spending on consumer goods as opposed to heavy industry.

The traditionalists, on the other hand, desired a more traditional approach to defense. While not denying the influence of new technology on weaponry and military doctrine, they held that those lessons, painfully learned from past experiences should not be lightly forgotten nor set aside simply for the sake of something new. They wanted to continue with large conventional forces while increasing their nuclear capabilities.³

The main line of the modernist view (and one of the major landmarks of the debate) was put forth in a 1960 report to the U.S.S.R. Supreme Soviet by Khrushchev himself. In his speech he praised the great strides taken to enhance the economic growth of the Soviet Union and the entire "socialist camp," and emphasized

that a troop reduction (of 1,200,000 men) would not endanger the capabilities of the Soviet Union.⁴ He went on to state that some of the previous military methods and equipment had been made obsolete by nuclear weapons and missiles,⁵ and that these new and improved weapons would make mass armies obsolete. Therefore, he argued, the troop reduction could be carried out without endangering the defense of the country.⁶ Finally, he summarized his proposed actions by saying:

The proposed reduction will in no way reduce the firepower of our armed forces, and this is the main thing, after all. In essence, the reason why states maintain armies is precisely to have firepower that can withstand a possible enemy and either restrain him from attacking or repulse him if he tries to attack.

The Soviet Army today possesses such combat means and such firepower as no army has ever had before. I stress once again that we already have enough nuclear weapons - atomic and hydrogen - and enough rockets to deliver them to the territory of a possible aggressor, and that if some madman should cause an attack on our state or on other socialist states, we could literally wipe the country or the countries that attack us off the face of the earth.⁷

It was apparent almost immediately that there would be some opposition. Marshal Malinovsky, Minister of Defense, followed Khrushchev's speech and praised the troop reduction, reemphasizing many of the points made by Khrushchev. However, because of his military background, his experiences, and the fact that he represented the military, Malinovsky took a "centrist" position. He showed veiled opposition to Khrushchev's massive proposals to cut back conventional forms of military to emphasize missiles and nuclear weapons. In his speech he emphasized that, while the rocket troops were certainly the "main" type of armed forces, it is not possible to win a war without all types of troops. He assured the

military that, "we are retaining at a definite strength and in relevant sound proportions," other types of armed forces.⁸

Michael Deane further explains that:

In this way, Malinovsky contradicted Khrushchev on what would become one of the most sensitive issues in Soviet military affairs over the next few years, namely, the size of the armed forces. The two sides reflected two opposing approaches to the task of national defense. Emphasizing reliance on missiles along with troop reduction, the Khrushchev position at the same time maintained greater confidence in the possibilities for peace and in finding shortcuts to national security. Emphasizing a more balanced or unified approach, the Malinovsky stance, on the contrary, expressed greater fear for the possibilities of war and the belief that all means of warfare should be retained.⁹

Nikolai Galay concluded that; "the latest unilateral reduction of the Soviet armed forces is primarily conceived as a political maneuver to facilitate the achievement of several aims. The chief aim is to disarm the West psychologically and to oblige it to disarm militarily without first establishing an effective means of control."¹⁰

This troop reduction was never fully implemented for various reasons, one of which was that Khrushchev never received full support from the military. One of the major problems seemed to be an increasing morale problem among those officers who were being released and were unable to find suitable employment which would allow them to continue the quality of life that they were used to in the military. There was also a problem with a heightened state of tension on the international scene due to the U-2 incident and the break-down of the Paris Summit Conference mentioned in an earlier section. There appeared to be a need for a compromise of some sort and Marshal Malinovsky again provided the centrist road.

Along with the 1960 Khrushchev speech, Malinovsky's report to the 22nd Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in October 1961 is another major landmark in the debate. The report represented a "new Soviet military doctrine" which followed Khrushchev in areas such as the character of war, the significance of the strategic missile forces and others. However, Wolfe points out that it differed in some very important areas:

1. Malinovsky emphasized the need for "mass, multimillion-man armies" to win future wars, while Khrushchev omitted this point.
2. Malinovsky, although not specifying so, implied that the Soviet Union must prepare for both long and short wars, while Khrushchev envisioned a short war following an initial nuclear exchange.
3. Malinovsky reflected the military's concern that the type of military force envisioned by Khrushchev "might prove inadequate for fighting a war successfully if deterrence should break down."¹¹

So the discussion continued. Khrushchev insisted that the Soviets had more and better nuclear missiles and that this would deter any aggressor from attacking the Soviet Union. However, in October 1962, a blow struck which showed some real weaknesses in the Khrushchev strategy. In his effort to change the strategic balance, Khrushchev (obviously with some support from the rest of the leadership, although, to what degree we may never know) secretly placed nuclear missiles off the coast of the United States in Cuba. The results of this experiment have been discussed in a previous section. If we assume that the espoused reason for the venture was true (to protect Cuba from invasion by the U.S. and her allies),¹² then it was a success. However, as was previously pointed out, the adventure had a disastrous political effect for Khrushchev and marked the beginning of the end for him.

Militarily, the Cuban missile crisis showed that reliance on nuclear weapons as the major strategic emphasis could lead to serious problems in that the only real options would be either one side backing down (deterrence) or, failing that, nuclear war. It also exposed a real defect in the Soviet argument of nuclear supremacy and shot some large holes in the "missile gap".

Skepticism about the reliance on nuclear missiles was not a new point, but the Cuban missile crisis did add weight to Malinovsky's argument and to a new treatise that appeared on the scene just shortly before the crisis developed. In a book review by Abshire and Crane, the Cuban missile crisis was used to point out the growing change of emphasis in Soviet military strategy and how it could (and they say was) applied according to the thesis put forth by a new book, Military Strategy:

Cuba is an interesting illustration of the interplay between the "radical" and the "traditional" approaches. To the radical - who prefers the decisiveness of strategic weapons and the possibility of controlling and defeating the United States without relying on ground forces - the paramount objective of the Cuban operation was to establish a nuclear missile base, and affect the overall nuclear balance. To the traditionalist - who sees the probable need to occupy hostile territory to achieve and consolidate victory - the practical objective of the Cuban operation logically might be the complete control and consolidation of an advanced ground base in the Western Hemisphere...

The Cuban experience translates into practice the theory portrayed in Military Strategy. This theory calls not for an either-or approach, but for the combined application of the best of both.¹³

Oversensational comments in the Western press indicated that Military Strategy, edited by Marshal V.D. Sokolovsky, who, until 1960, had been First Deputy Minister of Defense and Chief of the Soviet General Staff,¹⁴ revealed secret Soviet information and was

smuggled out of Russia. This was simply not true because the book was freely taken off the shelves of military book stores. However, by the author's own admission, it was the first work since A. Svechin's Strategy to cover such a broad spectrum of military strategy. Sokolovsky also criticized Svechin's work for not giving a "correct Marxist interpretation of the character and content of military strategy, and contained many methodological shortcomings."¹⁵

Thomas W. Wolfe summarizes his initial impressions of the book in this manner:

Military Strategy is indeed an important document - certainly the most significant to appear in the open literature to date - and it does afford valuable insight into Soviet strategic thinking...

Military Strategy reflects the somewhat precarious balance of views on military policy and strategy that has resulted from the interplay of events and doctrinal debate over the past several years...

The book registers a broad shift in outlook from the Soviet Unions earlier preoccupation with theater warfare to today's central focus upon the problems of global strategic war.¹⁶

The book appears to use the Malinovsky formulation and again try to strike a balance between the modernist and traditionalist. A short 15 months later, a second edition appeared on the shelves¹⁷ which was about 50 pages longer, but, according to Wolfe, "it did not register any radical changes in Soviet military doctrine or strategic concepts." It did, however,

...display a strong tendency to reaffirm the primacy of the political leadership in military affairs, a trend that appeared in Soviet military writing after publication of the first Sokolovskii edition. There seems to have been a general internal reaction to efforts by the military to claim a larger share of influence in the formation of national security policy.¹⁸

Yet, with the growing areas of consensus, such as: the primacy of strategic nuclear weapons in modern warfare; problems of maintaining large forces in peacetime; increased attention to limited nuclear and convention war, etc., there were important areas where the debate continued throughout the end of Khrushchev's reign. These areas include:¹⁹ (1) the size of the armed forces; (2) the nature of the initial period of a war; (3) the length of the war; (4) the best military strategy for dealing with the United States; (5) the escalation of small wars; and (6) the proper role of the military in the formulation of defense policy and strategy.

Essentially, this was where the debate on military strategy ended as far as Khrushchev was concerned - without definitive answers. However, even though there was disagreement with various aspects of military strategy, it was not this disagreement by itself that affected the support of the military for the Khrushchev regime.

The military under Zhukov supported Khrushchev on numerous occasions against his opposition as represented by Malenkov. Malenkov, as presented in the previous section, advocated several plans that would decrease the size and influence of the military. Essentially, the problem centered around the allocation of resources, a continuing problem within the Soviet Union. The military leadership supported Khrushchev in the 1954-57 time frames for similar reasons that they supported his ouster in 1964. Interestingly enough, in 1964, Khrushchev was advocating some of the same things Malenkov did in 1957: lessening of the military budget, diversion of resources from heavy industry to consumer goods, etc.

Roman Kolkowicz points out that large military institutions in industrialized societies have several things in common no matter what their socio-political environment. These include:

...(a) a consistently heavy investment in defense industry (in the Soviet Union this means primarily in heavy industry); (b) large standing forces and large military budgets; (c) a certain level of international tension (maintained by depicting political opponents as aggressive and unpredictable) so as to justify the large budgets and armies. To these "external" needs must be added such "internal" interests as (d) demands for professional freedoms and institutional autonomy, and (e) the cultivation of a noble image of the military in the eyes of society.²⁰

These five traits will guide the discussion of the final results of the conflict. The final section will discuss how the military debate meshed with the domestic forces to finally lead to the downfall of Khrushchev.

Endnotes

¹Nikolai Galay, "The Soviet Army and Domestic Policy," Institute for the Study of the USSR: Bulletin 7(October 1960): 8.

²Thomas W. Wolfe, Soviet Strategy at the Crossroads (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1964), pp. 5-6.

³Thomas W. Wolfe presents a detailed discussion of the "main lines of the debate" in Soviet Strategy at the Crossroads, pp. 30-37. Additional discussion may be found in Jeffrey Record, Sizing up the Soviet Union (Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1975), pp. 3-6.

⁴"Khrushchev's Supreme Soviet Report on Troop Cut, "The Current Digest of the Soviet Press, 12(February 10, 1960): 10. This, as well as quotes in notes #5, 6 and 7, appeared in the January 15, 1960 issue of Pravda under the title of, "Disarmament is the Path Toward Strengthening and Ensuring Friendship Among Nations." "Our confidence in the correctness of the measures proposed is based on the fact that the Soviet Union is going through a period of unprecedentedly rapid development of the entire national economy. It is based on the indestructible moral and political unity of Soviet society. Soviet scientists, engineers and workers have made it possible to equip our army with types of armaments never before known to man - atomic, hydrogen, rocket and other modern weapons. The development of our economy and the achievements of our scientific and technical thought - these are what have created the conditions for reducing the armed forces. Furthermore, we are taking into account the consolidation and growth of the mighty socialist camp, which is a firm bastion of peace."

⁵Ibid. "Our state has a powerful rocket technology. Given the present development of military technology, military aviation and the navy have lost their former importance. This type of armament is not being reduced but replaced by rockets. We have now sharply reduced and probably will further reduce and even halt production of bombers and other obsolete equipment. In the navy the submarine fleet is assuming great importance, and surface ships can no longer play the role they played in the past.

Our armed forces have been largely converted to rocket and nuclear weapons."

⁶Ibid. "The Party Central Committee and the Soviet government can report to you, Comrade Deputies, that the weapons we already have are formidable, but the weapon we have in the hatching stage, so to speak, is even better, even more formidable. The weapon that is being developed and is, as they say, in the portfolio of our scientists and designers, is an incredible weapon.

You will all presumably agree, Comrade Deputies, that the question of the numerical strength of armies cannot be approached today as it was several years ago. Suffice it to say that beginning

in 1955, the numerical strength of the armed forces in our country has been reduced by one-third, while, thanks to the introduction and development of the latest types of modern military equipment, their firepower has increased many times in this same period.

In our time a country's defense capacity is determined not by the number of soldiers it has under arms, the number of men in uniform. Aside from the general political and economic factors, about which I have already spoken, a country's defense capacity depends to a decisive extent on the firepower and means of delivery it has."

⁷Ibid.

⁸Deane, Political Control, p. 71. This quote comes from a speech by R. Ya. Malinovsky, broadcast on the Soviet Home Service, January 15, 1960.

⁹Deane, Political Control, p. 72. See also, Matthew P. Gallagher, "Military Manpower: A Case Study," Problems of Communism 13(May-June 1964): 54.

¹⁰Nikolai Galay, "Why the USSR is Trimming its Armed Forces," Institute for the Study of the USSR: Bulletin 7(February 1960): 25. This article gives additional conclusions and insight into this speech.

¹¹Wolfe, Soviet Strategy at the Crossroads, p. 34.

¹²"Malinovsky's Speech on Armed Forces Anniversary, The Current Digest of the Soviet Press 15(March 20, 1963): 6-11. Marshal Malinovsky gives an interesting account in this speech given on the Armed Forces Anniversary. It appeared in Pravda on February 23, 1963, pp. 2-3, under the title, "45 Years on Guard Over the Socialist Homeland."

¹³David M. Abshire and Robert Dickson Crane, "Soviet Strategy in the 60's," Army, July 1963, p. 21.

¹⁴Sokolovsky opposed Khrushchev's 1960 position on the military cuts and was subsequently retired.

¹⁵V.D. Sokolovsky, ed., Soviet Military Strategy, trans. and commentary by Herbert S. Dinerstein, Leon Goure, and Thomas W. Wolfe. A RAND Corporation Research Study (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1963), pp. 82-83.

¹⁶Thomas W. Wolfe, A First Reaction to the New Book "Military Strategy." Memorandum RM-3495-PR (Santa Monica, CA: The RAND Corporation, February 1963), pp. iii-vi.

¹⁷See Leon Goure, Notes on the Second Edition of Marshal V.D. Sokolovskii's "Military Strategy," Memorandum RM-3972-PR (Santa Monica, CA: The RAND Corporation, February 1964).

¹⁸Wolfe, Soviet Strategy at the Crossroads, pp. 51-53.

¹⁹For a detailed presentation of the areas of disagreement as well as a brief resume of the important points of the book, see: Thomas W. Wolfe, A Postscript on the Significance of the Book "Soviet Military Strategy." Memorandum RM-3730-PR (Santa Monica, CA: The RAND Corporation, July 1963).

²⁰Kolkowicz, The Soviet Military and the Communist Party, pp. 291-292.

THE RESULTS OF THE CONFLICT

Before examining in more specific detail the role of the military in Khrushchev's ouster, it would help to pause a moment to reflect on the events presented thus far and review the fluctuating influence of the military, as well as the progression of the internal debate previously presented.

During Stalin's reign, there was virtually no other entity within the Soviet Union that could (or would) challenge him. However, almost immediately upon his death, his "permanent operating factors," which had served as the basis for all military discussion, began to be questioned along with other aspects of his military thought. This discussion progressed slowly and began to show a split within the military as well as disagreement between political and military leaders. This split was earlier described as the "modernists" versus the "traditionalists." This split grew with Khrushchev as the major proponent of the modernist school. Several high ranking military men tried to bridge the gap but their leanings were more towards a traditional military posture with large land forces along with the new nuclear technology.

In 1955, Marshal Zhukov was appointed as the Minister of Defense and this marked a significant increase in the influence of the military. Zhukov challenged many of the Stalinist concepts and was a strong supporter of Khrushchev. He supported Khrushchev in the

Twentieth Party Congress where Stalin was vehemently denounced. This opened the door for an increased role for Zhukov and the military with the 1957 Anti-Party Group incident probably being the high point. After this incident, in which Zhukov and the military played a pivotal role in maintaining Khrushchev in power, it appeared that the military was freeing the shackles of party control and becoming a more predominant factor in Soviet political life. Zhukov became extremely zealous in his efforts against the Anti-Party Group and began openly opposing some of Khrushchev's policies, such as economic de-centralization and the de-emphasis of heavy industry. As Deane points out: "Once the 'anti-Party group' was removed, the military, led by Zhukov, posed the only organized threat to Khrushchev's otherwise uninhibited rule."¹

When Zhukov was removed, political control over the military was increased but Khrushchev was never really able to silence the modernist-traditionalist debate completely. Kolkowicz mentions that some of the objectives of the Khrushchev reforms against the military included: (1) Breaking down barriers between ranks and thereby lessening the power of the commander; (2) establish Party supremacy in the military with a "dual principle at the command level"; (3) enhance the role of the Main Political Administration (MPA) and thereby increase party control; (4) involve the military in local Party functions in order to reduce the military "exclusiveness"; and (5) placing the authority to define military theory, doctrine, and strategy in the Central Committee.²

Zhukov's replacement, Marshal Malinovsky, tried to find center ground on which to build a compromise among the military factions. However, possibly due to his military background, he never fully supported the direction the Khrushchev military programs were taking.

As was pointed out previously, this direction was clearly defined in Khrushchev's 1960 speech to the Supreme Soviet and was immediately, although only partially, opposed by Malinovsky himself in his speech that directly followed. Probably the most damaging point for the military (and the one that Malinovsky tried to reduce) was the de-emphasis on "conventional forces." The Khrushchev line of reasoning went something like this: (1) There is a general trend in the reduction of international tension; (2) war is no longer inevitable; (3) a nuclear war would be different (both in its beginning and development); (4) the defense of the Soviet state is more prepared now than ever before; (5) this defense relies more heavily on nuclear missiles and new technology of which the Soviets have more than enough to deter any aggressor. Therefore, reasoned Khrushchev, the Soviets no longer needed the large conventional forces (army, air and naval) which could be cut, allowing a significant savings to be diverted into other sectors of the economy (consumer goods in particular), and, because of their increased nuclear and missile technology, these cuts would not decrease Soviet firepower but would actually increase it through greater emphasis on missile forces.³

This program met with opposition from both party and military leaders, particularly along the line of the traditionalists.

Even several members of the MPA, the Party's representatives within the military, voiced opposition to this program.⁴

Implementation of these programs were hindered not only by opposition but also because of increased tension on the international scene (particularly the U-2 incident and the aborted Paris Summit Conference). At the same time, Khrushchev continued to exaggerate Soviet military capabilities "vis-a-vis" the West, which tended to inspire the West to close the "missile gap" and, gave Khrushchev more ammunition to decrease Soviet defense spending.

At the Twenty-Second Party Congress Khrushchev renewed his bid to cut military spending and troop numbers. He increased his attacks on the hierarchy of the Defense Ministry, particularly through the MPA which drove some centrists (particularly Malinovsky) to speak out against his boss during one of the most critical times of Khrushchev's administration - the Cuban missile crisis.

The effects of this crisis were discussed earlier. One point that was not mentioned was the increase in pressure on the military following the crisis, to fall in line with Khrushchev's policies and directions. Interestingly enough, there appeared to be some kind of truce between the military and Khrushchev during this period. Kolkowicz points out that: "Relations between Party and military after the Cuban missile crisis, therefore, seem to have been governed by some 'modus vivendi', which included a number of major concessions by the military."⁵ These concessions probably included, giving the party free reign in the areas of political,

economic and doctrinal affairs without public criticism by the military. At the same time, the Party would try and provide a more flexible doctrine, allowing for mass armies and conventional weapons, as well as more freedom to discuss and criticize "those aspects of military science that had no political implications."⁶

Khrushchev needed military support as he moved to consolidate his power even further. He had already introduced reforms that split the Party into an industrial and agricultural sector, with his people mostly in power. Additionally, late in 1963, he introduced new economic reforms that would increase his powers even further.⁷ Concerning the relationship between Khrushchev and the military, Roman Kolkowicz points out that:

It is perhaps ironical that Nikita Khrushchev, once considered to be the benefactor of the Soviet military, turned out to be its major adversary. Having supported the military's interests in 1953-1955 against the detentist policies of Malenkov, thus gaining the military's support in his power struggles within the Party, Khrushchev reversed himself after 1957, and introduced some far-reaching reforms that threatened the military's privileged position in the state as well as many of its traditional interest and objectives.⁸

More specifically, P.B. Reddaway emphasized that:

On the three main party-military issues of allocation, strategy-formulation, and the degree of party control in general, the majority of the military leaders consistently tried to resist Khrushchev's pressure. Whenever Khrushchev felt his position to be strong,...he was on the offensive. Whenever he was weak,...the military (with support of the Presidium?) counterattacked.⁹

It was the final counterattack by the traditionalists and their supporters (about August 1964) that finally meshed with the political opposition, and deposed Khrushchev. However, many of the threats felt by the military following Khrushchev's late 1963

efforts to increase Party control, as well as several of his political and economic plans, were not new to this period. Utilizing what Kolkowicz proposes as the vital interest and objectives common to all large military institutions in industrial societies, as outlined in the previous section, let's now see how the military was threatened by Khrushchev and his policies as well as how and why they finally reacted.

1. Investments in defense industry. In the Soviet Union, this basically equates to heavy industry. As mentioned earlier, one of the reasons the military fell so strongly behind Khrushchev during his rise to power was the fact that Malenkov proposed altering the Leninist principle of priority to heavy industry in favor of an increased emphasis on consumer goods. Once Khrushchev had secured his power base after the 1957 Anti-Party Group affair, he reversed himself on this subject. He continually pushed for more consumer goods and a reduction in heavy industry. As a result of a series of meetings of expanded party-government executive organizations (Khrushchev was beginning to use public pressure and large meetings to try and push his programs through) held sometime after June 1963, the basis of a new five-year plan emerged. These meetings continued to grow in intensity as Khrushchev looked ahead to a November 1964 plenary session at which he proposed several changes in the economic and agricultural sectors. These changes, along with the 1962 split of the party, would further enhance Khrushchev's power.

Interestingly enough, the full text of an important planning meeting concerning the economic plan was never released. However,

Pravda did publish edited portions of the speech. According to Carl Linden's summary of these accounts, the substance of Khrushchev's remarks was that:

...heavy industry and defense had now been adequately developed and the pace and focus of future development plans should be shifted in favor of consumer welfare and light industry.¹⁰

Khrushchev was emphatically pushing forward cuts in heavy industry which would certainly equate to cuts in the defense industry.

2. Large standing forces and large military budgets. The modernist versus traditionalist debate discussed earlier was at the center of this problem. Khrushchev had continually tried to reduce the size of the military as well as their budget. He had emphasized reliance on nuclear missiles which he envisioned as replacing some of the larger (and more expensive) conventional forces.

Along with the change of emphasis from heavy to consumer industry mentioned above, Khrushchev also proposed another troop reduction as well as a cut in the military budget. Khrushchev had not been successful in fully implementing previous troop cuts (because of opposition and increased international tensions) and the size of this one was never revealed. However, the military leadership was not prepared to take these additional cuts in their manpower and budgets without a fight.

3. International tension. After the Cuban missile crisis, Khrushchev pursued a vigorous policy towards detente with the West. He sought negotiated settlements and pressed the idea of coexistence. This significant decrease in world tension, thus,

would allow him to focus his efforts on cutting the military and increasing the emphasis on the domestic economy - particularly consumer goods.

4. Demands for professional freedom and institutional autonomy. Again, Khrushchev was trying to increase the control of the military by emphasizing the role of the Party. As was previously mentioned, Party control took a significant increase after the Cuban affair and invoked a strong reaction from the military leadership. Even Marshal Malinovsky, who was initially quoted as supporting the primacy of the Party, began to side with many of his military colleagues in an attempt to increase the military influence - and decrease party influence - concerning military affairs, strategy, etc. Thomas W. Wolfe and Roman Kolkowicz discuss several of the growing number of articles by Soviet military authors which came out towards the end of 1963 and increased through 1964.¹¹ This growing discussion demonstrated an increased restlessness with the Party control over the military and the lack of autonomy of the military in their own affairs.

Deane points out that the MPA was even running into problems. He mentions that the problem of the dual nature of the MPA in that it is "both a spokesman of the professional military and a spokesman for the Party." In this dual role, Yepishev, the head of the MPA, opposed Khrushchev on numerous military policies (such as the mass-army concept) but, at the same time, supported the predominance of the Party over the military.¹²

5. The cultivation of a noble image in the eyes of society. Colton mentions that:

Most Soviet military men are obviously concerned with the public image of themselves, their mission, and the values they seek to embody. They often demand in extremely frank terms that Soviet leaders and citizens acknowledge this image in favorable terms and that the regime propagate military values through its systems of mass communication and education.¹³

Although Khrushchev never really denied the importance of the military, he continually tried to subjugate its importance by ascribing numerous successes (particularly during World War II) to himself, and/or the Party rather than the professional military. He also introduced the strategic missile forces and proclaimed them to be the most important element of the Soviet military. Additionally, he was continually involved in questioning the professional military on numerous aspects such as training, strategy, etc. In all, Khrushchev was less than enthusiastic in placing the military leadership (particularly those who did not agree with him) on the high pedestal that they desired.

By this discussion I hope to have shown that there are continuous conflicting interests and interest groups operating within the Soviet Union and that the "monolithic" facade is just that - a facade. Interestingly enough, it was not a single interest group that downed Khrushchev, but a coalition, among which, was the military.

Was the role of the military important? Harrison Salisbury, reporting for the New York Times the day after the announcement of the Khrushchev ouster, seemed to think so when he said that, "the role of the Soviet military was vital if not conclusive."¹⁴ However, Michel Tatu, after a more exhaustive study as well as more time for extensive research, seems to think that the military was

not quite so important. Tatu states that the military played a minor role, at least minor compared to their involvement in 1957. One must, however, consider that this vital center of power in the Soviet Union (the military) would have to be considered in any plans. Tatu goes on to explain the role of Malinovsky, and therefore the military, as this:

It has been reported from various quarters that he (Malinovsky) was invited to take part in the Presidium debates during the crisis. It seems likely that the plotters would have tried to gain his advance consent or at least his neutrality. Brezhnev, whose connection with the armed forces is known (he has given several proofs of it since his accession to power), must have seemed to the marshals far preferable to Khrushchev, who had been trying for so long to whittle down their appropriations. In any case, there was no sign of any opposition to the plot on their part.¹⁵

The military role, then, was more one of abstinence rather than participation. Unlike Zhukov's active support for Khrushchev in 1957, Malinovsky, as a minimum, did not attempt to stop the coup. As Carl Linden points out on numerous occasions, Khrushchev had developed a growing reaction to his radicalism which tended to bring together "both conservatives and more cautious reformers."

Khrushchev had alienated the political-ideological functionaries by his efforts to reshape the party institution; he had incensed the central planners and the economic czars of the state apparatus by his attempts to give the party the key role in economic management and by his successive projects to rechannel the direction of the economy; he had provoked opposition of important elements of the Soviet military establishment by repeated incursions into their sphere; he had aroused fears among guardians of the party institution that his radical attacks on Stalin would get out of control and inflame discontents in society at large. He had offended too many powers within the regime too often.¹⁶

It was this coalition of "strange bedfellows," including the military, that banded together to depose Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev sometime between October 12 and October 14, 1964. However, the ouster of Khrushchev did not completely end the debate but proved to be more of a compromise victory. Both sides of the military debate won to some extent. The modernists continued to receive additional emphasis on nuclear missiles and an important increase in development followed. The traditionalists were able to stop the proposed troop and budget cuts and, at the same time, increase spending in the conventional weapons arena.

It has also been proposed that the military influence increased after Khrushchev's downfall, but this proposal is probably without foundation. There was no significant increase in military personnel in high-level positions which would support this hypothesis. From all indications, the military influence remained similar to that of the late Khrushchev era but their financial support from the government had certainly increased.

Endnotes

- ¹Deane, Political Control, p. 64.
- ²Kolkowicz, The Soviet Military and The Communist Party, p. 138.
- ³Ibid., pp. 150-153.
- ⁴See Deane, Political Control, pp. 69-93.
- ⁵Kolkowicz, The Soviet Military and the Communist Party, p. 290.
- ⁶Ibid., pp. 290-291. See also note #4 above.
- ⁷See Tatu, Power in the Kremlin, pp. 364-427.
- ⁸Roman Kolkowicz, The Red "Hawkes" on the Rationality of Nuclear War, Memorandum RM-4899-PR (Santa Monica, CA: The RAND Corporation, March 1966), p. 5.
- ⁹Reddaway, "The Fall of Khrushchev," p. 20.
- ¹⁰Linden, Khrushchev and the Soviet Leadership, p. 199.
- ¹¹See Roman Kolkowicz, Soviet Strategic Debate: An Important Recent Addendum, P-2936 (Santa Monica, CA: The RAND Corporation, July 1964); Thomas W. Wolfe, Signs of Stress in Soviet Political-Military Relations, P-2877 (Santa Monica, CA: The RAND Corporation, March 1964); Wolfe, Some Recent Signs of Reaction Against Prevailing Soviet Doctrinal Emphasis on Missiles, P-2929 (Santa Monica, CA: The RAND Corporation, June 1964); Wolfe, "Political Primacy vs. Professional Elan," Problems of Communism 13(May-June 1964): 44-52; Wolfe, "Some New Developments in the Soviet Military Debate," Orbis 8(Fall 1964): 550-562.
- ¹²Deane, Political Control, pp. 95-127.
- ¹³Colton, Commisars, p. 208.
- ¹⁴Harrison E. Salisbury, "Fall of Khrushchev," New York Times, October 17, 1964, p. 13.
- ¹⁵Tatu, Power in the Kremlin, p. 419.
- ¹⁶Linden, Khrushchev and the Soviet Leadership, pp. 207-208.

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