



ABSTRACT

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Title: A Worker's Way of War: The Red Army's Doctrinal Debate, 1918-1924

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Summary:

Following the October 1917 Revolution, the leaders of the fledgling Red Army embarked on a debate concerning the nature, form, and function of military doctrine. A group known as the "military communists," including M.V. Frunze, M.N. Tukhachevsky, K. Voroshilov, and S.I. Gusev sought to formulate a "proletarian" military doctrine based on the lessons of the Russian Civil War (1918-21) and purged of supposedly outmoded, bourgeois military thought. Their doctrine, they claimed, would be based overwhelmingly on maneuver and the offensive, which they felt best represented the "active" nature of the working class. Against them stood Commissar for War Leon Trotsky, supported by ex-Tsarist "military specialists," notably A.A. Svechin. Trotsky and his allies, noting the Soviet Union's backwardness relative to the West, professed a policy of expediency in military affairs. Though Trotsky and Svechin proved their position correct both in reference to military affairs and orthodox communist thought, the ripening political struggle eventually secured Frunze's and Tukhachevsky's domination of the Red Army and Trotsky's eventual ouster and exile.

Key sources:

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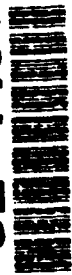
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The Red Army's Doctrinal Debate, 1918-1924

by

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THE SOCIALIST OATH

1. I, son of the working people and a citizen of the Soviet Republic, assume the title of a soldier of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army.
2. Before the working class of Russia and of the whole world I pledge myself to bear this title in honor, to study the art of war conscientiously, and to protect, like the apple of my eye, all public and military property from damage and robbery.
3. I pledge myself to observe revolutionary discipline strictly and unflaggingly, and to obey without question all orders given by commanders appointed by the Workers' and Peasants' Government.
4. I pledge myself to abstain from any action derogatory to the dignity of a citizen of the Soviet Republic, and to restrain my comrades from such action, and to direct all my thoughts and actions towards the great goal of the emancipation of all the working people.
5. I pledge myself to respond to the first call from the Workers' and Peasants' Government to defend the Soviet Republic against any dangers and attacks from any enemy, and to spare neither my strength nor my life in the fight for the Russian Soviet Republic and for the cause of socialism and the brotherhood of the peoples.
6. If ever, with evil intent, I should depart from this my solemn promise, may the scorn of all be my lot and may the stern hand of revolutionary law punish me.

--Leon Trotsky (1918)

INTRODUCTION

In On War, the nineteenth century German military historian Karl von Clausewitz postulated that "War is a mere continuation of policy by other means." [1] Clearly, the potential risks of using armed force, among them the possible destruction of a belligerent nation, suggest the expectation of some significant political gain through its implementation. However, the relationship between politics and war took on increased importance as weapons technology, the intensity of warfare, and the size of the opposing forces--in short, the sheer destructive potential of war--increased throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Since the October 1917 Revolution, the leadership of the Soviet Union has used military force as a political instrument, both internally and externally. Its goals over time have included the acquisition of power, the suppression of internal unrest, and the installation or preservation of friendly, compliant regimes in client states. V.I. Lenin himself studied Clausewitz intensively, and the first Soviet "Law of War" maintains that the course and outcome of war are dependent on the political goals of the warring sides. [2] There is, however, a subtle yet important distinction between the Clausewitzian and Leninist conceptions of armed conflict. Lenin maintained that "every

1 Karl von Clausewitz, On War, trans. O.J. Matthijs Jolles (Washington, DC: Combat Forces Press, 1953), p. 16.

2 Graham D. Vernon, ed., Soviet Perceptions of War and Peace (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 1981), p. 21.

war is inseparable from the political system from which it arises [emphasis added], "[3] suggesting that the relationship between war and politics includes more than just the goals of military force; exactly how much more, however, was never made clear. In the Soviet Union, a state allegedly founded on Marxism-Leninism and the class interests of the proletariat, the relationship between political philosophy and "purely" military considerations became the subject of a heated debate which peaked in the early 1920s.

Few aspects of military affairs were spared the intrusion of ideological meddling, but the primary areas of contention included the organization of the Red Army, its relationship to the party, the political indoctrination of its members, and its military doctrine.[4] The doctrinal debate, perhaps the most bitter of the lot, ran its course with varying degrees of intensity from 1918 to 1924. Many Red Army commanders vigorously opposed any doctrine that resembled the "reactionary" military mindset of capitalist

3 V.I. Lenin, "Voina i revoliutsiia," in V.I. Lenin: Polnoe sobranie sochinenii, Vol. 32 (Moscow, 1974), p. 79.

4 In the Soviet Union, "military doctrine" is most often defined in terms of certain questions or problems facing the armed forces. In Soviet Military Strategy Marshal of the Soviet Union V.D. Sokolovskiy defined doctrine as "the expression of the accepted views of a state regarding the problems of: political evaluation of future war; the state attitude toward war; a determination of the nature of future war; preparation of the country for war in the economic and moral sense; organization and preparation of the armed forces; [and] methods of waging war." Cited in Harriet Fast Scott and William F. Scott, Soviet Military Doctrine: Continuity, Formulation, and Dissemination (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1988), p. 52.

states or the defunct Imperial Russian army. Convinced that they had discovered a new, "proletarian" method of warfare during the Russian Civil War, a method based on maneuver and offensive action, these "military communists" [5] wanted a class-based doctrine founded on those principles. Their opponents, firm in their belief that the fundamentals of war were essentially the same for all armies, feared any effort to forge a "proletarian" military doctrine based on communist ideology and the lessons of the Civil War alone. In their view any attempt to create such a doctrine, or to limit the operational flexibility of the Red Army, would inevitably hamper innovative military thinking and ensure disaster on the battlefield.

Lip service to "proletarian" military doctrine would continue long after the 1920s, but the Red Army found that it could never quite exorcise the specter of "bourgeois" military thought. There was, however, another level to the debate, for while military men argued over military theory, a political struggle developed which eventually secured Stalin's dominance of the party and the nation. In his way stood his chief political rival: the People's Commissar for

5 A variety of terms have been used to denote these Red Army commanders, including "military communists," "the Red Command," and "the military opposition." These terms are used interchangeably throughout this work. Bear in mind that they do not necessarily refer to a set group of specific individuals acting in concert, but to all the young, "self-made" Bolshevik commanders who advocated varying degrees of ideology-based doctrinal reform.

War, Leon Trotsky.[6] Trotsky's opponents and competitors, including Stalin, simply had to remove him from his military posts to get a piece of the post-Lenin action. While Trotsky vigorously--and for the most part successfully--argued against the idea of a class-based warfighting doctrine, many of Stalin's supporters took the opposite side and enthusiastically advocated that approach. Though it is difficult to assess the extent to which party politics and personal ambitions (as opposed to military considerations) motivated these "military communists," one can easily see that Trotsky's theoretical brilliance and abrasive personality contributed significantly to his subsequent downfall.

* * *

6 This office has also been referred to as the "People's Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs" or simply "War Commissar."

CHAPTER 1

THE IDEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND:

Foundations of Marxist Military Thought

In retrospect, the Red Army's doctrinal debate seemed inevitable. Marxism is a holistic ideology that "explicitly rejects compartmentalization of the human experience,"[1] so the ardent military communists of the 1920s may well have felt compelled to apply Marxist ideology to their military theory and experiences. However, as D. Fedotoff White noted in The Growth of the Red Army, "Very few beacons were lighted by the founding fathers of Marxism to guide the footsteps of the debaters."[2] Few communists could doubt the indissoluble bond between politics, society, and war, but the extent of that bond and its concrete application to the armed forces of the Soviet state were left wide open to debate.

Karl Marx in particular was conspicuously silent regarding military matters. He did assert that the military, like all other elements of the societal "superstructure," depended on the "modes and relations of production" prevalent in society at a particular time, thus implying that the advent of communism would lead to the

1 Condoleezza Rice, "The Making of Soviet Strategy," in Peter Paret, ed., Makers of Modern Strategy: From Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), p. 648.

2 D. Fedotoff White, The Growth of the Red Army (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1944), p. 158.

development of a new method of warfare.[3] To Marx, however, the relationship between productive forces and armies appeared a bit more nebulous than that between society's economic base and other elements of the superstructure.

Take law, for example. Marx claimed that law is based solely on the "common interests and needs of society...which arise from the material mode of production prevailing at the given time." [4] Military forces, although purportedly an instrument of the ruling class and hence shaped by existing political and economic conditions, constitute perhaps the one element of the superstructure which Marx conceded has a reciprocal effect on the base:

In general, the army is important for economic development. For instance, it was in the army that the ancients first fully developed a wage system....Here too [was] the first use of machinery on a large scale. Even the special value of metals and their use as money appears to have been originally based...on their military significance. The division of labor within one branch was also first carried out in the armies.[5]

This indicates a Marxist dilemma. On the one hand, only the full attainment of communism can lead to a "proletarian" military doctrine. On the other, if the military can indeed make "progressive" contributions to economic and social

3 Ibid.

4 Karl Marx, "Articles for the Neue Rheinische Zeitung," in Karl Marx: Selected Writings, ed. David McLellan (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 274.

5 Karl Marx, "Letters 1848-1857," in Karl Marx: Selected Writings, ed. David McLellan (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), pp. 342-43.

relations, then the institution of a "proletarian" military doctrine might acquire great importance and urgency in aiding the development of communism, especially in a semi-feudal society like 1917 Russia.

Frederick Engels, in contrast to Marx, wrote prolifically about on military affairs. Marx tended to examine war from the periphery, concentrating primarily on its place in and effects on international relations, economics, social relations and the like. Engels, however, studied almost every aspect of warfare; his writings range from biographies of military leaders to a history of the development of the rifle. Indeed, "General" Engels, as nicknamed by his friends, was "by nature a soldier and a warrior" who eagerly awaited the chance to put his riding and hunting experience to the test in a revolutionary war.[6] In the absence of such an opportunity, he contented himself with writing about military subjects, and indeed wrote about them more often than any other topic.[7]

On several occasions Engels discussed the concept of a class-based military doctrine, albeit briefly.[8] In Anti-Duhring, for example, Engels cited the American War of Independence as an example of how a "bourgeois" revolution

6 Sigmund Neumann, "Engels and Marx: Military Concepts of the Social Revolutionaries," in Edward Mead Earle, ed., Makers of Modern Strategy: Military Thought From Machiavelli to Hitler (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), pp. 157-58.

7 Ibid., p. 158.

8 In fact, both sides of the debate at one time or another quoted Engels to support their respective views.

would lead to new forms of conflict. The extensive use of skirmishing on the colonial side illustrated "a new method of warfare which was the result of a change in the human war material." [9] Similarly, the recruitment of bourgeois elements into the formerly aristocratic Prussian officer corps, necessitated by rapid expansion of the army, produced changes in Prussia's warfighting methods. As Engels stated in "The Prussian Military Question and the German Workers' Party" (1865), "we would attribute the gallant conduct of the Prussian officers before the enemy in the Schleswig-Holstein War [in 1850] chiefly to this infusion of new blood. The old [aristocratic] class of junior officers by themselves would not have dared to act so often on their own responsibility." [10]

Perhaps Engels's most relevant work is an essay written in 1851 entitled "Conditions and Prospects of a War of the Holy Alliance Against France in 1852." [11] Noting that the liberation of the bourgeoisie during the French Revolution had spawned an entirely new form of warfare, Engels proposed that "the emancipation of the proletariat, too, will have its particular military expression, it will give rise to a

9 Frederick Engels, Anti-Duhring (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1976), pp. 214-15.

10 Frederick Engels, "The Prussian Military Question and the German Workers' Party," in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels: Collected Works, Vol. 20 (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1985), p. 61.

11 Mikhail V. Frunze, perhaps the best-known proponent of "proletarian" military doctrine, cited this article to support his position in 1922.

specific, new method of warfare." [12] Coupled with that prediction, however, was Engels's warning that initial attempts to formulate a proletarian military doctrine would be flawed and incomplete. The mere acquisition of state power, he noted, "is a long way from the real emancipation of the proletariat, which consists in the abolition of all class contradictions, so the initial warfare...is equally far removed from the warfare of the truly emancipated proletariat." [13] Furthermore, Engels argued that changes in the art of war must be predicated on corresponding industrial and economic developments. "Increased productive forces," he wrote, "were the precondition for the Napoleonic warfare; new productive forces must likewise be the precondition for every new perfection in warfare." [14] In the interim, "the revolution will have to wage war with the means and by the methods of general modern [i.e., bourgeois] warfare." [15]

Perhaps even more damning to the proponents of a "proletarian" military doctrine was Engels's contention that the use of maneuver "is in every respect a characteristic of the bourgeois armies." [16] The future military communists of the Red Army would insist that maneuver was based on the

12 Frederick Engels, "Conditions and Prospects of a War of the Holy Alliance Against France in 1852," in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels: Collected Works, Vol. 10 (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1985), pp. 550-53.

13 Ibid., p. 553.

14 Ibid., p. 554.

15 Ibid., p. 555.

16 Ibid., p. 552.

"active" nature of the proletariat, a claim that Engels presumably would have challenged. Engels claimed that during the French Revolution the bourgeoisie, at the time riding the "locomotive of history," seized the initiative and were the first to use maneuver in modern combat on a large scale. Nonetheless, Engels did stress the importance of decisive, mobile, offensive operations even when on the strategic defensive; considering Engels's place in the pantheon of communist theorists, these elements became the "stock in trade of revolutionary strategy,"[17] but Engels never specified them as uniquely proletarian military concepts.

Lenin, like Engels, emphasized the importance of decisive action and initiative, and also drew upon the experience of the French Revolution. Impressed by the "gigantic revolutionary creativeness" that permeated French military thinking at the close of the 18th century, Lenin observed that France "remodeled its whole system of strategy, broke with all the old rules and traditions of warfare, replaced the old troops with a new revolutionary people's army, and created new methods of warfare." [18] This passage clearly implies that a revolutionary class, motivated by its sense of purpose and historical "mission," can indeed effect changes in military technique and doctrine. It does not, however, say anything about the

17 Neumann, p. 158.

18 V.I. Lenin, "Voina i revoliutsiia," in V.I. Lenin: Polnoe sobranie sochinenii, Vol. 32 (Moscow, 1974), p. 80.

formulation of a proletarian military doctrine in particular; Lenin's only specific word on that subject apparently came in 1922 when, in fact, he sided with Trotsky against the military communists during the Red Army debate.[19]

Engels, a self-proclaimed military man who based his theories on his perception of reality, was "obviously not in favor of producing the chickens of military theory from an ideological incubator." [20] Likewise Marx, who prided himself for his "scientific" views of history and social phenomena, probably would have frowned on such ideological blather.[21] However, both Marx's and Engels's observations on military affairs were sufficiently vague and incomplete to provide ammunition to both sides in the coming debate; as Fedotoff White observed, "There was [no] ready-made revolutionary theory handed down by the founders of Marxism, which could be used to regulate the shaping of [the Red Army's] military doctrine." [22] To this meager legacy Lenin added little. Undoubtedly, had Marx, Engels and Lenin specified the form, functions, and methods of a revolutionary army in all circumstances, there would have been no need to debate the question (unless, of course, their prescriptions led to defeat on the battlefield). It

19 Discussed in a later section of this paper.

20 D. Fedotoff White, "Soviet Philosophy of War" (Political Science Quarterly, September 1936), p. 336.

21 One is reminded of Marx's famous disclaimer, "I am no Marxist!"

22 Fedotoff-White, The Growth of the Red Army, p. 159.

appears that the communist "trinity" supported, in principle, the idea of a proletarian method of war and a corresponding military doctrine. With this tentative approval, however, came a warning: such developments must wait. Whatever the inherent warfighting qualities of the revolutionary proletariat, attempts to formulate a class-specific doctrine would be futile unless certain social and economic prerequisites had been met.

* * *

CHAPTER 2

THE INSTITUTIONAL BACKGROUND:

Doctrinal Debate in the Tsarist Army

In many respects, the Red Army doctrinal debate resembled a similar dispute which occurred between 1905 and 1912. Though it took place in an entirely different arena--within Russia's imperial army--the subjects involved exhibited some remarkable similarities. Moreover, some of the participants of the earlier debate later found themselves embroiled in the Red Army version as well.

Whereas the military communists of the Red Army sought to make sense of the lessons of victory, tsarist reformers sought to remedy the defects that had led to defeat at the hands of the Japanese. The Russian officer corps of the late 19th century, drawn largely from the aristocratic caste, displayed general apathy towards military affairs.[1] Their attitudes reflected those of Tsar Nicholas II, who, though a self-proclaimed army enthusiast, had neither the aptitude nor the inclination for military thought. "His real passion," recounted one author, "was the outward form of military life--romance, color, reckless heroics, and pageantry--rather than its content...."[2] The disastrous results of Russia's 1904-05 war with Japan illustrated the deleterious effects of not only Nicholas's command, but also

1 William C. Fuller, Jr., Civil-Military Conflict in Imperial Russia, 1881-1914 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), p. 32.

2 Ibid., pp. 40-41.

the inadequacies of Russian military doctrine; as Lt. Col. A.A. Neznamov, a professor at the General Staff Academy, remarked, "We did not understand modern war." [3] Consequently, a "military renaissance" began in Russia, encouraged by reform-minded army commanders such as members of the Society of Zealots of Military Knowledge (Obshchestvo revnitelei voennykh znani) and the "Young Turks" movement. [4]

The leader of the Young Turks, Gen. N.N. Golovin, had attended the French Ecole Superieure de Guerre and returned with great enthusiasm for Marshal Foch's "applied method" of teaching military subjects. [5] The Young Turks as a group believed that Western military technology and methods "were of central importance for the Russian army," underscoring the long-standing Russian military tradition of "looking west for solutions." [6] In a similar vein Neznamov, who openly admired the military views of Germany's Sigismund von Schlichting, attempted to introduce a "unified military doctrine" based on Schlichting's theories into the curriculum of the Nicholas Academy of the General Staff, and

3 A.A. Neznamov, Sovremennaiia voina: Deistviia polevoi armii (Moscow, 1912), p. vi, cited in Jacob W. Kipp, "Mass, Mobility, and the Origins of Soviet Operation Art, 1918-1936," in Carl W. Reddel, ed., Transformation in Russian and Soviet Military History (Washington, DC: Office of Air Force History, 1990), p. 91.

4 Fuller, pp. 196-97, 201.

5 Ibid., p. 201.

6 Walter Pinter, "Russian Military Thought: The Western Model and the Shadow of Suvorov," in Peter Paret, ed., Makers of Modern Strategy: From Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), pp. 368-70.

from there into the army as a whole.[7] Both Neznamov and Golovin encountered powerful opposition from A.K. Baiov, a lecturer on "Russian military art," and M.D. Bonch-Bruevich, who had strong connections within the War Ministry. Baiov in particular accused the reformers of attempting to subordinate Russian military thought and traditions to foreign, i.e., German and French, views.[8] Years later, the military communists of the Red Army would register similar protests against the retention of "bourgeois" elements in the military technique and doctrine of the "workers' and peasants'" army.

The similarity does not end there, however. The earlier debate also had a second, political level, for underlying the polemics over doctrine and theory was an inter-ministerial conflict in which the Young Turks played a significant role.[9] Furthermore, the tsarist doctrinal debate was decided by political considerations. Bonch-Bruevich exerted his influence in the imperial court and War Ministry to silence the reformers and remove them from their academy posts.[10] The final blow, however, was struck by Tsar Nicholas II himself. The Fundamental Laws of 1906 had preserved military policy and doctrine as his exclusive domain, and he resented any meddling in the affairs of "his own personal fief."[11] Finally, in 1912, the Tsar flatly

7 Kipp, p. 92.

8 Ibid.; Fuller, p. 201.

9 Fuller, pp. 202-203.

10 Ibid., p. 201; Reddel, p. 92.

11 Fuller, pp. 207, 231.

announced that "Military doctrine consists in fulfilling my orders," and instructed Neznamov and other reformers to keep quiet on the issue.[12]

Some of Neznamov's critics argued that his proposed "unified" doctrine amounted to little more than an ill-defined conglomeration of foreign views and tactics, and would only stifle creative military thought and promote "stereotyped" solutions to military problems.[13] For their part, the reformers "insisted on the fruitfulness of an orderly unity of views." [14] The censorship imposed by the political leadership was equally disturbing to both sides, and the results of the Tsar's decision would linger in the memory of officers like A.A. Svechin, who later served in the Red Army as a "military specialist" (voenspetsy) and played an active role in its doctrinal debate.

In all, some 50,000 voenspetsy would serve in the Red Army, and to them fell the task of merging Marxist "military science" with the practical military lessons learned from the Russo-Japanese War and World War I. Considering the fact that 198 of the 243 leading military writers of the late 1920s had served under Nicholas II, one might say that "the Red Army's search for a 'unified military doctrine'

12 Cited in Vitaly Rapoport and Yuri Alexeev, High Treason: Essays on the History of the Red Army, 1918-1938 (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1985), p. 124; original source not given. Ironically, after the Red Army debate had subsided, Stalin issued similar edicts.

13 Ibid.; Reddel, p. 92.

14 Rapoport and Alexeev, p. 124.

only continued the similar efforts being made by Imperial soldiers on the eve of World War I." [15]

* * *

15 David R. Jones, "Russian Tradition and Soviet Military Policy," Current History (May 1983), pp. 198-99.

CHAPTER 3

LET THE GAMES BEGIN!

Early Stages of the Red Army's Doctrinal Debate (1917-1920)

The history of Russia from 1914 to 1920 was one of almost unremittent warfare. Created during the disastrous World War, the fledgling communist government and its Workers' and Peasants' Red Army (Raboché-Krestianskaia Krasnaia Armia, or RKKA) [1] soon found themselves fighting renewed German offensives, the Czech Legion, Allied intervention, White forces, the Polish army, and various pockets of internal unrest and partisan resistance. The fate of the Solshevik regime hung in the proverbial balance, and there seemed to be little time to argue over matters as abstract and academic as military doctrine. And yet, somehow, the military communists made the time. Of course, questions of doctrine were of only secondary concern compared to the crises faced by the army and government during the Russian Civil War. Consequently, accounts of the earlier stages of the RKKA's doctrinal debate--i.e., from

1 The Red Army was established by decree on 28 January 1918. A small controversy has lingered over the years regarding the "official" birthdate of the Red Army. Although Lenin signed the decree on 28 January, the event is celebrated on 23 February. Stalin's Short Course on the History of the Communist Party claims that on 23 February 1918, units of the Red Army repulsed German forays at Narva and Pskov, and the date thus represents the RKKA's first triumph over capitalist aggression. The birthdate controversy was the subject of a May 1965 article in Voenno-istoricheskii zhurnal.

1917 to 1920--are few; the available information is due in large part to the legacy left by Leon Trotsky.

When he became the People's Commissar for War and the Chairman of the Revolutionary Military Council (Revvoensovet, or RVS) in March 1918, Trotsky could boast only a modest knowledge of military subjects. Like Lenin, Trotsky was familiar with the works of Clausewitz, but his greatest influence appears to have been Jean Jaures's L'Armee Nouvelle;^[2] as Karl Radek noted, however, Jaures was best known as a historian and democratic socialist rather than as an authority in military affairs.^[3] Trotsky, burdened with the responsibility of army leadership, became an expert out of necessity, and the Red Army was largely his creation. In fact, Lenin held Trotsky in such high regard as both a military strategist and a Marxist theorist that he accepted Trotsky's judgment in army matters almost without question.^[4]

2 L'Armee Nouvelle was published in 1910; in it Jaures advocated universal military training and a "democratic army," i.e. a socialist militia (see "The New Army" in Margaret Pease's Jean Jaures: Socialist and Humanitarian (New York: B.W. Huebsch, 1917)). Trotsky would also press for a militia system, and although his plan was approved at the Ninth Party Congress and partially implemented under the military reforms of 1924-25, the "territorial-militia" scheme was soon abandoned and the RKKA reverted to standing-army status.

3 Karl Radek, Portrety i pamflety, cited in Isaac Deutscher, The Prophet Armed: Trotsky 1879-1921 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963), pp. 405, 477.

4 Isaac Deutscher, The Prophet Unarmed: Trotsky 1921-1929 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), pp. 55-56.

However, many Bolsheviks in the army grumbled over Trotsky's policies, including his war strategy [5] and his decision to employ ex-tsarist officers as "military specialists" (voenspetsy). [6] Another contentious issue-- the Red Army's military doctrine--became a subject of debate as early as December 1917, when military communists began to contrast the principle of maneuver to the "imperialist" mode of positional warfare. As Trotsky recalled in 1921, "The heralds of the proletarian 'military doctrine' proposed to reduce the entire armed force of the Republic to individual composite detachments or regiments [in 1917 and 1918]," since larger formations were deemed too "ponderous" for maneuver warfare. [7] "In essence," Trotsky continued, "this was the ideology of guerrilla-ism just slicked up a bit." [8] The RKKA's regulations also came under fire since they resembled those of the Imperial Army, which were supposedly "the expression of an outlived military doctrine...." [9]

5 For example, Trotsky offered his resignation from the War Commissariat and RVS to protest the Central Committee's decision to follow Sergei Kamenev's 1919 plan for a southern offensive against Denikin. W. Bruce Lincoln, Red Victory: A History of the Russian Civil War (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989), pp. 222-23.

6 Trotsky offers a number of explanations for this policy in How the Revolution Armed: The Military Writings and Speeches of Leon Trotsky, Vol. 1 (London: New Park Publications, 1981), pp. 169-236.

7 Leon Trotsky, "Military Doctrine or Pseudo-Military Doctrinairism," in How the Revolution Armed: The Military Writings and Speeches of Leon Trotsky, Vol. 5, trans. Brian Pearce (London: New Park Publications, 1981), p. 316. This article was first published as a separate pamphlet by the Supreme Military Publishing Council, Moscow, 1921.

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid.

However, as Trotsky astutely noted, "the noisy innovators were themselves wholly captives of the old military doctrine. They merely tried to put a minus sign wherever previously there was a plus. All their independent thinking came down to just that." [10]

For his part, Trotsky wrote little about the subject in 1917 and 1918; he limited his remarks to an assertion that the Red Army should analyze the whole history of modern war, including the experience of the "imperialist" World War, [11] and apply their lessons to the practical tasks of serving the working class. [12] The lessons of the Russian Civil War, Trotsky warned, were an insufficient base on which to build an army's doctrine--especially considering that the war's outcome was still in doubt. "Such complacency," he wrote, "resting content with small successes...is the worst feature of philistinism, which is radically inimical to the historical tasks of the proletariat." [13] Trotsky urged the

10 Ibid., p. 317.

11 Lenin's description ("The Present War Is an Imperialist War"); V.I. Lenin, "Sotsializm i voina," in V.I. Lenin: Polnoe sobranie sochinenii, Vol. 26 (Moscow, 1974), p. 313.

12 Leon Trotsky, "The Military Academy (Speech at the Opening of the Military Academy, November 8, 1918)," in How the Revolution Armed: The Military Writings and Speeches of Leon Trotsky, Vol. 1, trans. Brian Pearce (London: New Park Publications, 1981), pp. 218-19.

13 Leon Trotsky, "Scientifically or Somehow," in How the Revolution Armed: The Military Writings and Speeches of Leon Trotsky, Vol. 1, trans. Brian Pearce (London: New Park Publications, 1981), p. 222. First published in Voennoe Delo, 23 February 1919.

Red Army to instead direct its thought and effort towards carrying the war to a successful conclusion.[14]

The doctrinal debate continued despite Trotsky's misgivings and began to assume a momentum of its own. Ironically, Trotsky himself had called for such a debate in February 1919 in the Soviet military journal Voennoe Delo. [15] His essay entitled "What Sort of Military Journal Do We Need?" lamented the lack of attention given by the specialists to the specific military qualities of the working class and the unique characteristics of the Civil War (including its emphasis on maneuver)--themes which would become two hallmarks of his opponents. "An open polemic," he wrote, "will shake military thinking out of its equilibrium of immobility" and "infuse a fresh spirit...."[16] Those words would come back to haunt him as the "fresh spirit" he spoke of rapidly turned against him.

14 Vitaly Rapoport and Yuri Alexeev, in High Treason: Essays on the History of the Red Army, 1918-1938 (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1985) refer to a speech by V.E. Borisov which "reopened" the debate in 1918 (p. 124). However, they do not elaborate on either his position or any response, and I have found no reference to Borisov's address in any other work.

15 Voennoe Delo (Military Affairs) began publication in 1918. Trotsky, in a speech entitled "What Sort of Military Journal Do We Need?" characterized it as a forum for abstract and ill-formulated discussions of subjects which bore little relevance to practical military tasks. "Many articles in Voennoe Delo," he wrote, "resemble correspondence exchanged by good friends amongst themselves." Leon Trotsky, "What Sort of Military Journal Do We Need?" in How the Revolution Armed: The Military Writings and Speeches of Leon Trotsky, Vol. 2, trans. Brian Pearce (London: New Park Publications, 1981), pp. 221-28.

16 Ibid., pp. 224, 227-29.

In the July 1919 issue of the same Voennoe Delo, A.I. Tarasov-Rodionov [17] published a piece entitled "Building the Red Army" which criticized the enlistment of voenspetsy within the Red Army. This view was by no means a new one among Bolsheviks, many of whom doubted the political reliability of "bourgeois" military personnel. The main thrust of Tarasov-Rodionov's article, however, expressed his concern that the former imperial officers, having been trained in the "positional" mode of warfare dominant in World War I, held views which were incompatible with the "proletarian" method of war. This latter style, as practiced during the Civil War, emphasized mobility, initiative, and offensive operations as opposed to "the positional warfare of recent times." [18] His comments echoed those of Semyon Budenny, who attributed the positional warfare of World War I to the fact that "there was no real genius among the [imperialist] war leaders." [19]

Tarasov-Rodionov also believed that wars of maneuver were uniquely suited to the proletariat; accordingly, the Red Army should be "subordinated to the maneuvering character of the class war." [20] He encouraged military commanders to concentrate their study of warfare on similar

17 Tarasov-Rodionov was a brigade commander during the Civil War; he either died in prison or was executed in 1938.

18 D. Fedotoff White, The Growth of the Red Army (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1944), p. 159; Trotsky, How the Revolution Armed, Vol. 2, p. 635.

19 Cited in Fedotoff White, The Growth of the Red Army, p. 170.

20 Cited in Trotsky, How the Revolution Armed, Vol. 2, p. 635.

past campaigns and to base their strategy and tactics--and by extension, their military doctrine--on the principle of maneuver. The voenspetsy, he argued, "do not understand and do not recognize the class politics of the proletariat, but consider bourgeois methods of warfare to be apolitical, independent of class and solely correct...."[21] Therefore, "[they] cannot be of any use to the Red Army." [22]

Trotsky called these suggestions "laughable" [23] and began to systematically tear them apart. He pointed out that the chief elements of Tarasov-Rodionov's "proletarian" strategy--"mobility, local initiative, and impetuosity"--were the same concepts employed by the Whites. Trotsky noted especially Denikin's use of cavalry, which the Reds had previously discounted as an "aristocratic" military arm. "Thus, this strategy," Trotsky remarked, "which 'Communist' phrasemongers try to legitimize as the new proletarian strategy, considering it to be beyond the brains of Tsarist generals, has in practice been applied, up to now, most widely, persistently and successfully, by none other than those same generals...." Therefore, since Tarasov-Rodionov proposed that the Red Army study and adopt the methods of the Whites, "it is silly to chatter at the same time about the 'positional' obtuseness of Tsarist generals." [24]

21 Ibid.

22 Ibid.

23 Leon Trotsky, "Guerrilla-ism and the Regular Army," in How the Revolution Armed: The Military Writings and Speeches of Leon Trotsky, Vol. 2, trans. Brian Pearce (London: New Park Publications, 1981), p. 80.

24 Ibid., pp. 80-81.

In the context of civil war, Trotsky observed that such tactics and strategies were the "natural" method of the weaker side. Since "Soviet power has been all the time, and is still the stronger side" because of its historic mission and class solidarity, the Red Army had adopted a "ponderous" organization and corresponding strategy. In contrast the Whites, "as rebels, focused their experience and ingenuity upon the development and application of mobile, guerrilla, 'small-scale' warfare." [25] As the war progressed, however, the Red Army began to realize the advantages of guerrilla-style techniques while the Whites adopted a more "ponderous" and "positional" style. Therefore, Trotsky concluded that the methods practiced by the opposing sides "cannot simply be fitted into the pattern of 'generals'' strategy and 'proletarian' strategy" as Tarasov-Rodionov had suggested. [26]

Furthermore, Trotsky realized that certain objective factors had conditioned the modus operandi of the belligerents. For example, a large number of ex-imperial officers and NCOs with cavalry experience had joined forces with the Whites, which allowed them to execute mobile operations far more effectively than the RKKA even though they were "allegedly forever in the grip of 'positional' obtuseness." [27] The Reds, beset by manpower shortages and institutional prejudices, lacked a suitable trained reserve

25 Ibid., pp. 81-82.

26 Ibid., p. 83.

27 Ibid., p. 84.

for such actions.[28] The Whites had been further aided by the fact that "cavalry flourishes most successfully in what are precisely the most backward [i.e., anti-Bolshevik] parts of the country,"[29] despite Tarasov-Rodionov's claim that maneuver was the exclusive domain of the working class. Finally, Trotsky noted that the Red Army hadn't the material resources sufficient for a capable cavalry arm. He criticized "newcomers to Marxism" who tried to formulate a strategy based on the active and militant nature of the proletariat but failed to realize that "to the aggressive character of a class there does not always correspond a sufficient number of...cavalry horses [ellipses in original]."[30]

Tarasov-Rodionov had belittled his "bourgeois" counterparts for their belief in apolitical and universal principles of war, principles which, on the battlefield, translate into specific tactics and strategies. Trotsky, on the other hand, encouraged the Red Army to learn from all available sources, including its "reactionary" enemy. He insisted that the Whites, like the voenspetsy serving the Bolsheviks, could offer valuable lessons to further the cause of the working class, unlike those who mired themselves in "pseudo-proletarian doctrinairism." [31] Yet the significance of Tarasov-Rodionov's proposals remains in

28 Ibid.

29 Ibid.

30 Ibid., p. 85.

31 Ibid., p. 87.

their attempt to build strategy and tactics on a Marxist foundation and embody them in a corresponding doctrine. This position would attract a wider following and greater importance in the following years.

Naturally, Trotsky didn't stand alone in his opposition to the rising tide of "Marxist" military thought; among the others was the former Major General A.A. Svechin, by then a military specialist and professor at the Red Army's military academy.[32] In Voennoe Delo, no. 15 (1919), Svechin published an essay discussing cultural-class armies and concluded that the Red Army must be based not on communist philosophy or the supposed class nature of the proletariat, but on those principles which formed the foundations of Count Albrecht of Wallenstein's armies during the Thirty Years' War.[33] The seventeenth century saw great changes in the character of war, among them the proliferation of fortifications and the ascendancy of the defense on the battlefield, but one of the most significant military developments during that period was Wallenstein's assembly of an army composed of men of various faiths and nationalities. Unlike the mercenary troops common to the day, however, Wallenstein's army was not only regularly paid and supplied, but continuously disciplined, drilled, and trained, becoming a professional force whose loyalty lay not

32 Svechin had previously served on the Soviet All-Russian Supreme Staff. John Erickson, The Soviet High Command: A Military-Political History, 1918-1941 (London: Macmillan, 1962), pp. 114-115.

33 Fedotoff White, The Growth of the Red Army, p. 160.

only in greed but in allegiance to its commander.[34] Svechin correspondingly professed religious, political, and social toleration within the ranks of the Red Army, and advanced the idea of a national, rather than a class, army. While that army would be subordinated to the will of the government and subject to its policies, Svechin stressed that it should be "left free to develop what he called the specifically soldierly viewpoint, instead of being permeated with political ideas and influences." [35]

Trotsky, while dismissing the school of "proletarian" warfare as utopian, impractical, and ill-formulated, characterized Svechin's position as "reactionary." [36] However, Trotsky's rebuff largely focused on Svechin's criticism of the proposed militia system--a project that Trotsky jealously guarded. [37] As for Svechin's reference to Wallenstein's camp, while Trotsky was willing to accept the validity of the lessons of modern war regardless of the source, to call the seventeenth century "modern" was going a bit too far. Trotsky had earlier claimed that the study of ancient, medieval, and Middle Age warfare may be disregarded, since during World War I

34 Michael Howard, War in European History (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), pp. 29, 37; Robert Ergang, Europe from the Renaissance to Waterloo (Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath and Company, 1967), p. 346.

35 Fedotoff White, The Growth of the Red Army, pp. 160-61.

36 Ibid., p. 161.

37 See Leon Trotsky, "The Militia Program and Its Academic Critic," in How the Revolution Armed: The Military Writings and Speeches of Leon Trotsky, Vol. 2, trans. Brian Pearce (London: New Park Publications, 1981), pp. 163-72. This article was first published in Voennoe Delo, no. 25, 1919.

everything that existed in all countries, in all ages, in all nations, has been put into practice:...on the one hand, men have flown above the clouds, and on the other, men have, like moles, like troglodytes, hidden themselves in caves, in muddy underground trenches. All the poles, all the contradictions in the mutual extermination of peoples have found their expression and application here....[38]

Trotsky regarded the "worthy professor"[39] with considerable respect, and felt Svechin could contribute much to the Red Army where purely military issues were concerned; in this respect, he implied agreement with Svechin's views on a "specifically soldierly" mindset common to all armies. Where the Red Army and ideology merged, however, Trotsky derided Svechin's opinions as "monstrous" and "historically ignorant." [40]

Tarasov-Rodionov's and Svechin's initial forays and Trotsky's rebuttals had subjected strategy, tactics, military history, and the idea of a "proletarian" method of warfare to a vigorous analysis; however, they rarely mentioned military doctrine itself except through inference and implication. Even so, the battle lines between the military communists and their adversaries had clearly been drawn. Furthermore, Trotsky's unique role in the Red Army's doctrinal debate, essentially that of middleman and moderate, had begun to take shape; so too had his harsh, humiliating style.

38 Trotsky, "The Military Academy," pp. 218-19.

39 Trotsky, "The Militia Program and Its Academic Critic," p. 172.

40 Ibid., p. 170.

The subject of military doctrine itself rose to the fore in 1920, when Svechin published "The Foundations of Military Doctrine." He defined military doctrine as "a point of view from which to understand military history, its experience, and lessons....Military doctrine is military, and particularly, tactical philosophy; doctrine creates certainty, which is the soul of every action." [41] Svechin claimed that doctrine reflects a "unity of views," which would translate to a unity of action through military education, regulations, and manuals. [42]

Svechin's views were reminiscent of A.A. Neznamov's during the earlier discussion in the imperial army. In 1920 Neznamov himself, then also a military specialist, continued to defend his previous position. Noting that "military doctrine expresses the view of the people and the government of war," he saw the Red Army as lacking in that regard; like Svechin, Neznamov believed that a military doctrine should be propagated through military regulations, but the RKKA first needed to formulate and adopt that doctrine. [43] But as Rapoport and Alexeev commented, "the primary watershed of

41 Cited in Rapoport and Alexeev, pp. 124-25. I fear that Svechin's works have been lost to the Western world; notwithstanding the fact that, to the best of my knowledge, he has never been published in English, his best-known work Strategiia was last published in its entirety in the Soviet Union in the 1920s. Excerpts are available in some Soviet collections, but I have never seen even a reference to "The Foundations of Military Doctrine" anywhere except in Rapoport and Alexeev.

42 Ibid., p. 125.

43 Ibid.

opinion lay elsewhere,"[44] for while Svechin and Neznamov discussed the need for a military doctrine, the military communists had already begun to formulate its content, or at least their vision of what it should be.

Among these hard-core army Bolsheviks was one F. Trutko, a Civil War veteran and a student at the military academy, who proclaimed that the Red Army needed not just any doctrine, but a proletarian, Marxist military doctrine. Following the lead of Tarasov-Rodionov and other pioneers of the "Marxist method of war," Trutko professed little faith in the specialists' ability to devise such a doctrine. After all, they had had plenty of time before the October 1917 Revolution to produce their own, and failed. More important, however, the voenspetsy would be forever defiled by their bourgeois background, and thus could never fully grasp the eternal truth of Marxism.[45]

The stage had been irrevocably set. Rapoport and Alexeev have characterized this first period of debate, i.e. from 1917 to 1920, as a "reconnaissance in force." [46] How true; compared to the scope, intensity, and consequences of the debate to come, these initial probes resembled a fireworks show--a fine display, a bit of a bang, and an amusing diversion, but with little effect. In 1921, however, twenty megaton warheads would begin to fall, and

44 Ibid.

45 Ibid.

46 Ibid.

Trotsky stood confidently and obliviously--or stupidly,
depending on your point of view--at Ground Zero.

* * *

CHAPTER 4

ENTER THE GLADIATORS

During 1921 two events of critical importance to the doctrinal debate occurred. In March, the Communist Party officially proclaimed its victory in the Russian Civil War; the Whites had been vanquished, and Soviet power reigned supreme.[1] With that crisis behind them, military communists could begin the satisfying task of writhing and posturing in a bog of ideological slime in earnest. Perhaps even more significant, a new player appeared on the doctrinal stage--Mikhail V. Frunze, a man who has since acquired near-legendary status in the annals of Red Army history, and who proved second only to Trotsky (if anyone) in his importance in the debate.

Frunze joined the Bolshevik Party in 1904 at the age of nineteen and by 1917 had been imprisoned, exiled and twice sentenced to death.[2] His military work--at first, revolutionary agitation and propaganda within the ranks--began during World War I, and he had taken a detachment of pro-Bolshevik troops to march on Moscow during the October 1917 Revolution. Soon afterwards, Frunze helped organize

1 W. Bruce Lincoln writes that by March 1921 all of the Transcaucasus had fallen under Soviet control; on 8 March before the Tenth Party Congress, Lenin proclaimed that "The last of the hostile armies has been driven from our territory. That is our achievement!" W. Bruce Lincoln, Red Victory: A History of the Russian Civil War (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989), p. 461.

2 Harriet Fast Scott and William F. Scott, Soviet Military Doctrine: Continuity, Formulation, and Dissemination (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1988), p. 5.

the RKKA and by 1920 had risen to the command of a frontline army.[3] As Erickson wrote, Frunze "represented the Communist Party intellectual turned soldier," possessing the courage, perseverance, and administrative ability necessary to build an army as well as lead it on the battlefield.[4] Though he may have been "lacking in imagination," Frunze compensated for such handicaps with an intense faith in Marxism, and he "worked most intensively to master the military trade, both in theory and practice." [5]

Frunze displayed his mastery of the practical aspects of warfare during the Civil War, during which he led the victorious campaigns against Kolchak and Wrangel.[6] In 1921, Frunze turned to more cerebral pursuits--namely, correcting what he perceived to be grave defects in the RKKA's military theory and doctrine. However, Frunze would not content himself with an article in the party press or some similar academic exercise. Rather, he appeared before the Tenth Party Congress in March 1921 to present a program developed jointly with Sergei I. Gusev.[7]

3 John Erickson, The Soviet High Command: A Military-Political History, 1918-1941 (London: Macmillan, 1962), p. 59.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

6 Lincoln, p. 18.

7 Gusev had also been a Bolshevik since 1905; during the Civil War he served on various regional Military Revolutionary Councils, and in 1921 was appointed head of the Red Army's Political Administration. Unlike Frunze, Gusev never served in a combat position or as commander of a regular army unit; his posts were exclusively administrative and political. Erickson, p. 839.

Despite the Civil War victory, the Tenth Party Congress convened against a background of defeat, intra-party division and internal unrest. Soviet attempts to export communist revolution on the bayonets of the Red Army had met with a disastrous fate at the gates of Warsaw the previous year; the "Workers' Opposition" within the party threatened Bolshevik dominance; and, in a supreme act of irony, the "heroic" Kronstadt sailors revolted against Bolshevik rule just days before the congress convened.[8] Lenin, determined to rid both the party and the nation of opposition groups, advanced his famous "Point Seven" to eliminate intra-party strife and proclaimed "We need no opposition now, comrades, this is not the time for it!"[9] "Unity" consequently became the theme of the Tenth Party Congress, so Frunze and Gusev hoped to capitalize on the prevailing political mood by submitting a series of twenty-two theses calling for a "unity of views" within the Red Army--a unity of views corresponding, of course, to their own particular brand of military and political thought.[10] Though Trotsky's opposition prevented the theses' inclusion in the congress' formal agenda, they warrant examination as

8 Walter D. Jacobs, Frunze: The Soviet Clausewitz, 1885-1925 (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1969), p. 24; for a fuller discussion of the war against Poland and the Kronstadt uprising of 1921, see Lincoln, Red Victory, pp. 399-421, 489-511.

9 V.I. Lenin, Sochineniia (2nd ed: Moscow, 1930), Vol. 26, pp. 227. Cited in Jacobs, p. 24fn. Lenin's "Point Seven" is included in KPSS v resoliutsiiakh i resheniakh s'ezdov, konferentsii i plenumov TsK (7th ed.: Moscow, 1954), Vol. 1, pp. 529-30.

10 Jacobs, p. 25.

the precursor to the "Unified Military Doctrine" for which Frunze is revered in Soviet military history; however, the the first sixteen points were penned by Gusev alone, while Frunze contributed the last six.

Gusev's theses cautioned the Congress that, although the Civil War had been won, the nascent Soviet republic faced a still more serious threat from "imperialist" states more capable than the Whites [11] and from "Bonapartist" attempts from reactionary elements within the RKKA.[12] Furthermore, he noted that during the Civil War the Red Army had been forced to rely heavily on peasant elements notorious for their "instability and vacillation." [13] To enhance the quality of the RKKA and enable it to meet potential internal and external threats, Gusev recommended a series of improvements in the Red Army's training, command, equipment, and political education, as well as a strengthening of party-military relations. In addition, he gave his approval to a system of one-man command and a gradual transition to a militia system.[14]

However, Gusev made little mention of a "proletarian" method of war, or of those elements which were had become its hallmarks--maneuver and offensive action. He did predict that future wars would be wars of maneuver and

11 Sergei I. Gusev, "Reorganizatsiia Raboche-Krest'ianskoi Krasnoi Armii," in Grazhdanskaia voina i Krasnaia Armia (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1958), pp. 120-21.

12 Ibid., p. 124.

13 Ibid., p. 120.

14 Ibid., pp. 121-26.

called for the Red Army to be equipped accordingly, [15] but he made no effort to link the concept with the supposed class nature of proletariat. In fact, he suggested that the Red Army learn mobility by studying not the writings of Marx and Engels but the techniques of Makhno, a Ukrainian guerrilla leader much maligned by the Bolsheviks.[16] Yet the significance of the twenty-two point program to the doctrinal debate lay not in Gusev's contribution, but in those theses authored by Frunze.

Frunze's first thesis, number seventeen in the program, stressed the desirability for "a community of political ideology" within the Red Army, as well as "a unity of views about the character of military problems facing the Republic, the means of solving them, and methods for the combat preparation training of troops." [17] In other words, he called for a "unified military doctrine" representing the "scientific proletarian theory of war [emphasis added]" to be institutionalized in the regulations, manuals, and directives of the Soviet military.[18]

The development of this proletarian doctrine, Frunze continued in thesis nineteen, "may not be entrusted to the narrow specialists of military affairs," referring to the

15 Ibid., pp. 123-24.

16 Ibid., p. 123. Makhno's heretical blend of socialism and anarchism had earned him the distinction of being declared an outlaw by the Ukrainian Communist Party in January 1920. During the Civil War he had fought with equal zeal against both Red and White armies in the Ukraine. Lincoln, pp. 326-27.

17 Gusev, p. 126.

18 Ibid., pp. 126-27.

ex-tsarist voenspetsy. [19] Rather, the development of the doctrine would rely on both the military expertise of those specialists and the proletarian consciousness of political workers. [20] Frunze conceded that the specialists would play an important role in military theoretical thought, representing as they did an invaluable resource which could not yet be replaced by well-trained and competent Bolshevik personnel. Even so, Frunze apparently felt that political considerations and ideological "purity" were at least as important to the evolution of a "proletarian" way of war as a mastery of the military art. This attitude was further reflected in Frunze's final thesis, in which he urged the state press to publish "all foreign Marxist works on military questions." [21] One might take note that Frunze made no effort to ensure a wider propagation of those works considered vital to "bourgeois" military thought, such as the writings of Clausewitz, Jomini, or Moltke, thus implying that such historically "obsolete" theories bore little relevance to communist society and the proletarian army.

Frunze's contributions to the twenty-two point program marked a seminal development in the fight for a proletarian military doctrine. True, Frunze's initial proposals neglected the supposed superiority of offense over defense. Granted, the importance of maneuver was mentioned only by Gusev, and even then briefly. Yet Frunze, a renowned war

19 Ibid., p. 127.

20 Ibid.

21 Ibid.

hero and combat leader of some significance, did claim that there was a proletarian way of war, unique to the working class and superior to then-current bourgeois military concepts. One might infer from the context and timing of the Frunze-Gusev program that the proletarian military doctrine was based upon the lessons of the Civil War, the only war in history won by an army with proletarian elements at its head. Yet, while calling for a unified proletarian military doctrine to unite the RKKA in this new style of warfare, Frunze made little effort to define what that method consisted of. Despite the shortcomings and ambiguities, however, the Frunze-Gusev theses are significant as a sort of "starting point" in Frunze's military-theoretical thought; the best was yet to come.

Frunze's and Gusev's program encompassed a wide range of military topics, but at its core lay an "urgent advocacy of a uniform military doctrine for the Red Army." [22] For the most part, this plea fell on the deaf ears of a congress preoccupied with the institution of the New Economic Policy and the anti-Bolshevik rebellions in Tambov and Kronstadt. [23] Frunze and Gusev were further hindered by Trotsky's opposition, which stemmed from his view that it was not yet possible to develop a mature, theoretically sound proletarian military doctrine. "It is necessary," he warned, "to exercise the greatest vigilance in order to

22 D. Fedotoff-White, The Growth of the Red Army (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1944), p. 161.

23 Erickson, p. 125.

escape falling into some mystical or metaphysical trap, even though such a pitfall were covered up by revolutionary terminology." [24] While Trotsky believed that a "proletarian" military doctrine was desirable, he stressed that it should be "concrete, precise, and filled with historical content" beyond the limited experience of the Civil War. [25]

Trotsky's opposition proved sufficient to move Frunze and Gusev to withdraw their proposed program; thereafter Gusev refrained from further work on military doctrine altogether. [26] For Frunze, however, the defeat at the Tenth Party Congress represented only a temporary setback which was lessened by some tangible political gains. The debate would no longer be limited to the pages of military journals; it had now become a party issue. The members of the so-called "Red Command" had shown their willingness to voice their own views and attempt to further their own ambitions in an open forum, in spite of Trotsky's considerable stature within the Red Army and the party. A tide of discontent was rising against Trotsky's administration of the War Commissariat, and military communists who shared Frunze's sense of urgency to develop a proletarian military science began to rally in opposition to Trotsky. At the same time, Trotsky's opponents began to

24 Leon Trotsky, Kak voorzhuvalas Revoliutsiia, Vol. 3, Book 2 (Moscow, 1924), p. 201, cited in Fedotoff White, The Growth of the Red Army, pp. 161-162.

25 Ibid.

26 Jacobs, pp. 33-34.

expand and consolidate their own positions within the party hierarchy, for during the course of the Tenth Party Congress Frunze was elected to the Central Committee, along with his supporters K.E. Voroshilov and G.K. Ordzhonikidze; Gusev became a candidate member.[27]

* * *

27 Erickson, p. 125.

CHAPTER 5

THE "BATTLE OF ARTICLES" [1]

By Frunze's own admission, the twenty-two theses prepared for the Tenth Party Congress were riddled with defects; he later conceded that they had "a certain vagueness, inexactness, and lack of understanding in formulation." [2] Following the congress, Frunze returned to his command in the Ukraine, where he attempted to remedy the flaws. The result, hailed in the Soviet military press as "a great contribution to the development of Soviet military doctrine," [3] first appeared in the July 1921 issue of Armia i revoliutsiia under the title "A Unified Military Doctrine and the Red Army" ("Edinaia voennaia doktrina i Krasnaia Armia"). [4]

Frunze's article opened with a review of the brief "history" of his unified military doctrine; interestingly enough, Frunze made no mention of the defeat at the Tenth

1 I have borrowed this title from Walter D. Jacobs's Frunze: The Soviet Clausewitz, 1885-1925 (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1969).

2 Mikhail V. Frunze, M.V. Frunze: Izbrannye proizvedeniia, Vol. 2 (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1957), p. 92, cited in Jacobs, p. 33.

3 S.P. Ivanov, "Soviet Military Doctrine and Strategy" (Voennaia mysl', No. 5, May 1969); translated and reprinted in Selected Readings from Military Thought, 1963-1973, Vol. 5, Part 2 (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1982), p. 20.

3 Various sources refer to both the concept and the title differently, e.g. "Single Military Doctrine" or "Uniform Military Doctrine." For the purposes of this paper, the term "Unified" shall be used throughout, as I believe that term most accurately represents its proponents' intent--to "unify" the views and methods of the Red Army.

Party Congress, but rather lamented the apparent lack of effort within the Party to formulate such a doctrine. He lamely attributed much of the blame to conditions that had existed under the Tsar which had precluded "discussions about any kind of broad scientific work." [5] However, by July 1921 the forces of "reaction" had been effectively crushed and the working class ostensibly stood firmly in power. These and other arising social conditions, he claimed, "not only permit, but frankly demand that each honest citizen devote a maximum of energy and initiative" towards the development of military-theoretical thought. "Sufficient material for the task," in the form of personal experience and military knowledge, could be found within the ranks of the Red Army, including even those ex-tsarist military specialists capable of "rising above philistine stupidity and stagnation." [6]

Frunze then made an effort to remedy one of the most glaring defects of the original Frunze-Gusev theses. Throughout the platform presented to the Tenth Party Congress, Frunze had made liberal use of the term "unified military doctrine" without once defining it. In his article, Frunze based the definition on four points

5 Mikhail V. Frunze, "Edinaia voennaia doktrina i Krasnaia Armia," in M.V. Frunze: Izbrannye proizvedeniia (Moscow: Voennoe Izdatel'stvo, 1965), pp. 38-39; Frunze here implies that rigidity of thought and official censorship hindered the development of military theory. Ironically, those same criticisms would be leveled against Frunze's conception of a unified military doctrine by Svechin and, to a lesser extent, Trotsky.

6 Ibid., p. 39.

concerning the nature of modern war, the purpose of military doctrine, and its content. First, he noted that modern wars had assumed a "mass" character. Unlike earlier conflicts involving only small, professional armies, future wars would directly involve "almost every single member of the entire population." [7] Consequently, all state and social forces would be called upon to participate. [8]

Frunze also observed that such a total commitment of a nation's population and resources increased the importance of preparation and planning. "The state," he wrote,

must determine in advance the character of its general and, in particular, its military policy, and in accordance with it select the political goals of its military efforts and...establish a definite plan of government-wide activity that takes into account future conflicts and ensures success in advance by the expedient use of popular energy. [9]

This somewhat lengthy discourse essentially urges the Soviet state to plan and prepare for possible future conflicts; [10] in order to do so, however, Frunze claimed that the Soviet

7 Ibid., p. 40. When referring to "earlier" conflicts, Frunze meant those before the age of Napoleon.

8 Jacobs notes that "This view, while corresponding to the Marxist analysis of war, is not original with Frunze or with the socialist school of writers. The view had, indeed, long been current in non-Soviet thought." (Jacobs, p. 37 ff.) One need only look to the *levee en masse* of revolutionary France or to Gen. William Mitchell's then-current strategic bombing doctrine to see that such a view was characteristic of contemporary military theory, and no great "discovery" for Frunze or military communists in general.

9 Frunze, "Edinaia voennaia doktrina i Krasnaia Armia," p. 41.

10 Again, no great discovery; the plans of all military forces reflect their perceptions of "the next war." As Jacobs observed, "There is nothing peculiarly Marxist about prior planning." Jacobs, p. 37.

armed forces must be "unified from top to bottom by a community of views both on the character of military tasks themselves and on the means of their solution." This was the purpose of a unified military doctrine.[11]

Finally, Frunze classified the contents of a military doctrine into "technical" and "political" components. The first concerned the organization of the Red Army, the combat training of its personnel, and the means of conducting military operations. The second, "political" component was a bit more vague, and included the relationship between the armed forces and "the general order of state life," as well as "the character of military tasks themselves." [12]

At last, having discussed almost every other aspect of a "unified military doctrine," Frunze felt ready to plunge into a definition of the elusive beast. "A unified military doctrine," he wrote,

is the teaching accepted in a given state's army that establishes the character of the development of the country's armed forces, the methods of the combat training of troops, their leadership based on the dominant views of the state [regarding] the character of military problems before the state, and methods of their resolution resulting from the state's class character and determined by the level of development of the country's productive forces.[13]

Frunze qualified this definition with the admission that it lacked precision, and suggested that its formulation

11 Frunze, "Edinaia voennaia doktrina i Krasnaia Armia," p. 41.

12 Ibid., p. 42.

13 Ibid.

required further work;[14] but as definitions go, his was an acceptable one for military doctrine, "unified" or otherwise. Perhaps the one element to which Western strategists would take exception was Frunze's contention that military doctrine resulted "from the state's class character," yet it was precisely that inclusion which gave his doctrine its "proletarian" flavor.

Having defined his conception of a unified military doctrine, however tentatively, Frunze turned to a cursory examination of three states--Germany, England, and France--whose military establishments exhibited the traits of such a doctrine. From this study, Frunze concluded that "the military concerns of a given state...are wholly dependent on the general conditions of the life of that state," presumably referring to social relations and economic development in addition to the governments' policies.[15] He also stated that the "character" of a military doctrine depended on the "general political line of the social class which rules it," and claimed that a doctrine's "vitality" was based upon "its strict compliance with the general goals of the state and with those material and spiritual resources which are at its disposal." [16] Therefore, the "bourgeois" military experience demonstrated that military doctrine

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid., p. 47.

16 Ibid.

"cannot be invented," but is derived from objective conditions supplemented by theoretical work.[17]

Frunze had based these conclusions on the military experiences of the Germany, England, and France; but while the need for and the purposes of a unified military doctrine were not peculiar to the Soviet state, its "proletarian" variant would differ greatly from "bourgeois" doctrines. To demonstrate, Frunze attempted to apply his conclusions to the Red Army.

"We live in a workers' and peasants' state," Frunze boasted, "where the working class possesses the leadership role." [18] Consequently, Frunze went on, the general conditions of life within the Soviet republic, the social class which ruled it, and the goals of the state differed greatly from those in any capitalist nation; this in itself provided the basis for a revolutionary, "proletarian" military doctrine. Theirs, Frunze claimed, was a state and an army whose fundamental task was "the annihilation of capitalist relations of production;" therefore, "between our proletarian state and the rest of the bourgeois world there can be one condition--long, persistent, desperate war to the death, war which demands colossal endurance, discipline, firmness, steadfastness and unity of will." [19]

By heralding the inevitable, final conflict between communism and capitalism, Frunze again sought to highlight

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid., p. 48.

19 Ibid., p. 48.

the urgent need for a unified military doctrine. However, he had yet to show that this doctrine was possible given the resources then available. The Red Army, certainly, was not short on military experience, counting within its ranks and among its staff millions of World War and Civil War veterans. Furthermore, and perhaps more important, Frunze claimed that "the social-political content of our future doctrine" had already been provided "in the ideology of the working class--in the program of the Russian Communist workers' party,"[20] once more injecting a "proletarian" quality into military doctrine.

With all of the essential building blocks of military doctrine present, Frunze set about the grim task of specifying its content. He had earlier divided military doctrine into "technical" and "political" spheres; these in turn were further subdivided into questions of training, organization, and the "methods of solving combat problems" on the technical side, and the character of military problems and the relationship of the armed forces to the "general system of state life" in the political arena. The remainder of Frunze's article discussed these specific questions. For example, the question of the character of military problems (i.e., the "class character" of future wars) has already been mentioned, but warrants further discussion. Future wars involving the Soviet state, Frunze contended, would represent class struggle in its most

20 Ibid., p. 50.

intense, far-reaching form,[21] and "by the very course of the historical revolutionary process the working class will be forced to go to the offensive, when favorable conditions for this develop." [22] Frunze had already placed considerable stress on the inevitability of war between communism and capitalism, but within this discussion of the class character of future conflict he mentioned the pre-eminence of an offensive strategy for the first time. His claim was carefully couched in Marxist terminology; nonetheless, as Walter Jacobs observed, "there is no misinterpreting the meaning of the advice 'to go over to the offensive against capital whenever conditions are favorable.' This is pre-emptive war with a vengeance." [23]

To prepare for this coming conflict, the Red Army needed suitable training. Frunze accordingly foresaw a "need to educate our army in the spirit of the greatest activity, to train it for the completion of the tasks of the Revolution by means of energetic and decisively, boldly conducted offensive operations." [24] By happy coincidence it was precisely in that active, offensive spirit that the Red Army had conducted itself in the Civil War, or so Frunze claimed; of course, given the "active" nature of the

21 Ibid., p. 49. Frunze here again spoke about the "inevitable active battle with our class enemies," which required that "the energy and will of the country must be directed to the creation and strengthening of our military might...."

22 Ibid., p. 51.

23 Jacobs, p. 43.

24 Frunze, "Edinaia voennaia doktrina i Krasnaia Armia," p. 52.

proletarian class and the irresistible force of history, it seemed only natural to Frunze that the military vanguard of the workers' state would adopt an offensive doctrine. Frunze apparently forgot that every major belligerent power, though "imperialist," had immediately taken the offensive when World War I erupted in 1914--the Austro-Hungarians invaded Poland, Russia marched on East Prussia, the German army invaded France through Belgium, and the French advanced on Alsace-Lorraine.[25] Frunze had, perhaps unwittingly, engaged in a central military debate of his time; the "tyranny of the offensive" had led to disaster in 1914, and many Western military theorists counterposed it to the methods of position, attrition, and defensive preparation which they felt had won the war.[26]

Frunze considered training the Red Army for offensive operations as only one means of solving military problems. While he tirelessly promoted the fundamentally offensive nature of proletarian military art, the state of the Soviet economy and the Red Army's technical backwardness posed significant obstacles to the successful conclusion of any large-scale offensive campaign. To overcome this disadvantage, Frunze recommended preparation for wars of

25 Michael Howard, "Men Against Fire: The Doctrine of the Offensive in 1914," in Peter Paret, ed., Makers of Modern Strategy: From Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), p. 510.

26 Condoleezza Rice, "The Making of Soviet Strategy," in Peter Paret, ed., Makers of Modern Strategy: From Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), p. 657.

maneuver. Such a war would rely on mobility as a force multiplier [27] for both offensive and, where absolutely necessary, defensive operations. Frunze also envisaged an alliance between the Red Army and the proletariat of other nations, especially those at war with the workers' paradise, predicting that "the [indigenous] proletariat will attack [its own government] and with it, as its main weapon, the Red Army will also attack." Furthermore, Frunze suggested that field troops be strengthened at the expense of defensive fortifications, which would be rendered obsolete in a war of maneuver. For those defensive operations which could not be avoided, Frunze advocated advance preparation for partisan warfare in areas which might be evacuated in a strategic withdrawal. Finally, Frunze stressed the role of horse cavalry in future conflicts, a notion which reflected his ideas on the importance of maneuver and the offensive, yet implied the abandonment of his (and Gusev's) earlier ideas regarding "a new type of arm--armored cavalry." [28]

"A Unified Military Doctrine and the Red Army" may be summarized in four points. First, Frunze claimed that there

27 Allow me to apologize for the military jargon. To those unfamiliar with the concept, a "force multiplier" is any factor, such as technological superiority or esprit de corps, which would allow an army to compensate for other disadvantages (usually numerical inferiority) or merely to enhance its overall capability relative to the enemy.

28 Frunze, "Edinaia voennaia doktrina i Krasnaia Armia," pp. 52-54. By mentioning the potential need for strategic withdrawal, Frunze was not abandoning or minimizing the idea of the offensive as the basis for a proletarian military doctrine. In 1922 he did not object to the notion of defense per se, but to defensive positional warfare, the bane of bourgeoisie military art.

was indeed a proletarian way of war. Second, the Soviet state urgently needed a military doctrine to unify the Red Army in its military methods and political views. Third, this doctrine would, of course, be a "proletarian" military doctrine uniquely suited to the armed forces of the workers' and peasants' state. Finally, this proletarian doctrine would reflect the class nature of the Soviet republic and the RKKA in its long-term strategic and political outlook as well as in its emphasis on the principles of maneuver and the offensive. One might argue that the connection between the Red Army's reliance on maneuver during the Civil War and its "proletarian character" was tenuous at best, yet Soviet military historians have implausibly claimed that the "active, highly mobile, and offensive" nature of the RKKA's operations resulted from the fact that "the Soviet Armed Forces were headed by elements imbued with the active ideology of the working class." [29]

Some of Frunze's ideas resembled those of his quasi-ally, Mikhail N. Tukhachevsky. Tukhachevsky, a former aristocrat and lieutenant in the Tsar's army, was a particularly fervent believer in offensive warfare who had "taken on the mantle of the militant internationalist." [30]

29 S.A. Tiushkevich, ed., Sovetskie Vooruzhennye Cily: istoriia stroitel'stva (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1978), pp. 122-23.

30 Albert Seaton and Joan Seaton, The Soviet Army: 1918 to the Present (London: The Bodley Head, 1986), p. 66. According to Fedotoff White, Tukhachevsky had "passed from the officers' mess of the aristocratic Semenovskii Regiment into the ranks of the Bolshevik party" and "took an extreme position in approaching problems of warfare." D. Fedotoff

In his pamphlet Krasnaia Armia i militsia, [31] published in January 1921, Tukhachevsky posed the question, "What is the way in which [the proletariat] will best achieve their aims?" He suggested that the answer lay in armed revolution within bourgeois states, armed socialist attacks on capitalist nations, "or a combination of both," depending on the circumstances. He expressed certainty, however, that "if a socialist revolution succeeds in gaining power in any country, it will have a self-evident right to expand, and will strive to cover the whole world by making its immediate influence felt in all neighboring countries." In such an endeavor, "Its most powerful instrument will naturally be its military forces." [32] Consequently Tukhachevsky, like Frunze, regarded the offensive as the sole means of achieving the aims of the working class through military means. Correspondingly, he also placed a low premium on the value of defensive fortifications. [33]

Tukhachevsky's affection towards offensive warfare was based upon a peculiar blend of "traditional" military

White, The Growth of the Red Army (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1944), p. 171.

31 The focus of Tukhachevsky's pamphlet was Trotsky's advocacy of a militia system. Whether the Soviet Union should retain a regular army or adopt a militia system was the topic of a simultaneous debate within the Red Army.

32 Cited in Thomas G. Butson, The Tsar's Lieutenant; the Soviet Marshal (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1984), p. 149.

33 Fedotoff White, The Growth of the Red Army, pp. 170-71. Both Frunze and Tukhachevsky initially came out against defensive positional warfare in any circumstance; both would later soften their views somewhat, but continue to share a distaste for the concept. Tukhachevsky's position, however, was always the more extreme of the two.

thought, patriotism, and Marxist orthodoxy.[34] Although a party member, he did not necessarily adhere to the concept of the "active" nature of the working class and its historic mission, despite his pronouncements to that effect.

According to Erickson, "his support for the Bolshevik regime seems to have derived less from any political idea than his realization that they were demonically active, that they would serve the fading fortunes of Russia most with their doctrine of expanding revolution." [35] However, despite the intensity of his opinions, Tukhachevsky would not take an active role in the debate until the following year, perhaps due in part to his defeat at Warsaw in 1920.

On the other hand, Commissar for War Trotsky again proved only too happy to cast his bread upon the doctrinal waters. His first rebuff to Frunze's landmark article took the form of a speech before the Military Science Society of the Military Academy on 1 November 1921. Quoting the voenspets Svechin, who "greatly reveres Suvorov and the Suvorov traditions," [36] Trotsky noted that the adoption of

34 Both Frunze and Tukhachevsky relied heavily on Marxist theory in formulating their military concepts. Still, Tukhachevsky's thought remained forever "tainted" by his imperial service and training in the Napoleonic military traditions, while Frunze studied Suvorov intensively. On the inspiration for Tukhachevsky's military thought see John Erickson, The Soviet High Command (London: Macmillan, 1962), p. 57-58.

35 Ibid., p. 58.

36 Alexander Suvorov (1729-1800), perhaps the most famous military figure in tsarist Russian history, has been called "a father figure in Russian military thought." Hew Strachan, European Armies and the Conduct of War (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1983), p. 56.

a unified military doctrine would lead to censorship in military discussion.[37] Undoubtedly the ex-tsarist military professor had much more to fear from censorship than the Commissar, but Trotsky nonetheless took the opportunity to equate Frunze with the tsarist censors of Nicholas's reign.[38]

In his address Trotsky further took issue with the emphasis Frunze and Tukhachevsky placed on the offensive. If the working class was naturally inclined toward an offensive strategy and doctrine, he asked, how would one explain Brest-Litovsk, an obvious political and military retreat? He answered simply that "It is a maneuver. Only a dashing cavalryman thinks one must always attack. Only a simpleton thinks that retreat means death. Attack and retreat can be integral parts of a maneuver and can equally lead to victory." [39] As for the need for a unified military doctrine itself, Trotsky simply responded, "Our doctrine is Marxism. Why invent it a second time?" [40]

Trotsky also responded to both Frunze's and Tukhachevsky's criticism of positional warfare and emphasis on maneuver. Noting that maneuver was characteristic of the

37 Leon Trotsky, "Opening and Closing Speeches in the Discussion on Military Doctrine at the Military Science Society, Attached to the Military Academy of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army, November 1, 1921," in How the Revolution Armed: The Military Writings and Speeches of Leon Trotsky, Vol. 5, trans. Brian Pearce (London: New Park Publications, 1981), p. 301.

38 Jacobs, p. 52.

39 Trotsky, "Opening and Closing Speeches," p. 306.

40 Ibid., p. 309.

Don Cossack General Mamontov and the anti-Bolshevik guerrilla leader Pelyura, he asked "how does it happen that the Red Army's doctrine coincides with the doctrine of Mamontov and Petlyura?"[41] Trotsky claimed that maneuver was employed by both sides during the civil war, given the numerical strength of the opposing forces and the wide expanse of territory. And any attempt to construct a universal doctrine from that limited experience, he said, would be "absurd." In a war between large, technologically advanced armies "a more solid front will be formed," once more resurrecting the "positional" style of warfare employed during World War I.[42]

Trotsky's full rebuttal to Frunze's article appeared shortly thereafter in the November-December 1921 issue of Voennaia nauka i revoliutsiia. The title itself, "Military Doctrine or Pseudo-Military Doctrinairism" ("Voennaia doktrina ili mnimo-voennoe doktrinerstvo"), spoke volumes about the tone of Trotsky's article. His multifaceted attack primarily dealt with Frunze's and Tukhachevsky's conceptions of the tasks of the Red Army, the relationship between offense and defense, the so-called "proletarian" method of war (with its emphasis on offense and maneuver), and the necessity for a "unified military doctrine" itself.

Much of Trotsky's article was concerned with the issue of whether or not the Red Army really needed a single,

41 Ibid., p. 304.

42 Ibid., p. 305.

official military doctrine. Trotsky noted that, following the October 1917 Revolution and faced with the prospect of imminent civil war and capitalist intervention, the Bolsheviks were forced to create the Red Army from a variety of sources, including the poorly trained and undisciplined Red Guard, politically unreliable tsarist officers, and peasant "atamans." This, Trotsky noted, could be construed as reflecting a lack of "unified doctrine" in the formation of the army, but

such an appraisal would be pedantically banal....We actually created the army out of that historical material which was ready to hand, unifying all this work from the standpoint of a workers' state fighting to preserve, entrench and extend itself. Those who can't get along without the metaphysically tainted word "doctrine" might say that, in creating the Red Army, an armed force on a new class basis, we thereby constructed a new military doctrine...from beginning to end, the entire work was cemented by the unity of a revolutionary class goal, by the unity of will directed toward that goal and by the unity of the Marxist method of orientation.[43]

Even so, "certain perspicacious innovators" continued to profess the need to construct a unified military doctrine.[44] Trotsky was quick to point out the difficulties, and indeed the pointlessness, of that effort. He noted that military and political conditions during the

43 Leon Trotsky, "Military Doctrine or Pseudo-Military Doctrinairism," in How the Revolution Armed: The Military Writings and Speeches of Leon Trotsky, Vol. 5, trans. Brian Pearce (London: New Park Publications, 1981), p. 316.

44 Ibid., p. 318. Trotsky here used the analogy of "the King in Andersen's story who went about without any clothes on and didn't know it. 'It is necessary, at last, to create the doctrine of the Red Army,' say some."

1920s were continuously and rapidly changing, denying the communist regime and its Red Army the stability necessary to identify even the most basic principles needed to construct a lasting, well-founded military doctrine. As a result, "it would be mortally dangerous for us to lull our vigilance with doctrinaire phrases and 'formulas' concerning international relations." The only "doctrine" for the Red Army, he maintained, was to "be on the alert and keep both eyes open!"[45]

Assuming that a unified military doctrine was both necessary and feasible, however, would its character be predominantly offensive? While conceding that "only a traitor can renounce the offensive,"[46] he maintained that strategic defense played a critical role in Soviet policy, citing as evidence the renunciation of Baltic sovietization, Soviet attempts to enter into peace and trade negotiations with the West, the New Economic Policy, and recognition of pre-Revolution debts. In the military sphere, the Red Army's campaigns during the Civil War exhibited both offensive and defensive traits, but following their defeat at Warsaw and the failure of the "September movement" in Italy, the military hand of the bourgeoisie had been

45 Ibid., p. 323. On p. 325 he concluded that "Military matters are very empirical, very practical matters. It is a very risky exercise to try to elevate them into a system, in which field service regulations, the establishment of a squadron, and the cut of a uniform are derived from fundamental principles."

46 Ibid., p. 330. Trotsky continued, "only a simpleton can reduce our entire strategy to the offensive."

strengthened. Accordingly, the defensive aspect of Soviet military strategy had become more pronounced, though the trend could conceivably be reversed with "a counter-offensive which in its turn can culminate in a decisive battle." [47]

Still, assuming that a unified military doctrine was both necessary and feasible, and assuming that it was to be based on maneuver and the offensive, would this really constitute a new, "proletarian" method of warfare? Trotsky answered that question with a resounding "no," and supported his position with examples drawn from the experience of the Civil War. The Red Army's predilection for maneuver during the Civil War, he claimed, could not have resulted from "its inner qualities, its class nature, [and] its revolutionary spirit" because "the strategy of the Whites was wholly a strategy of maneuver." [48] Furthermore, the highest capacity for maneuvering was characteristic not of the Red Army's campaigns, but of "the operations of Ungern and Makhno, those degenerate, bandit outgrowths of the civil war." [49] He concluded that "civil war [in general] is characterized by maneuvering on both sides. One cannot, therefore, consider the capacity for maneuvering a special manifestation of the revolutionary character of the Red

47 Ibid., pp. 332-33.

48 Ibid., pp. 338-39.

49 Ibid. As aforementioned, the original Frunze-Gusev theses had ironically suggested that the Red Army study Makhno's operations to learn more about mobility in warfare.

Army." [50] Even more damaging were Trotsky's claims that the offense and maneuver were embodied in the contemporary military doctrine of bourgeois France, and that the Red Army had not only imitated, but actually learned those concepts from the Whites during the Civil War! [51]

Regarding the international tasks before the Red Army, Trotsky concurred that, since war is a continuation of politics "rifle in hand," revolutionary wars should be pursued whenever feasible. [52] Yet Trotsky urged caution; in response to Tukhachevsky's impatience he warned that "Armed intervention is like the forceps of the obstetrician: used at the right moment it can ease the birth-pangs, but if brought into play prematurely it can only cause a miscarriage." [53]

In addition to these criticisms, Trotsky faulted the "Red commanders" for placing too much emphasis on the experience of the Civil War. "We must renounce," he concluded, "attempts at building an absolute revolutionary strategy out of our limited experience of the three years of civil war" since the lessons of any one conflict are unique and cannot be counted on to guarantee success in the future. "The danger," Trotsky concluded, "is that this kind of style, developed out of a single case, can easily outlive the situation that gave rise to it...." [54]

50 Ibid., p. 339.

51 Ibid., pp. 342, 345.

52 Ibid., p. 328.

53 Ibid., p. 337.

54 Ibid., p. 341-42.

To summarize the main points of Trotsky's article, he contended that there was at the time no such thing as a workers' way of war. Trotsky had earlier claimed that a proletarian military doctrine could only be built upon a mature socialist society and fully developed productive forces. Until then the Red Army would simply have to make the best use of the methods and materials at its disposal, while its doctrine would be shaped by objective conditions common to all armies. He admitted that the RKKA, led by proletarian elements and serving as the guardian of the proletarian revolution, was unique in history, but to attribute the principles of offense and maneuver to the Red Army's class character would be sheer fallacy.

Trotsky apparently sought some middle ground in the debate; in Erickson's opinion, although he opposed "the spread of reactionary views" by military specialists he also tried to prevent "a one-sided interpretation of a single set of military operations becoming the dominant element in Soviet war doctrine." [55] However, Trotsky succeeded only in further solidifying the opposition against him, partially because he was quick to make enemies. Fedotoff White wrote of "the low esteem of an old revolutionary exile for young party members, the disdain of an intellectual for half-trained minds daring to oppose him" [56] and "the fierce joy he had in laying low his opponents in a theoretical joust,

55 Erickson, p. 128.

56 Fedotoff White, The Growth of the Red Army, p. 164.

with complete disregard for the...political consequences to himself."[57] The bitter, sarcastic tone of Trotsky's speech and article and the obvious efforts to ridicule his opponents fully support Fedotoff White's observation.

Also, by his opposition to the "Red command" and the naively aggressive ideas of Frunze, Gusev, Tukhachevsky et al, Trotsky found himself in the unenviable position of appearing to be an opponent of revolutionary vigor and communist orthodoxy. This perception was strengthened by the fact that many ex-tsarist voenspetsy subscribed to the Commissar's views during the debate. In military terms, Trotsky's position was the more correct one, but as Fedotoff White stated,

The young zealots, fresh converts to the gospel of Marx, were enraged. They were told, and had come to believe, that there was a universal sesame at their disposal to solve any new problem in a revolutionary bolshevik way. And here was Trotsky saying that the key could not open the book of war! That instead of a logical well-rounded out theory of a Marxian science of war, the conquerors of Denikin and Wrangel had to content themselves with drilling sections and waiting patiently for the Soviet economic life to rise to a higher level.[58]

Finally, a behind-the-scenes struggle for power had developed, and Trotsky frankly did not see it coming. While Frunze, Tukhachevsky, and Trotsky dueled in the pages of the Soviet military press, Stalin was mapping his path to power; an alliance with the military communists would improve his

57 Ibid., p. 158.

58 Ibid., pp. 167-68.

position vis-a-vis Trotsky, and towards that end he actually encouraged Frunze and Voroshilov to press the issue of "proletarian" doctrine.[59] Fortunately for the General Secretary, Trotsky's bitter and uncomplimentary rebuttals "threw Frunze and his colleagues into the political camp forming against Trotsky under Stalin." [60] At the time, however, Trotsky's position within the military and party hierarchy was fairly secure, anchored by Lenin's support; Trotsky therefore remained unconcerned with the prospect of a Stalin-led assault on his position.[61]

Then again, he didn't see the ice ax, either!

* * *

59 Isaac Deutscher, The Prophet Unarmed: Trotsky, 1921-1929 (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 55.

60 J.M. Mackintosh, "The Red Army, 1920-36," in The Soviet Army, ed. B.H. Liddell Hart (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1956), p. 54.

61 Jacobs, p. 47.

CHAPTER 6

THE CLASH OF THE TITANS:

Frunze's "Ukrainian Theses" and the Eleventh Party Congress

By the time the Eleventh Congress of the Russian Communist Party convened in Moscow on 27 March 1922, four distinct "lines" had developed within the debate over military doctrine. At one extreme stood the voenspetsy, those former imperial officers who had cast their lot with the Bolsheviks, though more often for survival than from any affinity of political views. Reared in "traditional" military methods and theories, the specialists minimized the lessons of the Civil War that the "Red Command" held so dear; they further rejected the idea of a class-based doctrine and disapproved of any which neglected the role of defense and positional warfare. Theirs may be characterized as the far "right" or conservative faction, and their most famous spokesman was A.A. Svechin.

Pegging the meter to the left were Tukhachevsky and others who unreservedly favored international revolutionary war and an exclusively offensive strategy based on mobility and firepower. Tukhachevsky's radical preference for the offensive was based on what he perceived to be objective factors of modern war, however; though he was a committed Marxist loyal to the Bolshevik regime, he professed little faith in the concept of a "proletarian" method of war.

Between the two extremes stood Trotsky and Frunze, the undisputed champion of the "proletarian" military doctrine. Though they agreed on a number of points and had softened their respective positions somewhat, these two dominated an increasingly bitter debate. While it would be a mistake to characterize the affair as a personal joust between Trotsky and Frunze, the special session of military delegates assembled during the Eleventh Party Congress became little more than a showcase for their respective views.

Prior to the Eleventh Party Congress, Frunze took full advantage of the opportunity to revise and present his views to a gathering of political commissars of the Ukraine and Crimea in March 1922. On the surface, his remarks seem like a mere restatement of his article "A Unified Military Doctrine and the Red Army." Upon closer examination, however, a number of significant modifications become apparent. Frunze took great pains to rectify the defects of his previous pronouncements; obviously Trotsky's criticisms had made an impression, for the revised program was more exact in its terminology and flexible in its content. These improvements were reflected in his closing remarks to the conference, in which Frunze enumerated fifteen theses which he and Kliment Voroshilov would present at the congress.

Frunze's first thesis echoed his earlier statements that "education and training must be conducted on the basis of unified views, permeating the entire army, on the fundamental questions relating to the tasks of the Red Army,

the foundations on which it is built and the methods of conducting combat operations." This unity of views would, through regulations and directives based on the Marxist method, "provide the army with the necessary unity of will and thought." [1] However, Frunze's second thesis warned that this "worldview" (mirovozzrenie) [2] would constitute a guide to action rather than an inviolable dogma; the "economic and socio-political conditions of a given epoch" must also be taken into account. [3] One should note that Frunze no longer referred to this "unity of views" as a "doctrine," perhaps owing to Trotsky's stinging criticisms of that "metaphysically tainted" term. [4] That, however, is a mere semantic exercise; in substance this "worldview," or "doctrine," or whatever else he might have called it, had retained much of its original, Marxist character.

For example, Frunze's third thesis maintained that the Red Army, as a "class army of toilers," existed for "the defense of the proletarian revolution from bourgeois-landowner counterrevolution and the onslaught of world

1 Mikhail V. Frunze, "Voenno-politicheskoe vospitanie Krasnoi Armii," in M.V. Frunze: Izbrannye proizvedeniia (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1965), p. 81.

2 In his revised theses, Frunze substituted the term mirovozzrenie for doktrina, perhaps owing to Trotsky's stinging criticism of the implications carried by the term "doctrine." Mirovozzrenie is perhaps best represented by the German term Weltanschauung, but has been elsewhere translated as "attitude" or "worldview."

3 Frunze, "Voenno-politicheskoe vospitanie Krasnoi Armii," p. 81.

4 Leon Trotsky, "Military Doctrine or Pseudo-Military Doctrinairism," in How the Revolution Armed: The Military Writings and Speeches of Leon Trotsky, Vol. 5, trans. Brian Pearce (London: New Park Publications, 1981), p. 316.

imperialism, and for the support of the future socialist revolution in Europe." [5] Frunze once again warned that this conflict was inevitable; accordingly, he encouraged the Red Army to prepare "to engage in the struggle against world capital." [6] In that war, states the fifth thesis, the Red Army "will henceforth perform its combat mission in conditions of revolutionary war, either defending itself against imperialist attack or advancing together with the toilers of other countries in joint combat." [7]

Frunze's sixth thesis conceded that the Red Army had previously relied, in part, on "bourgeois" tactics and strategy. The October 1917 Revolution, by assigning the leading role in the army to the proletariat, offered opportunities for the development of new tactics and strategy. [8] These developments were manifested in the RKKA's Civil War operations, in which, claimed his seventh thesis, maneuver reigned supreme; but Frunze also acknowledged that "objective conditions (the vastness of the theater of operations, the relatively small size of the forces, etc.)" helped shape the mobile character of Red Army actions. This admission was a major concession on Frunze's part, even though he still maintained that the revolutionary

5 Frunze, "Voenno-politicheskoe vospitanie Krasnoi Armii," p. 81.

6 Ibid., pp. 81-82.

7 Ibid., p. 82.

8 Ibid.

qualities inherent in the Red Army contributed to the predominance of maneuver.[9]

Future wars, Frunze predicted, would "undoubtedly" be wars of maneuver. Accordingly, Red Army commanders and troops "must be educated predominantly on the basis of maneuver and mobility concepts." Frunze lifted that excerpt almost verbatim from his article, but he warned in his ninth thesis that "Maneuver is not an end in itself," but only one means of achieving victory.[10] Again, this was a concession of some significance.

The converse of maneuver, positional warfare, was briefly discussed in the tenth thesis. "Correct maneuvers," Frunze stated, "are unthinkable without broad utilization of positional methods of battle...." While Frunze cautioned against "enthusiasm for positional methods as the basic form of struggle"[11] and minimized the importance of defensive fortifications,[12] the mere mention of such methods in a

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid., pp. 82-83.

11 Ibid., p. 83.

12 Frunze's twelfth thesis discussed the role of defensive fortifications in future "revolutionary" wars of maneuver, and despite his acceptance of positional methods in some circumstance, Frunze still held a distaste for defensive fortifications. Regardless of his reasoning and Marxist bent, this prediction was at least partially correct. One need only cite examples from military history--the Maginot line in France, the Bar-Lev line on the Suez in 1973, or Saddam Hussein's "impenetrable barrier" of 1991--to see the results of an exclusive reliance on fortifications. Each was easily outflanked or quickly overrun by numerically or technologically superior forces with modern offensive weaponry. However, if used intelligently as one element of a defense, fortifications can perform an important role in slowing an enemy advance.

positive context marks a considerable softening of Frunze's position.

According to Frunze's eleventh thesis, the "spirit of bold and energetically executed offensive operations" not only reflected the "class character of the worker-peasant army" but "the requirements of the military art." To reinforce this argument, Frunze quoted the French Field Service Regulations of 1921, which held that attack is militarily superior to defense and also carries a psychological advantage by showing "superior will." [13] This obvious error--citing a "bourgeois" military manual to support a "proletarian" method of war--would be exploited to the hilt by Trotsky.

Frunze's remaining three theses advocated flexibility in training military commanders, the revision of regulations, the employment of modern technology in the Red Army, and an educational program for the individual soldier--improvements which, he hoped, would facilitate the implementation of his doctrine. [14]

Frunze's "Ukrainian theses" represented a considerable advance in his thinking. For the first time he admitted the usefulness of positional warfare, albeit reluctantly. He also acknowledged that "objective" conditions had

13 Ibid.

14 Ibid., pp. 83-84. His proposed educational program included the elimination of illiteracy, political education, improved military training, an increased "spiritual alliance" between soldiers and commanders, and the elimination of the term "specialist."

contributed to the Red Army's use of maneuver during the Civil War, as did "bourgeois" military methods. In his theses and opening remarks at the conference, Frunze attempted to clarify his intentions and to support his claims within a coherent framework, a feature noticeably lacking in the original 1921 program. Nonetheless, his fundamental propositions--the "proletarian" nature of the Red Army and its operations, the need for a "unity of views," and the preeminence of maneuver and the offensive--remained largely unchanged. Toward these tenets Trotsky directed his fire when the Eleventh Party Congress began.

Outwardly, Trotsky's political position at the time of the Congress appeared solid. In addition to his standing as a party leader and Commissar for War, he enjoyed Lenin's support in the doctrinal debate, though lukewarm.[15] In general, the voenspetsy also allied themselves with Trotsky, with whom they identified their political and military survival.

Frunze was best known for his exemplary Civil War performance. As the commander of the Ukrainian and Crimean

15 Vitaly Rapoport and Yuri Alexeev, High Treason: Essays on the History of the Red Army, 1918-1938 (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1985), p. 126. Rapoport and Alexeev claim that Lenin "gently but firmly" told Frunze that he agreed with Trotsky's position before a meeting of military delegates; unfortunately, they do not specify their source or the circumstances. Presumably they refer to the instance I discuss on page 74. At any rate, Lenin apparently preferred to avoid direct involvement in the debate. Many Soviet authors, of course, portray Lenin as an active proponent and even the founder of "proletarian" military science.

military districts in 1922 he held sway over a considerable bloc of delegates, but he was "clearly overshadowed by Trotsky." [16] One of his chief allies, Sergei Gusev, failed to appear at the Congress; [17] to further complicate matters, Frunze had taken ill and consequently missed several meetings, including the opening session of military delegates. [18] However, he was joined by Kliment E. Voroshilov, a former partisan commander, with whom he jointly presented the Ukrainian theses. [19] Assessments of Voroshilov's military qualifications range from questionable to nonexistent; his role in the debate has been described not as one of a military theoretician or party chieftain, but as "that of the silent Stalin's placeman and spokesman." [20] The highly regarded Civil War commanders Semyon Budennyi and Tukhachevsky also supported certain aspects of the Frunze program. While both took exception to some provisions of the Frunze-Voroshilov theses, they remained steadfast in their opposition to Trotsky. [21]

16 Walter D. Jacobs, Frunze: The Soviet Clausewitz (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1970), p. 66.

17 Mark von Hagen, Soldiers in the Proletarian Dictatorship: The Red Army and the Soviet State, 1917-1930 (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), p. 161. Gusev was in Central Asia at the time of the congress.

18 Jacobs, p. 66.

19 John Erickson, The Soviet High Command: A Military - Political History, 1918-1941 (London: MacMillan and Company, Ltd., 1962), p. 133; Albert Seaton and Joan Seaton, The Soviet Army: 1918 to the Present Day (London: The Bodley Head, 1986), p. 66.

20 Seaton and Seaton, p. 66.

21 Erickson, p. 133.

"That such an abstruse subject as the military doctrine should be brought up at a party congress," recalled Fedotoff White, "speaks for the great importance ascribed to this discussion in party circles." [22] The debate was no longer a purely military matter; it had become a sounding board for opinions and loyalties, a test of the universal applicability of Marxism, and a vehicle for personal ambition and political survival. Taking place in an atmosphere of "contrived artificiality," [23] the polemics over military doctrine were intended, in part, to hasten Trotsky's inglorious fall from the mantle of party leadership.

Ironically, though Frunze's program stressed the desirability of attacking first, his medical condition forced him to cede that advantage to Trotsky at the Congress. In his opening remarks the Commissar for War admitted that the Ukrainian theses were "far more cautious, well combined and scrubbed." [24] He noted with delight that "certain points are accompanied by a note in brackets: Trotsky, Trotsky, Trotsky," and that the term "doctrine," to which the Commissar for War had objected so strenuously, had been replaced by "very much stronger meat"--the term

22 D. Fedotoff White, The Growth of the Red Army (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1944), p. 166.

23 Erickson, p. 127.

24 Leon Trotsky, "Report and Concluding Remarks at the Conference of Military Delegates to the Eleventh Congress of the Russian Communist Party, April 1, 1922," in How the Revolution Armed: The Military Writings and Speeches of Leon Trotsky, Vol. 5, trans. Brian Pearce (London: New Park Publications, 1981), p. 359.

"worldview." [25] However, Trotsky felt that "the totality of views and attitudes covered by this term is very dangerous." [26]

Trotsky primarily objected to Frunze's continued insistence on viewing military matters through a Marxist prism, for example, in his discussion of the Red Army's regulations in the first two "Ukrainian" theses.

"Regulations summarize military experience," Trotsky affirmed. "But how are they to be unified by means of the Marxist method?...[Marxism] is a method of scientific thinking...[but] there is not and never has been a military 'science.' There are a whole number of sciences on which the soldier's trade is based." Trotsky agreed that regulations should be unified; to speak of this in terms of a unified military "worldview" based on Marxism, however, would be ridiculous. [27]

To Frunze's third point, which emphasized the Red Army's "specific class character," Trotsky replied "This goes too far." To attempt to derive a military system "entirely from the specific class nature of the proletarian state" would be "scholastic and hopeless." Strategy and tactics, he continued, derive not from a proletarian

25 Ibid.

26 Ibid., p. 360.

27 Ibid., pp. 360-62. Jacobs felt that Frunze blundered by not responding appropriately to this criticism: "In a hostile world, the military art is a fundamental part of the 'defense of the dictatorship of the proletariat.' The military art, thus, has a direct connection with Marxism." Jacobs, p. 68.

outlook, but from such objective factors as military technique, logistics, geography, and the enemy's capabilities.[28]

Frunze's continued insistence on the inevitability of war with capitalism was dismissed as "abstract, wrong and dangerous in its essence." Trotsky pointed out that the Red Army's rank-and-file consisted almost entirely of peasants, who saw the need for a military force only in terms of defense against "the bourgeoisie and landlords."

"Naturally," he proclaimed, "we reserve the programmatic right to strike blows at the class enemy on our own initiative. But our revolutionary right is one thing and the reality of today's situation and tomorrow's prospects are something else." [29] Trotsky again raised the issue of the peasantry in his critique of Frunze's fifth thesis, which placed "joint combat" with foreign workers on equal footing with defense against an "imperialist" attack.

"Well," Trotsky challenged, "how would you tell a Saratov peasant: 'Either we shall lead you to Belgium to overthrow the bourgeoisie there, or you will defend Saratov province against an Anglo-French expeditionary force landed at Odessa or Archangel?'" [30] The peasantry, he contended, could never be rallied to support an international war, while "if we put forward the 'doctrine'--either they will attack us or

28 Trotsky, "Report and Concluding Remarks," p. 363.

29 Ibid., p. 365-66.

30 Ibid., p. 367.

we shall attack them--then we shall only confuse our commissars, political workers and commanders...."[31]

Trotsky then turned to an obvious contradiction in Frunze's theses: while the sixth admitted that the Red Army had employed bourgeois military methods, the seventh claimed that the Red Army's "war of maneuver" resulted from the class character of the proletariat. The former point, Trotsky asserted, was the more correct, since maneuver "developed first among our enemies, not among us." The latter, however, "reeks of braggadocio." In fact, the Red Army's maneuvers during the Civil War were often disorganized and formless. Trotsky felt that Frunze had committed the error of "idealizing" the past; "we have to learn and progress," he chided, "and for that it is necessary to assess critically, and not to sing hymns of praise." [32]

As for future revolutionary wars being wars of maneuver, Trotsky held up the example of the Paris Commune of 1871, during which the supposedly maneuver-oriented proletariat was forced into defensive, positional warfare. "In highly-developed industrial countries," he concluded,

31 Ibid., pp. 367-68.

32 Ibid., pp. 369-71. Frunze may have committed an error common in the history of warfare. In general, military commanders tend to learn their lessons well when they have been thrashed in the field; victory, however, often leads to idealization and self-glorification. The United States' failure to adapt to changing conditions of modern war (with their emphasis on unconventional, limited conflict restricted by political considerations) following WORLD WAR II may be taken as one example.

"civil war may assume...a far less mobile and far more compact character; that is, it may approximate to positional warfare." [33] But Trotsky reserved some of his most severe criticism for Frunze's eleventh thesis, which committed the obvious blunder of quoting the French Field Service Regulations to support an allegedly "proletarian" military doctrine. "There, you see: strategy must be offensive because, first, this results from the class nature of the proletariat," Trotsky replied sarcastically, "and because, secondly, it coincides with the French Field Service Regulations of 1921." He agreed that, militarily, the offensive was superior to the defensive; victory is impossible without it. "But one does not invariably have to be the first to attack; an offensive should be launched when the situation calls for it." [34]

Perhaps the most bitter medicine of all, however, was administered by Trotsky's reference to General Alexander Suvorov's "Science of Victory," which also emphasized the offense and maneuver. [35] Trotsky found the similarities

33 Ibid., p. 374.

34 Ibid., pp. 376-77.

35 Suvorov's seven "laws of war," paraphrased by Trotsky are:

1. Act no other way than offensively.
2. On the march--speed: in the attack--impetuosity, cold steel.
3. Not methodism but a true soldierly outlook is needed.
4. All power to the commander-in-chief.
5. The enemy must be attacked and beaten in the field: so don't stay sitting in fortified areas, but get in among the enemy.
6. Don't waste time on sieges. A direct assault is best of all.

between the theses of Frunze and Suvorov striking; in fact, the 18th-century nobleman's dictum was "exactly the strategy 'resulting from the class nature of the proletariat' and from civil war--only put a bit shorter and better!...those who began by promising a new proletarian doctrine ended by copying out Suvorov's rules, and even then made mistakes." [36] This rebuff must have been especially embarrassing to Frunze; the advocate of a "proletarian" military doctrine was "a well-known devotee of Suvorov, who had, of course, commanded armies composed of serfs." [37]

Frunze responded feebly at best. His rebuttal before the military delegates [38] consisted of little more than a restatement of those views to which Trotsky objected. Frunze denied that he and his colleagues idealized their Civil War experience; "on the contrary," he claimed, "we said that in the past there had been a mass of mistakes, that we were badly prepared, and that we must study, study,

7. Never scatter your forces to occupy points. The enemy has outflanked you--so much the better: he is himself heading towards defeat."

Ibid., p. 380.

36 Ibid., pp. 380-81.

37 Condoleezza Rice, "The Making of Soviet Strategy," in Peter Paret, ed., Makers of Modern Strategy: From Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), p. 657. Erickson also noted that Frunze was fascinated by "the high qualities of Russian troops in the age of Suvorov, who had molded his soldiers into excellent fighting machines....Frunze's own frequent, if didactic, lectures on the same themes [of training and intelligent discipline] suggested that he wished to exploit his peasant soldiers in the fashion of the earlier Russian master." Erickson, p. 177.

38 See "Osnovnye voennye zadachi momenta" in Frunze, Izbrannye proizvedeniia, pp. 85-96.

and study." [39] However, he held fast to his conviction that the revolution had provided fertile ground for the development of an "independent proletarian strategy and tactics," citing Engels to support his point and to discredit Trotsky. [40] Frunze also criticized Trotsky for citing the Paris Commune as a model of positional revolutionary or civil war, noting that the Communards, according to Marx, "just decided not to attack." [41]

In essence, Frunze said nothing in his defense which would impress upon the delegates the need for a unified military doctrine, nor did he offer any improvements to his theses to placate Trotsky. He seemed more content to rest his arguments on emotional rather than logical bases, appealing to the enthusiasm of those victorious Civil War veterans who dominated the conference of military delegates. In that respect he may have been more successful than he realized. However, a dark cloud appeared on the Frunze horizon, and its name was Vladimir Illych. Taking his outspoken general aside at the congress, Lenin told Frunze:

You [military communists] are wrong here. Your approach is of course correct from the point of view of

39 Frunze, "Osnovnye voennye zadachi momenta," p. 88.

40 Ibid., pp. 90-91. Specifically, Frunze quoted Engels' 1852 article "The Possibilities and Perspectives of a War of the Holy Alliance Against France."

41 Ibid., p. 93. The relevant passage is from Marx's 1871 letters to Liebknecht and Kugelmann in David McLellan, ed., Karl Marx: Selected Writings (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), pp. 592-93. Frunze made no mention of Marx's 1881 letter in which he conceded that conditions were not sufficiently developed in France for the proletariat to permanently take the offensive against the bourgeoisie.

perspective...but if you come forth now with a theory of proletarian [military] art, you fall into the danger of communist swaggering. It seems to me that our military communists are still insufficiently mature to pretend to the leadership of all military affairs.[42]

Lenin's admonition probably had a greater effect on Frunze than Trotsky's rebuttals, for he thereafter kept quiet on doctrinal matters and did not "swagger communistically." He also kept Lenin's remarks to himself, at least until Trotsky's position had been sufficiently weakened.[43]

Trotsky once more took to the podium during the final meeting of military delegates, and he again questioned the need for a unified military doctrine. "We have the Communist program," he insisted, "we have the Soviet constitution, we have the agrarian law--there's your answer. What more do you need?"[44]

Once more, Trotsky felt obliged to renounce the "cult of the offensive." Frunze's error, Trotsky believed, lay in his inability to distinguish between political and military strategy. Citing the Soviet government's decision to repay tsarist debts, Trotsky concluded that the prevailing political mood within the Party was defensive, and rightly so "because we wish to spare our country the ordeal of another war." [45] Should war be thrust upon the Soviet

42 Frunze recounted Lenin's remarks during a 1925 speech before a literary commission of the Central Committee; they were included in the 1927 volume of his collected works, but haven't appeared in any edition since. Cited in Jacobs, p. 92.

43 Jacobs, p. 92.

44 Trotsky, "Report and Concluding Remarks," p. 384.

45 Ibid., pp. 386-87.

republic, conditions would require a political offensive; yet "only a simpleton supposes that the whole of political tactics is reducible to the slogan--'Forward!'"[46]

Even in military affairs, Trotsky refused to denigrate the defensive. The object of war, he observed, was to defeat the enemy, which ultimately required offensive action. However, he cautioned that "if the material conditions of mobilization did not permit it, I should be a hopeless formalist and a dolt if I were to base my plan on the proposition that I must be the first to attack." The physical realities of the Soviet state--its economic and logistic weakness, its poor transportation network, and its territorial depth--would create a situation which necessitated "an initial period of elastic defense and maneuvering retreat." [47]

Years later, in What is the Soviet Union and Where Is It Going? (Chto takoe SSSR i kuda on idet?), Trotsky likened Frunze and other "military communists" to Archimedes, who had said he could move the earth given a suitable point of support. "However," Trotsky claimed, "if they had offered him the needed point of support, it would have turned out that he had neither the lever nor the power to bring it to action. The victorious revolution gave [us] a new point of support, but to move the earth it is still necessary to build the levers," i.e., the social, technological, and

46 Ibid., p. 389.

47 Ibid., p. 391.

industrial bases upon which modern war and world revolution depended.[48]

The delegates' reactions to the Frunze-Voroshilov program were mixed. Tukhachevsky, for example, agreed wholeheartedly with Frunze regarding the importance of offensive warfare. Tukhachevsky professed offensive, revolutionary war to the extreme; he had gone so far as to propose an international "general staff" to coordinate Red Army action with revolutionary movements throughout Europe.[49] Like Frunze, therefore, Tukhachevsky was quick to belittle the value of fortified positions [50] and felt that in the face of modern armies equipped with tanks, aircraft, chemical weapons and the like, fixed fortifications would pose no more than a minor nuisance to an attacker.[51] In addition, Tukhachevsky disputed the claim that the Red Army had "borrowed" the concept of maneuver from the Whites, as Trotsky had suggested.[52] However, Tukhachevsky's "traditional" military training still permeated his thinking; while he favored an exclusively offensive doctrine, his views were drawn more

48 Leon Trotsky, Chto takoe SSSR i kuda on idet? (Paris: facsimile of the manuscript, 1937), p. 176.

49 Thomas G. Butson, The Tsar's Lieutenant, the Soviet Marshal (New York: Praeger, 1984), p. 150.

50 Fedotoff White, The Growth of the Red Army, p. 171.

51 Rapoport and Alexeev, p. 127.

52 Erickson, p. 134.

from Napoleon rather than from any faith in the Red Army's active "proletarian" nature.[53]

Svechin had also denied the existence of a distinctive "class" method of warfare, opting instead for the idea of a traditional national army unencumbered by superfluous political ideology. Svechin attacked Frunze on most other points as well. For example, Svechin had pressed for a comprehensive military doctrine during the tsarist debate, and therefore did not minimize the importance of a unified doctrine. However, he noted that the internal and international conditions which followed the October 1917 Revolution impeded the development of military thought. A revolutionary era, he claimed, was an era of empiricism in which unstable conditions precluded the possibility of formulating a doctrine with real, lasting import.[54]

Svechin noted that Red Army had relied on maneuver and the offense during the Civil War for objective reasons, chief among them a weak economy, apathetic populations, poor communications and logistics, and unstable rear areas. In Poland, the Red Army had tried to apply the same methods which brought victory in the Civil War and failed because the strategic situation differed markedly.[55] Svechin thus denied that offensive action and maneuver constituted a universal basis for revolutionary war or any modern war, and

53 Francesco Benvenuti, The Bolsheviks and the Red Army, 1918-1922, trans. Christopher Woodall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 198-99.

54 Ibid., p. 162.

55 Ibid., p. 128.

pressed instead for a policy of expediency--use whatever works, given the circumstances.

The "official" results of the Eleventh Party Congress appear at odds with the intensity and significance of the debate; no official Soviet doctrine was proclaimed, no move was made to censure Trotsky, and the military delegates were content to pass a series of rather mundane resolutions dealing with routine administrative matters like manpower strengths, the military budget, recruiting, and supporting Red Army households while the soldier was away in the performance of his duties.[56] The real significance of the debate, however, lay elsewhere--in the thoughts and opinions of its participants.

Most of the delegates sided not so much with Frunze as against Trotsky, despite the fact that the Commissar's reasoning and recommendations were, for the most part, correct. An increasing number of commanders began to identify Trotsky with "reactionary" trends within the Red Army, a belief seemingly confirmed by the military specialists' support for the Commissar during the debate.[57] Another reason could be found in the misinterpretations or deliberate distortions of Trotsky's ideas--for example, though he never minimized the experiences of the Civil War or denied the possibility of formulating a cohesive military doctrine, his opponents

56 KPSS o vooruzhennykh silakh Sovetskogo Soiuza (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1981), pp. 189-92.

57 Erickson, p. 131.

accused him of just that.[58] Finally, while Trotsky derided his opponents' arguments, he failed to offer a definitive program of his own beyond "admonitions to deal with mundane matters like 'how to grease boots'...."[59] For his part Frunze, despite the obvious defects in his program, escaped Trotsky's accusations of "ignorant" or "utopian" thinking.[60]

Trotsky's most serious blunder, however, again lay in his inability to see the political inappropriateness of his position and his methods; his remarks before the Eleventh Party Congress carried with them even more invective and ridicule than his November article. Although Trotsky's position was theoretically correct, in this instance wisdom brought no profit to the wise. Granted, transcripts of his speeches make for amusing reading, but he failed to foresee the harmful effects of dampening the enthusiasm of "Red commanders," fresh from their victory in the Civil War and eager for world revolution:

[The] ardent communist element was not prepared emotionally to give up the plans or at least the training of the army for the execution of these plans in the future, and to settle to the dreary routine of 'form squad right' of garrison life or its Soviet equivalent. The world was their oyster and they wanted to pry it loose with the bayonets of the Red Army.[61]

58 Fedotoff White, The Growth of the Red Army, p. 163; Erickson, p. 132.

59 Condoleezza Rice, "The Making of Soviet Strategy," in Peter Paret, ed., Makers of Modern Strategy: From Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), p. 657.

60 Ibid.

61 Fedotoff White, The Growth of the Red Army, p. 179.

Furthermore, Trotsky remained oblivious to the power struggle brewing behind the scenes. If ignorance is bliss, then Trotsky must have been truly ecstatic over his latest "victory" in theoretical combat, but as Jacobs observed he "missed the fact that the Military Communists understood so well. This was a battle to the death. The Military Communists went for the jugular. Trotsky, as frequently in his later clashes with Stalin, thought it was all too absurd." [62] For now the power struggle confined itself to the relatively narrow field of military affairs; within that sphere, however, lay Trotsky's chief base of support, and there Trotsky found himself increasingly isolated and under more frequent attack. As the crisis of Civil War receded, so did the need for the voenspetsy, whose influence correspondingly declined precipitously. Henceforth, the debaters crystallized into two factions: Trotsky, and those who opposed Trotsky. While he retained Lenin's support, that security would last only while Vladimir Illych remained alive. The enemies Trotsky made during the Eleventh Party Congress would last a lifetime.

* * *

62 Jacobs, p. 74.

CHAPTER 7

THE SAD WINGS OF DESTINY:

The Debate's Final Stages and Aftermath

Judging from the bulk of literature available, it would seem that the debate over a "unified" or "proletarian" military doctrine virtually ended with the Eleventh Party Congress. True, the bitter, open conflict which characterized the debate in the military press and party congresses largely ceased after April 1922. However, some discussion of the subject continued, though primarily on a different and more obscure plane--i.e., among the hard-core theorists who genuinely took military matters to heart and cared little for the political conflagrations which engulfed and in many ways fueled the debate. Among these must be included Trotsky himself; and while he certainly had reason to fear the political ramifications of the debate, at the time he still remained oblivious to them.

That scant mention is made of the debate's latter stages is due in part to the fact that the idea of a class-based method of warfare bore little relevance to the economic conditions which persistently plagued the Soviet leadership. Whether Trotsky's opponents liked it or not, the manpower of the Red Army was being reduced to a peacetime strength of a mere 561,000 regular soldiers, supplemented by a "territorial militia" system consisting of

minimally trained, part-time troops.[1] Similarly, the technical, scientific, industrial, and transportation bases of the Soviet Union remained thoroughly primitive by Western standards and would require massive effort to be brought up to the level necessary to support large-scale, mobile, offensive operations with a fair chance of success.

Discussions of a "proletarian" doctrine simply paled in comparison to the irrefutable realities of the day and their attendant problems. Thus, Frunze's conception of a workers' army unified by class consciousness and imbued with an offensive spirit, and Tukhachevsky's dream of that army's gloriously marching forth to wars of revolution, would simply have to wait.

Furthermore, historians may be excused for their neglect of the final phases of the debate because it was quickly overshadowed by more profound events. The struggle for doctrinal preeminence was soon followed by a fight to control the military itself; from there a struggle for party and national leadership inevitably and quickly ensued. After Lenin's death the struggle's military facade was dropped altogether, at least as far as Stalin's ruling troika and Trotsky were concerned. The only "military" aspect of the resultant contest was that Trotsky was

1 P.F. Vashchenko and V.A. Runov, "Voennāia reforma v SSSR," Voenno-istoricheskii zhurnal (December 1989), p. 33. At its Civil War peak, the Red Army boasted five and a half million men under arms. There is some confusion over the regular strength of the Red Army following demobilization, however; most authors, including some Soviets, cite 562,000 as the correct figure of the "cadre" force.

relieved of his military duties before he was ousted from the party and ultimately thrown into exile.

In 1922, however, Trotsky seemed oblivious to the perils that awaited him. By all indications, he had won the doctrinal debate; his opponents' schemes had failed to gain approval at the Eleventh Party Congress, his position as War Commissar remained as yet unchallenged, and--perhaps most important--Lenin was still alive, and his sympathies and support, though muted, lay with Trotsky. As he later remarked from exile, "the 'proletarian military doctrine' was rejected by the party like its older sister, 'the doctrine of proletarian culture'[2]....[and] never saw a resurrection, notwithstanding that its former advocates soon stood at the helm of state." [3] In retrospect, it seems that Trotsky had achieved at most a Pyrrhic victory, but at the time he felt confident and secure enough to continue speaking and writing on the subject.

Trotsky wasted little time. On 8 May 1922, just over a month after the Congress adjourned, Trotsky spoke before a meeting of the Military Science Society of the Military Academy of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army. Much of his speech dealt with the controversy over whether military

2 The "doctrine of proletarian culture" was similar to its military counterpart in that it advocated the eradication of "bourgeois" culture, art, and literature in favor of their newer, "proletarian" forms. Trotsky's works on the subject include Literatura i revoliutsiia and "Kultura i sotsializm."

3 Leon Trotsky, Chto takoe SSSR i kuda on idet (Paris: Facsimile of the manuscript, 1937), p. 176.

matters should be classified as an "art" or as a "science," but Trotsky seized the opportunity to again lambaste those who would "try and construct a special domain of military affairs by means of a Marxist method." [4]

During his opening remarks, Trotsky noted some proponents of a proletarian doctrine held the notion that "the methods of Marxism are universal scientific methods, so that their validity extends also to military science." As earlier, Trotsky asserted that "military science" is neither "natural" nor a "science"; even if one were to concede that it is a science, "it is nevertheless impossible to grant that this science could be built by the method of Marxism, because historical materialism is not at all a universal method for all sciences." [5] Trotsky appealed to his opponents to devote their energies towards the concrete development of the Soviet armed forces and to address more immediate, practical matters rather than argue over vague and ill-defined theoretical notions. "Our practical task," he concluded, "is this: learn to speak more simply about the cavalry, do not encumber our discussion of problems of aviation with high-flown expressions...which more often than not turn out to be hollow shells without kernel or content." [6]

4 Leon Trotsky, "Military Knowledge and Marxism," in How the Revolution Armed: The Military Writings and Speeches of Leon Trotsky, Vol. 5, trans. Brian Pearce (New York: New Park Publications, 1981), p. 403.

5 Ibid., p. 402.

6 Ibid., p. 404.

In his concluding remarks before the Military Science Society, Trotsky compared military affairs with the problems of peasant life. For example, "Bast [bark] shoes are determined by the peasant's mode of production....

[Marxism] can explain why the muzhik goes about in bast shoes--because around him is the forest, the bark of trees, and he is poor--but one can't plait bast shoes with the aid of Marxism. Nothing will come of that." [7] Similarly, Trotsky claimed, while Marxism can explain the class nature of the Red Army, its role in international affairs and state policy, and its dependence on the level of scientific and industrial development, any attempt to apply Marxism to practical military matters would be "a great delusion." [8]

In another analogy, Trotsky explained that "Marxism can be applied with very great success even to the history of chess," yet he cautioned that "it is not possible to learn to play chess in a Marxist way....The game of chess has its own 'laws,' its own 'principles....'" He admitted that social conditions may subconsciously alter a player's style, resulting in, for example, a "positional" or "maneuvering" method of playing. Nevertheless, "to learn to play chess 'according to Marx' is altogether impossible, just as it is impossible to wage war 'according to Marx.'" [9] Trotsky attempted to illustrate that war, like chess, has its own laws and principles, which are dependent "upon the

7 Ibid., p. 408.

8 Ibid., p. 403.

9 Ibid., p. 411.

anatomical and mental properties of individual man, upon the form of organization of collective man, upon his technology, his environment both physical and cultural-historical, and so on." True, Trotsky admitted, certain such conditions may change over time, but overall the laws and principles of warfare "do contain elements of greater or less stability" and thus fall outside the realm of Marxist analysis, applying as they do to bourgeoisie and proletariat alike.[10]

"We have already had one discussion about 'military doctrine,'" Trotsky concluded, "and today we reached the ultimate heights of philosophy. The time has come to begin the downward climb and to apply ourselves to practical study." [11] He again stressed his desire to close the debate and turn the army's attention to more immediate, pressing tasks. To teach a commander that "bourgeois" tactics have been supplanted by a "proletarian" method of war would only "lead him astray," Trotsky maintained; rather, he recommended that the commanders of the Red Army ought to be taught the military methods used by the more advanced armies of the world, including potential adversaries, "so that [the Red Army] may consciously use this knowledge and these practices in the interests of the working class." [12]

10 Ibid., p. 411-12.

11 Ibid., p. 428.

12 Ibid., p. 429.

In essence, Trotsky's speeches of 8 May 1922 indicate no softening of his position; he continued to profess a strong distaste for the idea of a "proletarian military doctrine" and the forced application of Marxist ideology to military affairs. It is interesting to note, however, that Trotsky encountered almost no opposition on this point from other participants.[13] In this respect, the meeting was little more than a sounding board for Trotsky to repeat the charges he presented in earlier articles and party congresses. Furthermore, his repeated appeals to put the subject aside suggest that he had passed from irritation to weariness; he had simply tired of the debate. Fortunately, fewer military communists seemed eager to raise the banner of a "proletarian military doctrine," so Trotsky obviously hoped that his speech before the Military Science Society would be his last word on the subject. It wasn't.

The lack of opposition Trotsky encountered did not necessarily indicate that he had won his opponents over; in some respects he had, but the debate had simply ceased to be a central issue and had given way to more significant political struggles. During the fight for political survival in which Trotsky soon found himself mired, the logic or accuracy of his earlier arguments would win him few

13 In his closing remarks before the Military Science Society, Trotsky presented his rebuttals to several delegates whose positions he found disagreeable. None of these, apparently, had taken issue with him over the subject of "proletarian" military doctrine, perhaps because they were well aware that Trotsky could make them look like fools.

points among the enemies he had made. What they remembered was the abusive manner in which Trotsky had attacked them; the resultant bitterness played directly into the hands of Stalin, Zinoviev, and Kamenev (the so-called "troika"), and others who trembled at the prospect of a Trotsky-led government.

During his address Trotsky avoided the subjects of maneuver and the offense, and concentrated instead on the very idea of "proletarian" military doctrine, which to him represented a perversion of Marxist science. In 1923, however, A.A. Svechin once more entered the lists with his book Strategy, in which he viciously attacked the Red Army's reliance on maneuver and the offensive. Strategy has been praised as "a unique and vital work" by "the most outstanding [military writer] of the post-October period in Russia." [14] However, it was last published in its full form in the late 1920s; excerpts are available in some modern Soviet military collections, but one may safely assume that politically "disagreeable" sections have, until very recently, been expunged.

Svechin maintained that a doctrine relying on the offensive at the expense of defense would be both unnecessary and impractical in modern, total war. An offense requires a considerable expenditure of force, extended lines of communications, and the danger of

14 Vitaly Rapoport and Yuri Alexeev, High Treason: Essays on the History of the Red Army, 1918-1938 (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1985), p. 131.

counteroffensives at points weakened by the deployment of troops for an attack--disadvantages which often outweighed the potential benefits of an offensive.[15] A more expedient course would be a strategic defense, he claimed, noting that such "negative" operations could be directed towards "a final positive end." [16] Of course, a strategic defense entails some loss of territory and postpones victory, but in a country the size of the Soviet Union time and space would work to the advantage of the defender, while the attacker would be forced to squander his resources and render his position more vulnerable.[17] A strategy of attrition, like that employed during World War I, was therefore inevitable and not the result of poor leadership as some military communists had claimed.

Svechin foresaw a defensive, attrition-oriented strategy relying on positional methods akin to the trench warfare of World War I. While he admitted that the Russian Civil War represented an "extraordinary war of maneuver," he warned that in a war between two large, well-armed armies, "military operations will assume a positional character." [18] Svechin cautioned the RKKA to tailor its operations to fit the circumstances and take advantage of battlefield opportunities; by implication he seemed to

15 A.A. Svechin, "Strategiia" (excerpts), in Voprosy strategii i operativnogo iskusstva v Sovetskikh voennykh trudakh (1917-1940) (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1965), p. 233.

16 Ibid., p. 232.

17 Ibid., pp. 232-33.

18 Ibid., p. 235.

advocate a more flexible military doctrine, one void of the theoretical rigidity endemic among the Red Command.

"Prophecy in strategy can only be charlantry," he asserted.

"Not even a genius has the power to foresee how a war will actually turn out." [19]

As the political struggle gained momentum after Lenin's death in January 1924, Trotsky once more defended his opposition to the concept of a proletarian military doctrine. In the 28 March 1924 issue of Pravda appeared Trotsky's review of Frederick Engels's Notes on the War, a collection of articles covering the 1870-71 Franco-Prussian war. The primary message of Engels's articles, Trotsky maintained, was that "one of the fundamental philosophical premises of Marxism says that the truth is always concrete.... War is war, and the Marxist who wants to judge it must bear in mind that the truth of war is also concrete." [20] Trotsky claimed that Engels did not support the notion that each class must have its own peculiar military strategy and tactics. Granted, methods of warfare had evolved throughout the feudal and capitalist epochs, and would continue to do so in a fully developed socialist state; however, each such development had been predicated on scientific and industrial advances rather than on "naked class will." The proletariat of the Soviet Union, boasting "only a very low level of production," could not yet provide

19 Cited in Rapoport and Alexeev, p. 134.

20 Leon Trotsky, "A New Book by F. Engels," in Military Writings (New York: Merit Publishers, 1969), p. 142.

an adequate foundation for a higher stage of the military art, which "can only flow from the enhanced development of the productive forces of the future socialist society." [21]

According to Trotsky, the Red Army could claim a number of advantages over bourgeois armies, chief among them the eradication of class antagonisms within its ranks. However, he characterized that as a "political" rather than a "military" advantage, and cautioned against any resultant inclination towards "military arrogance and self-overestimation." On the contrary, the Red Army should recognize its backwardness and "refrain from braggadocio," and learn from the methods of capitalist armies. [22]

Nowhere in Trotsky's review was even indirect mention made of Frunze, Tukhachevsky, Voroshilov, or any of his other prime military and political antagonists. Also missing was the derisive language that characterized his earlier articles and speeches. In short, Trotsky's last defense of his position was uncharacteristically restrained, relying almost exclusively on the words and ideas of Engels himself. Perhaps it finally dawned on Trotsky that his logic, his wit, his oratorical skill, his authority within the party, and his famous powers of persuasion had failed him; in fact, he had done himself more harm than good. There was nothing else to do but retreat to the unassailable fortress of ideological purity, if for no other reason than

21 Ibid., pp. 143-44.

22 Ibid., p. 145.

to show that his position in the debate, which had generated so much animosity towards him, had been supported by the Masters themselves. Trotsky had been correct, after all, and he had Engels's book to prove it! And yet he was finished; all that remained were the mere formalities of brushing him aside.

The first steps had already been taken. Trotsky's opposition to Stalin's "New Course" [23] in 1923 and his association with the "Forty-Six" [24] certainly accelerated his fall, but since Trotsky's main institutional base of support lay in his military positions, his opponents took the necessary measures to remove him from those posts. To that end the plenum of the Central Control Commission decided on 2 June 1923 to appoint a special Military Commission to conduct a thorough review of the Soviet armed forces. In September the chairmanship of the commission fell to Sergei Gusev, who had co-authored and co-sponsored the first version of Frunze's "unified military doctrine" in 1921.[25]

23 Stalin's "troika" had proclaimed "the New Course" ostensibly to guarantee freedom of expression and criticism within the party; Trotsky had opposed it on the grounds that it served as a front for "officialdom" and represented "a spirit of sheer sycophancy." Isaac Deutscher, The Prophet Unarmed: Trotsky 1921-1929 (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), pp. 118-20.

24 The "Forty-Six" were an informal association of party members opposed to the policies and purposes of the Stalin-Zinoviev-Kamenev troika.

25 John Erickson, The Soviet High Command: A Military-Political History, 1918-1941 (London: Macmillan, 1962), p. 141.

On 3 February 1924--just ten days after Lenin's death--Gusev presented the commission's findings to the Central Committee and precipitated what amounted to a purge of the military leadership. Not surprisingly, the report heaped criticism upon almost every aspect of Red Army management; Trotsky and his closest associates were singled out for particularly harsh condemnation.[26] The commission charged that "in the present aspect the Red Army is unfit for combat" and laid the blame for this condition squarely on Trotsky.[27] The military and administrative qualifications of E.M. Skliansky and P.P. Lebedev, two of Trotsky's deputies, were also questioned; Skliansky was summarily removed on 3 March and replaced by Frunze, who thereafter practically controlled the Red Army. Later that month, Voroshilov assumed control of the key Moscow Military District, displacing another of Trotsky's supporters. By 21 March, the Revvoensovet had been packed with members of the Red Command including Frunze, Voroshilov, and Budennyi, all of whom were deemed "acceptable" to the ruling group within the Central Committee.[28] Finally, on 18 July 1924 Tukhachevsky was recalled from relative obscurity in

26 Thomas G. Butson, The Tsar's Lieutenant--The Soviet Marshal (New York: Praeger, 1984), p. 158.

27 I.B. Berkhin, Voennaia reforma v SSSR (1924-1925 gg.) (Moscow, 1958), pp. 60-61; cited in Erickson, p. 169.

28 Erickson, pp. 171, 178.

Smolensk [29] to become Frunze's deputy as Assistant Chief of Staff and Staff Commissar.[30]

These personnel changes effectively rendered Trotsky's position as War Commissar untenable. On 26 January 1925, Trotsky's "request" to be released from his duties as the People's Commissar for War and the Chairman of the Revvoensovet was approved by the Central Committee, who appointed Frunze to replace him in both posts.[31] Of course, the Central Committee had previously decided to remove Trotsky to make way for a Red Army leadership unencumbered by "Trotskyist" perversions.

Three years later, on 23 October 1927, Trotsky was expelled from the Central Committee and, on 14 November, from the party, allegedly for "incitement to counter-revolutionary demonstrations and virtually to insurrection." [32] The following January he was sent into internal exile and, after a year at Alma Ata, deported from the country.[33] Thus it came to pass that Trotsky, perhaps the individual most responsible for founding the Red Army and guiding it through the most severe trials of its early history, came to be remembered in the Soviet Union only as the originator of "Trotskyism," reviled as "an ideological-political petitbourgeois tendency hostile to Marxism-

29 Tukhachevsky was serving as commander-in-chief of the Western Military District at the time.

30 Erickson, p. 178; Butson, pp. 159-60.

31 Rapoport and Alexeev, p. 114; Erickson, p. 189.

32 Deutscher, pp. 366, 378.

33 Ibid., pp. 391, 469.

Leninism and the international communist movement, which hides its opportunistic essence with radical phrases of the left." [34]

Frunze and Tukhachevsky, who had benefited so much from Trotsky's misfortunes, naturally clamored for his dismissal in 1923 and 1924; [35] yet on doctrinal matters they were conspicuous for their silence after April 1922. Lenin's criticisms during the Eleventh Party Congress may explain Frunze's subsequent reluctance to press the issue; furthermore, both he and Tukhachevsky soon found themselves burdened by new responsibilities and objective realities which not only put great demands on their time, but prompted them to amend or abandon their earlier views. In fact, following Trotsky's removal from military leadership, the champions of the "proletarian" military doctrine and international revolutionary war found themselves inching ever closer to conformity with the so-called "reactionary" views of the former War Commissar.

The erosion of Frunze's views is evident in the reforms which he implemented in 1924 and 1925. The reorganization of the Red Army included the transition to a partial territorial militia system, the institution of one-man

34 Harriet Fast Scott and William F. Scott, Soviet Military Doctrine: Continuity, Formulation, and Dissemination (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1988), p. 10.

35 Frunze was especially vocal in his criticism of Trotsky's management of the Red Army; we'll never know how he felt about Trotsky's internal exile and deportation since he died under suspicious circumstances shortly after becoming War Commissar.

command, intensified officer training, and an overhaul of the central military administration. Of the lot, Frunze had come out in favor only of intensified training for commanders; he was ambivalent towards one-man command and administrative reorganization, and had in fact spoken out against the militia system, one of Trotsky's pet projects.[36] Even so, they are often referred to as the "Frunze" reforms;[37] but as Erickson commented, "it was at once ironical and inevitable that Frunze's reforms were themselves the complete justification of Trotsky's inescapable arguments, and the surrender was made to orthodoxy at the expense of the 'revolutionary phraseology' which Trotsky had so often derided." [38]

Concerning his conception of a proletarian military doctrine, Frunze reluctantly gave up his ideas regarding the primacy of the offensive and maneuver, and even seemed ready to admit that such characteristics were not necessarily unique to the proletariat. In 1925, faced with the irrefutable realities with which he then had to contend, he conceded that the Red Army had not discovered a uniquely "proletarian" method of warfare; consequently, he decided to draw upon the army's imperial heritage. While he continued to maintain that the Red Army's class character necessarily

36 Walter D. Jacobs, Frunze: The Soviet Clausewitz (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1969), pp. 94-95.

37 Erickson, for one, often refers to the military reforms of the 1920s as the "Frunze" reforms.

38 Erickson, p. 208.

engendered an offensive spirit, "there was little left to his former aggressiveness." [39]

What little remained would evaporate before his death that same year; [40] as Erickson remarked, "his previous ideas of revolutionary offensivism had almost completely given way to calculations of long-term strategic and military-economic preparation." [41] In a 1925 article entitled "The Front and Rear in Future War" ("Front i tyl v voine budushchego") Frunze acknowledged that "war will assume the character of a long and cruel contest, subjecting to trial all of the economic and political bases of the belligerent sides....this signifies the transition from a strategy of lightning-like, decisive blows to a strategy of attrition." [42] Granted, Frunze continued to stress the importance of maneuver, but at the time he was speaking in terms of defensive maneuver and strategic withdrawal.

Furthermore, he claimed that the Red Army's propensity for such action was due not to its proletarian character, but to geographic conditions, i.e., the Soviet Union's tremendous

39 Rapoport and Alexeev, p. 135.

40 Frunze died on 31 October 1925 in very suspicious circumstances. Stalin had secured a special party edict ordering Frunze to undergo surgery for stomach ulcers, an edict which obliged Frunze to submit despite his unwillingness. Stalin had insisted on the operation despite the fact that Frunze's doctors advised against it, saying that his weakened heart couldn't stand the strain of chloroform.

41 Erickson, p. 209.

42 M.V. Frunze, "Front i tyl v voine budushchego," in Voprosy strategii i operativnogo iskusstva v sovetskikh trudakh, 1917-1940, p. 63.

size.[43] To geographic conditions; and this from the champion of the "proletarian" science of war!

Likewise, once Tukhachevsky found himself in a position where he could no longer shirk from reality, he eagerly sought to shed some of the idealistic trappings of his past. In an entry for the 1928 edition of the Great Soviet Encyclopedia (Bol'shaia sovetskaia entsiklopediia), he admitted that the Red Army could expect to fight the same type of positional war that he had previously dismissed out of hand. His reasoning emphasized advances in defensive weaponry and tactics which, he maintained, had outstripped their offensive counterparts and made maneuver more difficult.[44] Though he had largely abandoned the principle of the maneuver, Tukhachevsky continued to stress the importance of offensive action; however, his enthusiasm even for that principle had waned. Like Frunze, Tukhachevsky found himself faced with objective realities which simply could not be denied, and concluded, as Fedotoff White observed, that "it is impossible to determine the forms of warfare in all instances once [and] for all,"[45] a statement echoing Svechin's comments in his Strategy.

Other theorists, previously silent in the debate, began to express their views once the political danger had

43 Erickson, p. 208.

44 M.N. Tukhachevsky, "Voina kak problema vooruzhennoi bor'by," in Bol'shaia sovetskaia entsiklopediia, Vol. 12 (Moscow: 1928), p. 579; cited in D. Fedotoff White, "Soviet Philosophy of War" (Political Science Quarterly, September 1936), p. 344.

45 Fedotoff White, "Soviet Philosophy of War," p. 344.

apparently receded. For example, a collection of military writings published in 1927 included an essay by D. Riazanov, a noted Marxist theoretician, entitled "Military Affairs and Marxism" ("Voennoe delo i marksizm") which advocated a defensive military strategy. Critical of commanders who longed for conquest and professed the offensive principle exclusively, Riazanov declared that the Red Army's strategy should be based upon defensive principles. He dismissed the idea of a proletarian method of warfare, as opposed to a bourgeois doctrine, as a "Utopia." [46]

Trotsky could glean some small satisfaction from these developments. Sitting in exile in 1937, he smugly noted that "the territorial army contradicted that ideal of 'offensivism' and 'maneuverability' with which this school started." [47] Trotsky also saw that political realities and the practical demands of military affairs exacted a heavy price on the Red command's idealism and enthusiasm. Though the wheels of reason ground slowly for the military communists, facts could not be denied forever:

The former opponents of the enlistment of "generals" had themselves become "generals...." The "war of the classes" was replaced by the doctrine of "collective security." The perspective of world revolution gave place to the deification of the status quo. In order to inspire confidence in possible allies and not

46 D. Riazanov, "Voennoe delo i marksizm," in Voyna i voennoe iskusstvo v svete istoricheskogo materializma (Moscow: 1927), p. 14; cited in Fedotoff White, "Soviet Philosophy of War," p. 342.

47 Trotsky, Chto takoe SSSR i kuda on idet, p. 179.

provoke the enemies, the demand now was to differ as little as possible from capitalist armies....[48]

For a man deprived of his citizenship, his stature, and his ideals, that kind of victory must have seemed bittersweet indeed.

Reality, however, became the exclusive domain of those who were forced to confront it; doctrinaire military communists continued to profess their faith in a Marxist theory of war. They found a suitable forum, well isolated from the real world of practical military affairs, in the military section of the Communist Academy of the CPSU Central Committee. Established in 1929 as the supreme fount of military knowledge in the USSR, its first order of business amounted to little more than the condemnation of former tsarist generals and other proponents of conventional military thought. Among them was A.A. Svechin, who had devoted himself to the development of the Red Army since its inception; branded "bourgeois" by the Academy's military section, he was promptly removed from his chair at the Military Staff College.[49]

"It is worthy of notice," Fedotoff White wrote in 1936, "that the theoretical work in connection with the development of the Marxian science of war is centered not in the Staff College of the Red Army, but in the Communist Academy." Consequently, military doctrine was formulated not on the basis of combat experience and military training,

48 Ibid., p. 176.

49 Fedotoff White, "Soviet Philosophy of War," p. 346.

but on communist orthodoxy and Marxist ideology.[50] Small wonder, then, that the idea of a proletarian military doctrine again became the ideological vogue. Among what Fedotoff White called "the ardent exponents of the simon-pure Marxian viewpoint" was M. Krupskii, whose 1932 article in Morskoi sbornik proclaimed the development of a Marxist-Leninist theory of war as the ultimate aim of military work.[51] This time, however, the advocates of an exclusively Marxist science of war found themselves pushing an ideal which even its original sponsors had long since disavowed.

All that, however, is just so much wasted ink if one were to fail to appreciate subsequent developments in Soviet doctrine and military practice. As Fedotoff White noted, events suggested that continued support for a proletarian military doctrine was "merely verbiage" which "did not seem to influence the general trend of the politico-strategical thought of the leaders of the Red Army." [52] Was such a doctrine ever actually adopted by the Soviet armed forces? Did the Red Army ever cleanse itself of "bourgeois" military concepts in favor of an overwhelmingly offensive, mobile doctrine based on its class nature? The answer, if subsequent developments in Soviet military theory and

50 Ibid., p. 347. While the military society dominated these higher levels of military thought, it exerted much less influence over the development of operational art and tactics.

51 Ibid.

52 Ibid., p. 348.

practice are to be taken as any indication, must be a resounding "no." [53] Granted, Soviet military strategy was strongly oriented towards the offensive for a number of decades at the expense of strategic defense. Both the 1929 and 1939 versions of the Red Army's Field Service Regulations gave pride of place to the offense and maneuver; the latter boasted that "If an enemy unleashes a war on us, the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army will be to most offensive-minded of all the attacking armies that have ever existed." [54] That preference, however, had little to do with the alleged "class character" of the Red Army.

Take, for instance, the infamous Treaty of Rapallo. Signed on 16 April 1922, just two weeks after the Eleventh Party Congress adjourned, its provisions included Soviet access to results of German military training and tests within the USSR. [55] Even more astonishing, select Red Army commanders, picked by Tukhachevsky himself, were trained in

53 Even so, the modern Soviet military press claims that "the debate ended with a total defeat for Trotsky and his supporters. The party demonstrated that there does exist a Soviet military doctrine and a Soviet military science, which radically differ...from the military theories and military doctrines of the imperialist states....An important role in defending Lenin's stand on these matters and in defining the substance of Soviet military doctrine was played by Lenin's pupil and comrade in arms, the eminent proletarian field general M.V. Frunze." Gen. A.S. Milovidov, ed., Filosofskoe nasledie V.I. Lenina i problemy sovremennoi voyny (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1972), p. 99.

54 History of the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union, 1941-1945, Vol. 1 (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1960), trans. the US Army Center of Military History, p. 565.

55 Erickson, p. 155.

German military academies.[56] That fervent military communists would tolerate this infusion of "bourgeois" military theory--long the bane of the Red Command--is truly remarkable and suggests an ulterior motive: namely, to achieve a level of military competence and effectiveness regardless of the ideological price. This Soviet-German military cooperation even outlasted Soviet complicity in the abortive 1923 communist uprising in Germany.[57]

Even the sacrosanct principles of offense and maneuver were often subordinated to practical needs. For example, the employment of defensive fortifications--a method fiercely despised by the military communists of the early 1920s--enjoyed something of a renaissance in the Red Army during the late 1920s and the 1930s. What made the project even more unappetizing to doctrinaire military Marxists was the fact that the inspiration and technical advice for building such positions came from a "bourgeois" army--namely, the French.[58]

During the "Great Patriotic War" itself, the Red Army was quick to utilize the lessons learned from so-called "imperialist" forces and campaigns. As B.H. Liddell Hart said of the famed battle of Kursk, "The whole sequence of [Soviet] operations bore a remarkable likeness to Petain's elastic defense and counter-stroke in the Second Battle of

56 C.L. Sulzberger, World War II (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1966), p. 9.

57 Erickson, pp. 160-61.

58 Alan Clark, Barbarossa: The Russian-German Conflict, 1941-45 (New York: Quill, 1985), p. 30.

the Marne which gave the decisive turn to the First World War." [59] Even if die-hard military communists could point to the battle as an example of maneuver, they could never admit that the French army had followed the precepts of a "Marxist" science of war during World War I; on the other hand, the static defense of Leningrad and Stalingrad had little to do with a strategy of maneuver.

In a sense, the Red Army's doctrinal debate never truly ended. True, Trotsky's ouster and Stalin's attainment of total power closed the "political" portion of the doctrinal debate and provided a convincing deterrent against any sort of discussion during the reign of "the greatest military genius of modern times" and "the inspirer and organizer of all victories." [60] After all, "there is not a single aspect, not a single problem, of military art which has not received its further development from Comrade Stalin." [61] But shortly after Stalin's death a new group of military theorists began a discussion which was, in certain respects, similar to the earlier debate. On one side stood those who professed the superiority of Stalin's "socialist" approach to war; arrayed against them were military men who felt that "the Stalinist factors tended to limit originality in military thinking and to ignore the fact that the laws of

59 B.H. Liddell Hart, Strategy (New York: Praeger, 1967), p. 295.

60 Raymond L. Garthoff, Soviet Strategy in the Nuclear Age (New York: Praeger, 1962), p. 61.

61 Col. I.S. Baz, Istochniki voennogo moguchestva Sovetskogo Soiuza (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1947), pp. 82-83; cited in *ibid.*, p. 63.

war apply to both socialist and non-socialist fighting sides." [62] The former argument roughly corresponded to the position of Frunze and his cohorts within the Red Command, while the latter resembled Trotsky's stance. [63]

Among the most significant Soviet doctrinal developments has begun to evolve only within the last few years. In May 1987, the Soviet Union unveiled an outline of what purports to be a "new" military doctrine, based upon the principles of defense and "reasonable sufficiency." [64] The doctrine was further elaborated in January 1990 by Gen. M.A. Moiseev, Chief of the Soviet General Staff, and includes the following elements:

- War is no longer considered a means of achieving political objectives.
- The Soviet Union will never initiate military actions against any other state.
- The Soviet Union will never be the first to use nuclear weapons.
- The Soviet Union has no territorial claims against nor does it consider any other state to be its enemy.
- The Soviet Union seeks to preserve military parity as a decisive factor in averting war, but at much lower levels. [65]

Gone are the offensive principles which lay at the core of Soviet doctrine, "proletarian" or otherwise, since the inception of the Red Army. Granted, offensive weaponry and

62 Jacobs, p. 96.

63 Ibid.

64 "Reasonable sufficiency" refers to the force levels necessary to repel an attack against the Soviet Union. Phillip A. Peterson and Notra Trulock III, A "New" Soviet Military Doctrine: Origins and Implications (RMA Sandhurst: Soviet Studies Research Centre, Summer 1988), p. 25.

65 Soviet Military Power, 1990 (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, September 1990), pp. 26-27.

methods are to be retained, but supposedly only in the context of a counter-offensive to repel an aggressor. Of course, these developments must be viewed with caution; military doctrine can be an ephemeral phenomenon, especially given the transitory nature of current superpower relations. Therefore, accurate assessments of the actual long-term ramifications for Soviet military policy are years away. The impact of this "new thinking" and the revised doctrine have yet to be sorted out even within the USSR, but the Red Army has already begun its withdrawal from its forward positions in Eastern Europe and is actively engaged in arms control negotiations which, for the first time in recent memory, hold some prospect for far-reaching success.[66]

* * *

66 Two notable agreements, the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty and the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty, have already been concluded.

CONCLUSION

This paper began with a quote from Clausewitz, asserting that war is a continuation of politics. During the doctrinal debate and the subsequent struggle for power and survival, Clausewitz's famous dictum was perverted to an astonishing degree; not war itself, it seems, but entire military organizations, military leaders, and even military thought were manipulated for the achievement of political aims.

However, that political aspect was but one of the debate's two levels; while personal ambition and self-interest doubtless played some part in each participant's role, sincere beliefs either for or against a "proletarian" method of warfare stirred to action many who otherwise may have never become involved. The Revolution, having passed several severe tests, found itself struggling to find its place in the world. That place, according to the holiest tenets of Marxist thought, must be scientific, progressive, and a shining example for all others to follow. But the Soviet Union could hope for little such glory in the international political arena; widespread, lasting revolutions in Western Europe and elsewhere had failed to materialize. Likewise, the New Economic Policy represented a retreat of sorts in the economic field, while Soviet industry had to struggle to reach even the level of production present in pre-World War I tsarist Russia.

Only in the field of military affairs could the Bolshevik regime claim success. Having "defeated" a foreign capitalist intervention and internal forces of reaction, military communists sought to institutionalize their victories in a new, socialist science of war. Once again Clausewitz comes to mind, yet in quite a different context, and in a passage that has, in retrospect, proved remarkably prophetic. Speaking of the Wars of the French Revolution, he observed that they

suddenly opened to view a whole different world of military phenomena....Old models were abandoned and it was thought that all this was the result of new discoveries, magnificent ideas, and so forth, but also, of course, of the changes in the state of society. It was now thought that the old methods were of no further use whatever and would never be seen again. But in such revolutions in opinions, parties always arise and in this case also the old views have found their champions, who look upon the [new] phenomena as rude blows of brute force, a general decadence of the art, and who cherish the belief that is precisely the [art of war] which must be the goal of perfection....Of the new phenomena in the field of war very few indeed are to be ascribed to new social conditions and circumstances. But these must not be taken as a norm, either, belonging as they do just to the crisis of a process of fermentation, and we cannot doubt that a great part of the earlier conditions of war will once more reappear.[1]

Clausewitz had foreseen not only the debate itself, but its outcome as well; he noted that previously developed and proven elements of military thought would maintain their importance, even in "revolutionary" armies and societies. And yet, if one were to believe over six decades' worth of

1 Karl von Clausewitz, On War, trans. O.J. Matthijs Jolles (Washington, DC: Combat Forces Press, 1953), p. 498.

Soviet military literature, it would seem that the military communists of the post-October era had indeed succeeded in developing a new, superior science of war. If that is to be history's sole measuring stick--the amount of ink devoted to an individual's or a group's ideas--then it may be safely said that Frunze, Tukhachevsky, and their compatriots gained a clear and decisive victory during the doctrinal debate of the 1920s. If, however, one were to judge success and failure (or victory and defeat) on the basis of whose vision had proven correct, the laurels must certainly fall to Trotsky and like-minded conservative military figures of the time. From the perspective of an ex-tsarist "specialist" awaiting execution in the 1930s, however, or from that of a bitter, disillusioned exile lying in the Mexican dust with an ice ax embedded in his skull, that is meager consolation indeed.

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