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**VISION TO REALITY: Sergie G. Gorshkov -
Father of the Modern Soviet Navy**

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FM 22-103, Leadership and Command at Senior Levels, introduces us to the concept of vision. It describes vision as "a personal concept of what the organization must be capable of doing." (FM 22-103, p. 7). It further states that a leader must be able to communicate that vision and to make that vision a reality. In the modern world, with technology changing the face of war almost daily, senior leaders at the highest levels must possess long-range vision and be able to translate that vision into reality against the competing demands of economics, politics, and the global situation. The purpose of this paper is to examine the application of vision by a modern commander and draw some lessons for the future of our Armed Forces.

Probably no other leader is as clear an example of vision as Sergie G. Gorshkov, Admiral of the Fleet and Commander in Chief of the Soviet Navy from 1956 to 1985. He assumed command of a weak, coastal navy and made it into the second strongest "blue-water" navy in the world. Through his writings, speeches, and daily activities, he communicated his vision not only to the Soviet Fleet, but to the Soviet leadership and the entire world. This paper will focus on Gorshkov's application of his vision of seapower using the model contained in FM 22-103.

In developing the concept of vision, FM 22-103 identifies attributes and perspectives senior leaders must possess, and imperatives they must follow.

Attributes are what a senior leader must "be" in order to accomplish his vision. The leader must be a standard bearer, who sets the ethical framework in which the organization operates. A second attribute is the ability to develop others through teaching, training, coaching. The final attribute is that of integrator; one who focuses the activities of the organization.

A review of Gorshkov's career reveals that it was extremely varied in both duties and locations. Gorshkov served both in the inland seas (Black Sea) and in the Soviet Navy's only pre-World War II oceanic fleet, the Far East Fleet in the Pacific. He served on patrol craft, minesweepers, destroyers, and cruisers. Given his later preferences, it is somewhat paradoxical that the only type ship on which he never served was a submarine. Gorshkov's service during the Great Patriotic War was extensive and heroic. During the war he commanded a number of successful squadron actions; amphibious operations; river operations; and even, for a short time, land forces in the 47th Army.

Two significant facts about Gorshkov's career are that in 1941, at age 31, he became the youngest admiral ever in the Soviet Navy and he did not join the Communist Party (CPSU) until 1942. However, once he did join the CPSU, he was a delegate to seven Party Congresses and was a member of the Central Committee of the Party from 1961 to 1985.

This review of Gorshkov's career illustrates Gorshkov as a standard bearer. He was a hero of the Great Patriotic

War and was an important member of the CPSU. Without demonstrating these two attributes, he would have been unable to accomplish his vision in a country where military service and political activeness count for so much. Gorshkov deeply believes that the navy must set the standard for the services as the guardian of Communism. In a 1977 article, Gorshkov traced the role of the navy in the October 1917 revolution that established the communist state. He held the modern sailors of the Soviet Navy responsible for guarding the values established in that revolution.¹

As a developer, Gorshkov was at his best. He developed the theory of the seapower of the state and translated that into specific requirements for what the sailors and ships of the Navy must be able to accomplish. He coached his subordinates in his concept of seapower and was extremely active in the training of seamen. He developed and implemented an entire theory of military training and indoctrination for the Soviet Navy and implemented it during his tenure.²

To integrate the efforts of the navy, Gorshkov developed his theory of seapower into a doctrine for the navy. This doctrine was published as a series of articles in 1974, but by then was already largely in existence. Gorshkov used the publication of his doctrine to obtain support from the CPSU, largely in the form of a larger budget. The important facts about his doctrine were that it fit within the overall Communist view of defense and, it was applied at

every level and area of effort within the navy. Ship design, force design, manpower requirements, training requirements, and use of naval forces all reflected the doctrine.

Besides possessing the correct attributes, to be successful the senior leader must have the correct perspectives. Perspectives describe what the leader must "know" in order to be effective. These perspectives must be historical, operational, and organizational.

The theoretical base for Gorshkov's ideas on seapower rests on three underpinnings. These are his own personal experience; the naval history not only of Russia, but of the modern world; and Marxist/Leninist Communist doctrine. ✓

Gorshkov's writings contain a significant amount of history. This is consistent with the historical basis of communism itself. In developing his theories, he uses the history of naval warfare, primarily from the time of Peter The Great to the present. He draws lessons from the development of the navies of the Western nations as well as the Russian Navy. Gorshkov also draws heavily from the lessons of the Great Patriotic War. His historical writings are extensive, but somewhat twisted in favor of the Soviet Union. This can be the result of either cultural bias, or a need to satisfy the CPSU in order to achieve his goals.

The doctrine developed by Gorshkov clearly demonstrates the operational understanding Gorshkov had of the changes technology was making on the role of navies in war. In 1957,

the United States launched the first nuclear capable missile from a submarine located beneath the sea. Gorshkov considers this to be the most important event in naval history. Prior to this event, and consistent with Mahanian theory, the "fleet vs fleet" action to secure control of the sea was the most important role of a navy. However, Gorshkov states that once submarines acquired the ability to conduct strategic strikes on land targets the most important role of a navy became "fleet vs shore." Additionally, because nuclear submarines can strike from virtually any part of the sea, ocean's can no longer be considered defense barriers. The fleet that Gorshkov built was organized and equipped on this basis. Here is a clear example of a senior leader, well-grounded through experience in his craft, who grasps the possibilities the future holds for his service.

Despite long years as Commander-in-Chief of the Navy, Gorshkov remained close to the sailors, keeping an appreciation of the organization he commanded. He continually traveled throughout the navy, rode on its ships, and assisted in the recruitment of its sailors.

Given the correct attributes and perspectives, the leader can not be effective unless he is able to translate these into his vision. That task requires that the senior leader provide purpose, direction, and motivation for the organization. These are the things he must "do".

Providing purpose is based on an understanding of the strategic, operational, and tactical levels of war.

Strategically, Gorshkov's vision was based on the changing character of war following the introduction of nuclear weapons, missiles, and other technological improvements. He alone of the world's post-World War Two commanders broke away from the traditional Mahanian view of seapower. Strategically, Gorshkov also identifies a number of peacetime uses for the navy. One of these concepts is that the possession of a strong fleet demonstrates that the nation is an economic power. Another is the "show of force" concept for which he cites numerous U. S. examples. He extends this concept to include "show the flag" or as he terms them, port visits. Port visits are an opportunity for the state to spread its ideology directly to the people of another nation. Lastly, Gorshkov says it is possible to acquire dominance at sea, without going to war, through a vigorous building program. He considers the U. S. to have accomplished this during the inter-war period during this century.

Operationally, Gorshkov's analysis of American and Japanese naval operations in the Pacific during World War Two clearly demonstrates that he understands the linkage between strategy and operations. This is demonstrated clearly by the organization of the fleets and squadrons of the Soviet Navy. They are strongest where they can best support the overall strategic concept of their Armed Forces, not just their navy.³

Gorshkov's actions commanding several flotillas during the Great Patriotic War clearly demonstrate an ability to fight battles and win, particularly when outnumbered. Tactically, Gorshkov also gives a number of uses for the navy during "local wars." Among these are shore bombardments or pre-emptive strikes, "show of force," and amphibious operations.

Using this understanding of the levels of war, Gorshkov provided purpose to the efforts of the navy through his writings, speeches, and orders. He insured that all sailors, as well as the senior leadership of the other services and the CPSU understood what the navy was trying to accomplish. He even sponsored a series of articles debating his theories in the Soviet naval journal so that his strategy could be understood and embraced by all.⁴

Having provided purpose, Gorshkov sought to insure that the navy remained focused in a clear and unambiguous direction. A good example of this is Gorshkov's concept of the balanced fleet. Gorshkov faults the Germans in both World Wars for not supporting their submarines with surface vessels or air power. He points out that in both cases they were nearly successful despite being one-dimensional. Gorshkov extends the balanced fleet concept to include amphibious operations, naval air, and ship-vs-ship capabilities. This balanced fleet must exist at the start of a war, since ships take years to build. Additionally, the balanced fleet must reflect the policy requirements of the

state. The Soviet Navy reflects Gorshkov's concepts, having a strong air arm to attack western anti-submarine warfare (ASW) assets and a surface fleet to conduct their own ASW. When he first assumed command of the navy, Gorshkov even cancelled the building of some ships so the the Navy would reflect his vision.

The last requirement to accomplish is to provide motivation to the organization. Throughout his career, Gorshkov provided motivation by emphasizing the role of the Navy in the creation and preservation of the Communist state and the Communist basis for war. He utilized an understanding of the linkage between the CPSU and the Navy to motivate his subordinates.

Having looked at the attributes, perspectives, and imperatives of a leader developed in FM 22-103, I would like to draw some conclusions that may be applicable to our own future military development, particularly at the senior leader level.

Gorshkov commanded the Soviet Navy for 29 years. Clearly, the American way of operating will not and should not keep leaders in power for so long. Still, it is difficult to thoroughly implement your vision in two or three years. General Rogers was SACEUR for eight years. He was able to make some significant positive improvements during that time. Can we say that a recent Chairman of the JCS or Chief of Staff of the Army has been able to significantly implement his vision. This is particularly

critical when the long developmental period required for new equipment is considered. A Chief of Staff or Chief of Naval Operations rarely sees completions of the projects he initiates. His successor often has a completely different vision of what the organization needs.

Gorshkov saw that the nature of naval warfare would be significantly changed by technology and he developed and implemented a doctrine that accounted for that change. While AirLand Battle may be considered a doctrine that is modern and recognizes the new face of battle, it has not been implemented in the form of force structure, equipment, personnel policies, etc. Again, implementation of the vision of the AirLand Battle doctrine is going to take a long time. Clearly, a suggestion is to leave senior leaders in position longer. This is going to require that we are more selective in who we pick and that fewer will ever have an opportunity for the best positions. These are hard choices, but they must be made if we are to have any hope of implementing our vision.

Gorshkov was very closely tied to the CPSU for much of his career. These ties gave him much greater power than if he had not sat on the Central Committee. This is not to say that generals should be senators. Still, as a nation we need to foster cooperation and a sharing of vision between the military and the elected government. This is an absolute requirement if we are going to be able to implement our vision at the strategic level.

This paper has examined Gorshkov's accomplishments using the framework for leadership contained in FM 22-103. Gorshkov's 29 year command of the Soviet Navy is over. Yet, the impact of his theory of seapower and the navy he built will be felt into the next century. He has had a profound effect on the United States Navy as well as his own. He is a clear example of what a senior leader with vision can accomplish.

ENDNOTES

1. "Guarding the Accomplishments of the Great October." S.G. Gorshkov. Morskoy Sbornik. No. 11 (Nov 1977):6-12. Located in CARL in the TRANSDEX.
2. "Questions of the Theory of the Navy." S.G. Gorshkov. Morskoy Sbornik. No. 7 (Jul 1983):27-38.
3. "Pacific Naval Operations in World War II." S. G. Gorshkov. Vyenno-istorichesky Zhurnal. No 8 (Aug 1981):58-65.
4. Op cit. "Questions". 27-38.

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