

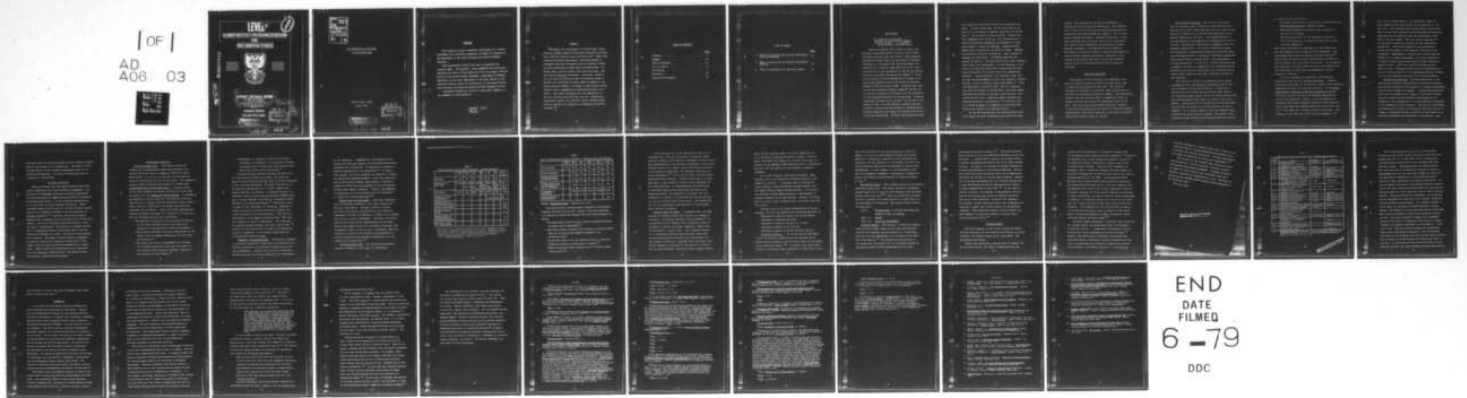
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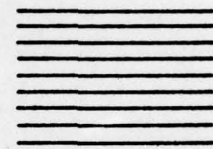
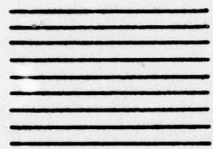
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MAJ. ^⑥ALLAN A. MYER
⑥ THE STRUCTURE OF DISCIPLINE
IN THE SOVIET ARMY,
-1975-

① Jan 75

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THE STRUCTURE OF DISCIPLINE
IN THE SOVIET ARMY

MAJOR ALLAN A. MYER

January 1975

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FOREWORD

This research project represents fulfillment of a student requirement for successful completion of Phase III Training of the Department of the Army's Foreign Area Officer Program (Russian).

Only unclassified sources are used in producing the research paper. The opinions, value judgments and conclusions expressed are those of the author and in no way reflect official policy of the United States Government; Department of Defense; Department of the Army; Department of the Army, Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff of Intelligence; or the United States Army Institute for Advanced Russian and East European Studies.

Interested readers are invited to send their comments to the Commander of the Institute.

RICHARD P. KELLY
LTC, MI
Commander

SUMMARY

Throughout the development of the Red Army, Soviet political leaders understood military discipline as having both a military function and a political role. Apart from classical military requirements, discipline serves to strengthen political reliability and an effective system has been established to meet these perceived needs. Although these controls achieve their political goal, they also enhance military discipline. The author presents the view that the political side of discipline tends to obscure the traditional military powers available to the Soviet military command. A review of these powers clearly indicate that a comprehensive disciplinary system is in effect. The author concludes that the combination of military authority and political control, coupled with significant support of a societal nature, provide Soviet military command the capability to minimize disciplinary problems.

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THE SETTING

"A violation of discipline, a cowardly retreat from the demands of military duty. . . is treason."
Soviet Military Barracks Poster

Barely two months after seizure of power, the Bolshevik leadership issued a military decree which abolished military ranks and titles.¹ This order was followed by another decree of the Council of People's Commissars on 12 January 1918, which proclaimed the formation of a socialist army which was to be, "built up from below on the principles of election of officers and mutual comradely discipline and respect."² These curious directives which represented an attempt at an egalitarian people's army in the spirit of the Paris Commune of 1871 were short-lived. In March 1918, Leon Trotsky was designated People's Commissar for War and the series of reforms he instituted laid the foundation for the professionalization of the Red Army. Visionary utopianism soon gave way to realism. By the end of the summer of 1918, a central military authority had been created; a council with the mission of coordinating all military operations and supply and administrative activities was functioning; military conscription had been

instituted and restoration of military discipline had begun. Trotsky stated that, "at all costs and at any price, it is necessary to implant discipline in the Red Army."³ And he moved in that direction. Trained military commanders were recruited. The installation of a system of political commissars was designed as a safeguard against treason and sabotage. Communist Party members were installed at all military levels. Emphasis was placed on political reliability. Even a system of hostages was instituted. As Trotsky explained the system, if officers betrayed the Red Army, their families would suffer the consequences. To add substance to this threat, an order was issued which stated that the families of deserters and traitors were to be immediately arrested. Trotsky declared, "Let them know, that they are also betraying members of their own families: mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, wives and children."⁴ Such was disciplinary realism in 1918 - and it is apparent that from the infancy of the Red Army, political leaders understood discipline as serving a dual function: first in the military role - affecting combat readiness and fighting efficiency, and second in its political role - as a system designed to strengthen the political reliability and loyalty of the military force.

As the Red Army matured, the organizational structure supporting force reliability and loyalty has been

refined. The prerogatives of military commanders in disciplinary matters have been modernized. The codification of military law statutes and supporting disciplinary regulations have been periodically updated. Yet the basic concept remains sacrosanct. Discipline continues to play both a military and a political role and it is precisely this duality which complicates any discussion of Soviet military discipline. Although political reliability and loyalty is an end in itself, it greatly influences the state of Soviet military discipline. Therefore, a discussion of discipline must first address the political realities and its interrelationship with the military structure.

POLITICAL REALITIES

The Communist Party leadership has developed a complex but highly integrated system of controls which seeks to penetrate every aspect of army life. The system is composed of two parallel hierarchies which operate side by side with the professional military command. Both hierarchies interact with the military chain of command but remain as separate entities with their own independent chain of command. The first which may be called political, consists of the political workers and the network of Party and Komsomol organizations. The other, which may be described as punitive, consists of security organs of the KGB .

The Political Hierarchy. The control of political work in the Soviet Army is centered in the Main Political Administration (GPU), which functions both as a part of the Ministry of Defense and as the Military Department of the Central Committee of the Party. The responsibilities of the GPU embrace all propaganda and educational activities in the army, including the supervision of Communist Party and Komsomol organizations. Its central organization plans and coordinates a comprehensive program of political education and indoctrination. Through its subordinate apparatus, which extends down to company level, these programs are closely supervised.⁵ In addition, the GPU representatives throughout the chain of command have the responsibility for monitoring the status of army morale and discipline and to render weekly reports to the Party leadership through the GPU hierarchy.

This political control is reinforced by the network of Communist Party and Komsomol organizations which function throughout the military structure. Primary party organizations are located in all military units (down to and including company level), and in all military institutes and training schools where there are three or more party members. Considering that 22 percent of all army personnel and more than 90 percent of all Army Officers are party members,⁶ it is readily apparent that the Communist Party permeates the entire chain of command. The general tasks assigned to these military party organizations are defined

by formal statutes and include:

*educating the military in the spirit of Marxism-Leninism

*reinforcing discipline. (Emphasis added)

*mobilizing personnel to fulfill tasks in political and military training.

*mobilizing personnel in the impeccable execution of their military duty, of orders and directives issued by their commanders.⁷

Day-to-day operations are reinforced by party supervision over the Communist Party League of Youth (Komsomol). Komsomol membership within the military exceeds 60 percent⁸ and provides the military party organizations an effective base of support and a reservoir of activists. At the monthly party meetings, attitudes within the units are evaluated and the fulfillment of work plans corresponding to statute tasking are analyzed.

From the standpoint of discipline, this political bureaucracy has some very definite advantages. Foremost among these advantages is the specific tasking of the political organizations within the military structure. As the Soviet Army Officer's Handbook on Military Legislation explains, "Political sections and Party and Komsomol organizations serve as the commander's support in the strengthening of discipline and through measures inherent in these organizations, each Party and Komsomol member will work toward this end."⁹ The corollary - having a stake in the system - also operates to the advantage of the military commander. As

part of the "establishment", the significant number of party members within the military can be expected to "toe the line". The advantage also extends beyond acquiescence. Many of these party members are well-motivated and dedicated young men and are concerned with unit performance; they want to set the example. The next obvious advantage is the monitoring capability provided by this specialized bureaucracy. Potential problems or counterproductive trends can be brought to the immediate attention of the leadership. Additionally, off-duty time is monitored and soldiers are strongly encouraged to use party-operated recreational centers and to participate in party-organized sporting events. This list could be extended but the point is clear: although the Main Political Administration has the principal mission of strengthening political reliability, it also enhances the state of military discipline.

The Punitive Hierarchy. The KGB organization in the armed forces parallels the military and political hierarchy and operates through so-called special or counter-intelligence sections down through the regiment. Although KGB representatives wear the uniforms and insignia of the units to which they are attached and are nominally subordinate to unit commanders, this organization is in fact directly responsible to the Committee on State Security. They are not accountable or subordinate to either the military or political chain of command. Although principally oriented to the prevention of political dissidence and disloyalty in the military, they

have what might be called the capability for flexible response based on the demand of the ruling elite. The sordid, blood-stained history of this powerful organization adds to its influence and mystique. Its role in raising the level of discipline is self-evident.

MILITARY DISCIPLINE

There is no doubt that the complex system of political control complicates the tasks of military commanders. The intrusion of independent political and police hierarchies into the army chain of command produces multiple by-products of friction and rivalry. It also produces misconceptions as to the nature of Soviet military discipline. Soviet statements supporting the goals of the Main Political Administration are frequently declared to be the foundation of military discipline.¹⁰ Certainly, politically-oriented measures play a dominant role in the daily life of the Soviet soldier. But do not let Soviet political rhetoric cloud the issue. Traditionally, the authority to command carries with it considerable power to effectuate control and discipline and obedience to orders. The Soviet system follows this tradition. The power of Soviet military commanders to exercise disciplinary authority is granted by a wide range of precise legal statutes and administrative regulations. These statutes and regulations may be subdivided into two categories: administrative, non-judicial powers and secondly, judicial punitive powers.

Non-Judicial Authority

The Disciplinary Code. Non-judicial powers are coupled with a comprehensive supporting structure, and provide the Soviet chain of command an effective, broad-based system. As in the U.S. military, the non-judicial structure constitutes the core of the system. The commander's primary source of disciplinary authority is found in the Disciplinary Code of the Armed Forces. In general terms, this 46 page document correlates to Article 15 of the UCMJ and Chapter 26, U.S. Manual for Courts-Martial. It implements and amplifies a decree issued by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet on 23 August 1960 and prescribes certain requirements, policies, limitations, and persons upon whom this punishment may be imposed. Soviet philosophy regarding non-judicial punishment parallels U.S. concepts in a limited way with the following policies and requirements.:

**A commander is expected to use non-punitive measures to the extent possible without resorting to the imposition of non-judicial or judicial punishment.¹¹

**Non-judicial punishment should be administered at the lowest level of command commensurate with the needs of discipline.¹²

**The amount and nature of punishment will be based on a careful evaluation of the case, the nature of the violation and the past performance, experience and character of the offender.¹³

**Confinement is viewed as a particularly severe punishment and commanders are cautioned to adjudge confinement only in those cases when lesser punishments have proven to be unsuccessful.¹⁴

Although accurate parallels between the Soviet and U.S. non-judicial system can be made, the spirit and intent of the Soviet Disciplinary Code in no way corresponds to U.S. military philosophy. The major functions of U.S. non-judicial regulations are to correct, educate and reform offenders, to preserve, in appropriate cases, an offender's service record from unnecessary stigmatization and to further military efficiency by disposing of minor offenses in an expeditious manner.¹⁵ The Soviet system is based on the requirement for unswerving obedience to orders and precise execution of military demands with certain retribution for any deviations. This spirit is unmistakable in the Code's declaration that, "The order of a superior is law to a subordinate. The order must be completed unquestioningly, precisely, and on time."¹⁶ Support for this declaration is found in the directives issued to commanders, in the demands placed upon the serviceman and within the Code.

Commander's Responsibilities. The military commander is initially warned that a high state of discipline is an absolute prerequisite in achieving a high state of military preparedness. Without qualification or deviation, he must precisely and sternly administer the requirements

of the regulation. Commanders are then advised of the expectation that all offenders of prescribed disciplinary standards will be punished. An exception is viewed as a definite degradation of the regulations.¹⁷ To support this concept, two formal programs are required: a continuing educational program designed to raise the understanding of disciplinary demands, and secondly, a publicity program to inform all unit personnel of the disciplinary actions taken against offenders. Finally, the commander is instructed to use the pressures of the "collective" to achieve all disciplinary goals.¹⁸

Demands upon the Serviceman. Individual compliance with disciplinary standards is not simply equated with military requirements. Through a process of social, political and military indoctrination, the soldier is repeatedly told that his obedience to orders is an integral part of his socialist development. His honor, his family name and the trust of his contemporaries are at stake. Then an even higher purpose for accepting the concept that a superior's order is absolute law is presented: "Military discipline is based on the soldier's consciousness of a military obligation and personal responsibility for the defense of his Motherland."¹⁹

The Disciplinary Code. The authorized punishments provide a commander a wide range of alternatives.

TABLE I

Table of Authorized Non-Judicial Punishment - Enlisted Personnel

	Squad Ldr	Dep Plt Cdr	1st Sgt	Plt Cdr	Co Cdr	Sn Cdr	Regt Cdr/Higher
Reprimand	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Restriction to Unit Area	1 week	EM/2 wks NCO/1 wk	EM/3 wks NCO/2 wks	EM/3 wks NCO/2 wks	EM/1 mo NCO/3 wks	EM/1 mo NCO/3 wks	EM/1 mo NCO/3 wks
Extra Duty*	One	Two	Three	Four	Five	Five	Five
Subject to Arrest (confinement)					72 hrs	5 days	10 days
Deprive award of "outstanding soldier"							Yes
Prevent Reenlistment							Yes
Prevent Promotion to PFC							Yes
Reduce position of Responsibility of Reenlisted Personnel							Yes
Reduction in Rank (1 or more grades)							Yes

*Extra duty is only authorized for EM below the rank of Sergeant. Period of extra duty is adjudged in terms of duty roster cycles. Therefore, a soldier punished for "two" will perform extra duty irrespective of the duty roster detailing until two cycles of the duty roster have been completed.

SOURCE: Ditsiplinarnyi Ustav. Chapter 8, pp. 21-23.

TABLE 2

Table of Authorized Non-Judicial Punishment - Officers (except Flag Officers)

	Co/Bn Cdr	Regt Cdr	Div Cdr	Corps Cdr	Army Cdr	Mil Dist Cdr
Oral Reprimand	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Written Reprimand		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Written Reprimand (published orders)		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Formal notification of substandard perf. of Svc obligation		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Confinement in Guardhouse		5 days	10 days	10 days	10 days	10 days
Reduce position of Responsibility						Yes

SOURCE: Ditsiplinarnyi Ustav. Chapter 10, pp. 25-27.

These tables provide a convenient means of comparison with punishments authorized by Article 15 of the UCMJ. However, to draw valid comparisons, it is necessary to evaluate the framework within which these punishments are imposed.

**The soldier does not have the right to refuse non-judicial punishment and demand trial by court-martial.²⁰

**The right to appeal is limited to those instances in which the offender feels that his case has been handled in violation of the Disciplinary Code.²¹

**No provisions exist by which the offender can request a suspension, mitigation, remission or setting aside of a sentence.²²

**Records of punishment become a permanent part of a soldier's record while in service.²³

In the introduction to the Disciplinary Code, it is explained that, "Military discipline is based on a high political awareness and communist upbringing, on the soldier's deep understanding of his patriotic obligation, on the international tasks of our people, and on the selfless devotion to the Socialist Motherland, the Communist Party and the Soviet Government."²⁴ But to find reality, one must search beyond political rhetoric. Closer to the truth is a statement made to this writer by a Soviet First Lieutenant of the Field Artillery. In characterizing the Soviet Army, he explained that the Soviet military operates on two simple principles: "Ya nachalnik i vyi durak, ili, Vyi nachalnik i ya durak" (I am the boss and you are the fool, or, you are the boss and I am the fool). The soldier has the list of requirements and obedience is the only path which prevents punishment.

Officer Courts of Honor. In December 1956, the USSR Ministry of Defense ordered the creation of a unique institution - the Officer Comrades' Courts of Honor.²⁵ As organizations of the Officer Corps, created by order of regimental, division and higher commanders, these courts are designed as a social force. Their specific mission is to investigate offenses which discredit their rank, violate military honor and which are inconsistent with the concept of morality. A specific moral code which classifies offenses in violation of the honor of an officer has not been published. The Court neither judges offenses

which violate criminal codes or service regulations nor is it intended to replace disciplinary action. Courts of Honor investigate the conduct of an officer only upon the request of the commander under whom the court is established, and only with the sanction of the offender's immediate commander.

As a social pressure, peer-group instrument, these standing courts are comprised of officers elected at each regiment or division. A separate Court is elected for Junior Officers (Junior Lieutenant through Captain) and for Senior Officers (Major through Colonel). To increase the influence of peer-group pressures, investigation is normally conducted in an open hearing. However, an officer may not attend a Court of Honor if he is of lower rank than the accused.

Although there is no formal documentation of the proceedings, the Court may petition the convening authority to:

- *Reprimand or publicly censure the guilty officer.
- *Recommend a promotion pass-over.
- *Recommend a reduction in position or rank.
- *Recommend transfer to the reserves.
- *Recommend transfer to another military district.

Pecuniary Liability. "It is the duty of servicemen to care for military property in every possible way as being national property and the material basis for the might of the USSR Armed Forces."²⁶ To support this requirement, A Ministry of Defense Order implemented in April 1964 states

that all servicemen will be held pecuniarily liable for damage to or loss of state property through non-criminal neglect or carelessness. Operating on the principle that possession of state property is a privilege, the order prescribes detailed administrative procedures to insure swift compensation. In this regard, it is interesting to note that the obligatory commander's investigation, headquarters review and financial accounting must be completed within 14 days.²⁷

The Service Record. This document serves as the soldier's efficiency report file. The service record is a permanent service record and is used as a job reference file following release from active duty.²⁸ Since all violations of regulations are recorded, the system serves as a useful lever in the maintenance of discipline. The service record consists of three parts:

- *Part I: Personal Data, to include data pertinent Communist Party or Komsomol.
- *Part II: Awards.
- *Part III: Record of Punishments.

Garrison Patrols. The Garrison and Guard Duty Regulations of Soviet Armed Forces dictate that each military garrison will maintain garrison patrols on a continuing basis in civilian communities in the vicinity of all military installations.²⁹ The mission of these patrols is "to insure that the behavior of all servicemen outside of the garrison meets uniform regulations and all rules

pertaining to military courtesy."³⁰ The Soviet military patrol varies in size and composition dependent on the area patrolled. A typical patrol consists of an armed officer or senior noncommissioned officer and two or three unarmed soldiers. The patrol is instructed to handle offenders in a manner corresponding to the offense committed. Servicemen stopped for minor violations which can be immediately corrected are allowed to continue their business. However, "all servicemen apprehended for any violation prejudicial to good discipline and military bearing will be ordered to return immediately to their unit."³¹ In the event of serious violation, the offender is apprehended, escorted back to his garrison and placed in temporary detention. The patrol leader maintains a record of all offenders, and through a formal reporting system, unit commanders are required to submit after-action reports to the garrison commander. This patrolling concept receives special command emphasis in those East European countries with a Soviet occupation forces.³²

JUDICIAL POWERS

The final supports to the overall concept of Soviet military discipline are the military law statutes, military tribunals, and another unique Soviet institution - the disciplinary battalions.

Rather than possessing a special code of criminal law for the Armed Forces, the Soviet criminal military law

statutes are incorporated in the general Criminal Code of the Russian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic.³³ Similarly, the military court system (Military Tribunals) are part of the USSR court system (comparable to being a part of the US Federal Court System). These military tribunals are permanent courts, staffed by permanent military judges and located in headquarters of military units and in the various military districts of the USSR. Jurisdiction of Soviet military courts extend beyond those granted to corresponding United States military courts. Military tribunals have jurisdiction over cases of all crimes committed by military personnel, personnel of state security agencies and officers of penal institutions, as well as over all cases of espionage. In addition, in localities where civil courts are not operating, all criminal and civil cases may be heard by military tribunals. The authority for this jurisdiction is made on a case-by-case basis and is most prevalent in those areas where civilians are working in support of military forces stationed outside the Soviet Union.³⁴

In Soviet legal terminology, a military crime is defined as, "crimes against the established order of performance of military service..., committed by servicemen as well as by reservists while undergoing active-duty training."³⁵ However, this definition is expanded by including those personnel subject to military tribunal jurisdiction as subject to prosecution for violation of appropriate military crime statutes. The Soviet rationale for incorporating

military offenses in a general crime code is based on the view that there is little differentiation between state discipline and military discipline. Military requirements are simply an extension of "socialist" requirements. 36

The articles in the criminal code contain one striking peculiarity: in all instances, sentences indicate the minimum and maximum punishment. Although provisions are made for early release from confinement (for good behavior, demonstrated rehabilitation, etc.), military tribunals may not adjudge lesser sentences than indicated in the following table:

(See next page)

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TABLE 3

Table of Punishments for Military Crimes (Representative Articles)

Article Number	Crime	Peacetime	Wartime
2a	Insubordination	1-5 yrs	Death or 5-10 yrs
2b	Insubordination (proud or resulting in group conseq.)	3-10 yrs	
3	Failure to execute an order	3 mos-3 yrs	3-10 yrs
4	Resisting a superior	1-5 yrs	Death or 5-15 yrs
5	Threatening a superior	3 mos-3 yrs	3-10 yrs
6	Acts of violence against a cdr	2-10 yrs	Death or 5-15 yrs
7	Insulting a cdr (or insult of a subordinate by a cdr while performing military duties)	3-6 mos	6 mos-5 yrs
9	AWOL (24-72 hrs or less than 24 hrs if second offense within 3 mos.)	3 mos-2 yrs	2-10 yrs
10	Quitting a unit (AWOL in excess of 72 hrs)	1-5 yrs	5-10 yrs
11a	Desertion (non-career pers)	3-7 yrs	Death or 5-10 yrs
11b	Desertion (career pers)	5-7 yrs	Death or 7-10 yrs
15	Willful destruction of military property	1-5 yrs	Death or 5-10 yrs
19	Violation of guard duty orders	6 mos-3 yrs	2-7 yrs
23b	Loss of Classified documents	1-3 yrs	
23d	Disclosure of Mil. info. (but not constituting a state secret)	3 mos-1 yr	
24	Abuse of Authority	7 mos-10 yrs	Death or 3-10 yrs
27	Unauthorized abandonment of battlefield or refusal to use weapons		Death or 15 yrs
28	Voluntary surrender to enemy		Death or 15 yrs
33	Illegal wear of Red Cross or Red Crescent emblem		3 mos-1 yr

SOURCE: Ugolovnyi Kodeks RSFSR (Criminal Codes of the Russian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic). (Moscow: Juridical Literature Publishing House, 1961), Chapter 12, pp. 80-90.

Soviet disciplinary battalions are the peacetime version of those Soviet assault battalions which were used during World War II to cross mine fields, attempt near-suicidal frontal assaults and other extremely high risk military actions. During peacetime, an enlisted man on his first tour who is sentenced by a military tribunal to imprisonment for not less than three months nor more than two years may be assigned to a disciplinary battalion instead of being imprisoned in a general institution. Unless an appeal is granted at the military district command level, the time a convicted person spends in a disciplinary battalion does not count toward his term of active military service. During the period of confinement, the serviceman and his dependents are deprived of all normally authorized service benefits and privileges. As a convict-soldier on active duty, he continues to receive military training. However, the emphasis is on re-education and the serviceman must receive a minimum of three hours political training per day. The entire program is capped with a mandatory *minimum of six hours of production work per day* to insure "complete and constant employment of the convicts." Needless to say, this entire daily schedule is accomplished under severe disciplinary conditions. The disciplinary battalions are in isolated locations and the convict-soldier has no contact with the outside world during his term in the unit. An indication of the severity of life in these units is the fact that cadre manning the battalions receive

the privilege to choose their next assignment after three years service in the unit.³⁷

SUMMING UP

It is clear that the Soviet military possesses the tools necessary for maintenance of discipline. Coupled with the considerable influence of the parallel political and police hierarchies, it appears that the Soviet leadership has developed a well-integrated system, fully capable of minimizing disciplinary problems. Yet the picture is still not complete. The Soviet military receives considerable peripheral support of a societal nature which is evidenced on two levels. On one level, the military is widely accepted by the population as an honored and respected organization and servicemen are held in high esteem. The military profession in general and the Soviet soldier in particular are glorified as the savior and heroic defender of the Motherland. All means of communication provide this message in literature, art, periodicals, newspapers, broadcasting and the omnipresent outdoor banners and posters. The carefully controlled news media limits disruptive outside influences while propagandizing the heroics of World War II.

The second level of peripheral support is found in the broad field of social and personality development of Soviet youth. The cumulative effects of peer-group pressures, societal regimentation, and political indoctrination throughout childhood lend itself to a positive attitude towards

a disciplined military existence. Starting at the pre-school level, childhood activities are always organized as a collective undertaking. Formal political indoctrination, which is an integral and inseparable part of all formal education, praises accomplishments of the Soviet collective spirit and is specifically oriented to the development of a corresponding attitude. Within the classroom, there are study group collectives, project collectives and, of course, the class collective. Leisure time activities are similarly organized. This all-inclusive, uninterrupted process is coupled with a social system which contains rigid lines of authority. This combination tends to develop a general acceptance to submerge individuality, to place a positive value on the collective will and to mold behavioral patterns according to peer-group pressures.

The reality of the Soviet social system plays a positive role in the transformation from citizen to soldier. Military life is not a complete cultural shock. In general terms, the rigors of military training and discipline and the necessity for cohesive group actions are extensions of childhood development. Military commanders take special effort to make effective use of this learned behavior which can best be described as passive accommodation to authority. In this regard, particular importance is attached to the taking of the military oath.³⁸ Rather than being a perfunctory act upon induction, the military command uses the Oath to link current military service with the heroism of the Red

Army in previous wars and to instill a spirit of responsibility as a member of the collective.³⁹ The Oath is not taken until after the soldier has completed basic training and is serving in his permanent unit. It is part of the political education process and Soviet authorities tie the Oath directly to military discipline.

"The Oath and the regulations teach servicemen to subordinate all their actions and deeds to the task of enhancing the combat potential of the Soviet Armed Forces, to be intolerant of the lightest violations of military regulations. Many young people are familiarized with the contents of the Oath and the regulations even before they are called up. But it is in the ranks that the main task of cultivating their sense of responsibility for the observance of military discipline is really undertaken."⁴⁰

In the attempt to achieve this goal, the Oath is studied in political classes, special lectures and reports are dedicated to it and Army veterans are brought in to describe valorous and heroic feats during World War II.⁴¹ The details of the oath-taking ceremony are prescribed by regulation and include the following requirements:

- *Each soldier will recite and sign the Oath in front of his entire unit after the unit commander personally explains the meaning and significance of the Oath.
- *The playing of the National Anthem, a congratulatory speech and a parade will follow the Oath taking.
- *The day of the oath-taking ceremony will be a non-working holiday.⁴²

From this beginning, the Soviet soldier commences his relationship with his peers, superiors and the disciplinary

requirements of the Soviet Army.

By all accounts, it appears that the current state of Soviet discipline is high. However, measurement is difficult. The Soviet Union is a closed society and statistical support is not published in the open press. Since a statistical analysis to measure the effectiveness of the system is beyond the capabilities of the Western analyst, it is necessary to derive indicators from other sources. For example, disciplinary battalions are functioning. On another level, it is widely accepted that alcoholism is a serious problem throughout the Soviet Union. Soviet universal military service brings into the army a true cross-section of Soviet society. The inference is clear.

During the Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1968, newsmen had an opportunity to observe the actions of the large Soviet military occupation force. Some of the reports reaching the West indicate that the Soviet commanders did face some disciplinary problems. For example, Radio Liberty received reports on 26 August 1968 that some Soviet troops were being rotated out of Czechoslovakia because their contact with the population had, "weakened their ideological reliability."⁴³ On that same date, Reuters reported that a Soviet tank was withdrawn from action in Prague after its crew had adorned the tank with portraits of Svoboda and Dubcek.⁴⁴ And how does one evaluate the suicide of a Soviet soldier who put a bullet into his heart in front of the Czechoslovak Central Committee building in Prague?⁴⁵

But reviewing all the evidence, one must conclude that the pluses outweigh known negative factors. The system of controls does penetrate every aspect of army life. There are checks and double-checks. Penalties for disobedience are severe. Social influences, both within and outside of the army, support high standards. But the Czechoslovakian experience, the existence of disciplinary battalions, the command emphasis placed on garrison patrols, the internal social problems of Soviet society and the periodic articles in Soviet military journals and newspapers calling for a heightened awareness in disciplinary matters⁴⁶ do support the conclusion that high disciplinary standards are not assured; that the state of discipline is dependent on continued command emphasis; and finally, that Soviet commanders are well aware of that requirement.

FOOTNOTES

¹"Decree on the Equalization of Rights of All Serving in the Army", translated in James H. Meisel and E. S. Kozera, Materials for the Study of the Soviet Society (Ann Arbor: Wahr Publishers, 1950), pp. 37-38.

²Erich Wollenberg, The Red Army (London: Martin Secker and Warburg, Ltd., 1940), p. 41.

³Leon Trotsky, Kak Vooruzhalas Revolyutsiya (na Voennoi Rabote) (How the Revolution Armed Itself (on War Service)). (Moscow: Military Publishing Council, 1924), Volume I, p. 28, quoted in Merle Fainsod, How Russia is Ruled (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967), p. 466.

⁴Ibid., p. 468.

⁵Lieutenant General Alexander Khmel, Education of the Soviet Soldier (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1972), p. 77.

⁶Major General S. Paronov, "V. I. Lenin o Zashchite Sotsialisticheskovo Otechestva" ("V. I. Lenin on the Defense of Socialist Fatherland"), Voennyi Vestnik, Number I (January, 1974), pp. 9-10. Also see Krasnaya Zvezda, 24 March 1972, p. 1.

⁷"Rules of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union", adopted by the Twenty-second Party Congress, 31 October 1961 and amended by the Twenty-third Party Congress, 8 April 1966, Article 65, contained in John N. Hazard, The Soviet System of Government (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1968), p. 256. For a detailed discussion of political work at unit level see Khmel, Education of the Soviet Soldier, pp. 33-54 and 76-89.

⁸Krasnaya Zvezda, 23 February 1974, p. 1.

⁹Osnovy Sovetskogo Voenno-zakonodatel'stva (Posobye dlia Ofitserov Sovetskoi Armii i Voenno - Morskoj Flota) (Basis of Military Legislation (Handbook for Officers of the Soviet Army and Navy)). (Moscow: Military Publishing House, 1962), pp. 109-110.

¹⁰"Military discipline in the Soviet military is not based on the fear of punishment and coercion, but rather on high political awareness and communist upbringing of the serviceman, on the deep understanding of his patriotic duty, on the international responsibilities of our people..." Ditsiplinarnyi Ustav Vooruzhennykh Sil Soyuza SSR (Disciplinary Code of the Military Forces of the Soviet Union). (Moscow: Military Publishing House, 1971), p. 5. "Soviet military discipline is a deeprooted political phenomenon which mirrors the ethical qualities of the defenders of the socialist motherland, one's selfless loyalty to his country and to the Communist Party." "Strogaya Ditsiplina - Osnova dlia Gotovnosti Vooruzhennykh Sil" ("Strong Discipline - The Basis for Preparedness of the Armed Forces"), Kommunist Vooruzhennykh Sil, February 1966, p. 3. These examples which illustrate Soviet desires to interweave the goal of effective military discipline with a mythical "socialist awareness" can be found readily in Soviet publications. For example, see Colonel V. Kovalev, Ditsiplina - Faktor Pobedi (Discipline - A Factor of Victory). (Moscow: Military Publishing House, 1974), pp. 9-18, or Osnovy Sovetskogo Voenno-zakonodatel'stva, pp. 109-115.

¹¹Ditsiplinarnvi Ustav, Articles 30-32, pp. 17-18.

¹²Ibid., Article 32, pp. 17-18.

¹³Ibid., Article 72, p. 31.

¹⁴Ibid., Article 73, pp. 31-32.

¹⁵U.S. Department of the Army, Army Regulations 27-10: Legal Services - Military Justice (Washington: 26 November 1948), Chapter 3, Paragraph 3-4.

¹⁶Ditsiplinarnvi Ustav, Article 6, P. 9.

¹⁷"Organization and discipline are inconceivable if the commanders are not strict with themselves and their subordinates. Strictness means that the commander must incessantly demand that his subordinates fully observe the regulations, carry out orders and instructions, perform their duties, and direct their efforts towards acquiring combat skill. The commander acts independently within the bounds of the authority vested in him, encouraging those who distinguish themselves and severely punishing delinquents." Khmel, Education of the Soviet Soldier, p. 148. "The order in which penalties are imposed is defined by the Disciplinary Regulations. Strict observance of these regulations precludes mistake and distortions in disciplinary practice." Ibid., p. 152.

¹⁸Ditsiplinarnvi Ustav, p. 6. Also see Osnovi Sovetskovo Voennovo Zakonodatel'stva, p. 4.

¹⁹Ditsiplinarnvi Ustav, p. 7.

²⁰Ibid., p. 12.

²¹Ibid., pp. 35-36.

²²Ibid.

²³Ibid., p. 41.

²⁴Ibid., p. 5.

²⁵USSR Minister of Defense Order No. 212, 19 December 1956 contained in Major General I. F. Pobezhimov and Major General B. A. Viktorov (ed.), Spravochnik Ofitsera po Sovetskomu Zakonodatel'stva (Officer's Handbook on Soviet Legislation). (Moscow: Publishing House of the Ministry of Defense, 1966), pp. 518-523.

²⁶USSR Minister of Defense Order No. 70, 31 March 1964 contained in Ibid., p. 376. In this order, "military property" is defined as weaponry, military equipment, fuel, construction materials, provisions, clothing, personal equipment, quarters property and the all-inclusive term "other property". Additionally, pecuniary liability includes non-criminal but illegal expenditure of funds.

²⁷Ibid., pp. 379-380.

²⁸Ditsiplinarnyi Ustav, p. 41. A new Service Work Book is initiated only if an enlisted man receives a commission. In such cases, awards are carried forward but any recorded punishments are discarded.

²⁹Ustav Garnizonnoi i Karavli'noi Slyzhh Vooruzhennykh Sil SSSR (Garrison and Guard Duty Regulations of the Soviet Armed Forces). (Moscow: Military Publishing House, 1970), Chapter 3, pp. 54-62.

³⁰Ibid., p. 57.

³¹Ibid.

³²General E. Ivanovskii, "v Postoiannoii Boevoi Gotovnosti" ("In Constant Fighting Preparadness"), Voennyi Vestnik, Number I (January 1974), pp. 2-6.

³³Ugolovnyi Kodeks RSFSR (Criminal Code of the Russian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic). (Moscow: Juridicial Literature Publishing House, 1966), Chapter 12, pp. 80-90.

³⁴Statute on Military Tribunals, Ratified by the Supreme Soviet USSR on 25 December 1958, contained in Pobezhimov and Viktorov, Spravochnik Ofitsera, pp. 444-449.

³⁵Ugolovnyi Kodeks, Article 237, p. 80.

³⁶Khmel, Education of the Soviet Soldier, pp. 140-141.

³⁷Regulation on the Disciplinary Battalion in the USSR Armed Forces, implemented by USSR Minister of Defense Order 71, 5 April 1961, contained in Pobezhimov and Viktorov, Spravochnik Ofitsera, pp. 413-423.

³⁸Soviet Military Oath: "I (name), a citizen of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, by joining the ranks of the armed forces, take an oath and solemnly swear to be an upright, brave, disciplined, vigilant soldier, to strictly preserve military and government secrets, and to execute without contradiction, all military regulations and orders of commanders and superiors. I swear to learn conscientiously the trade of war, to protect with all means the military and peoples' property, and to be devoted to my people, my Soviet homeland, and the Soviet Government to my last breath. I will always be ready to report, by order of the Soviet Government, as a soldier of the armed forces for the defense of my homeland, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. I swear to defend it bravely and wisely with all my strength and in honor, without sparing my blood and without regard for my life to achieve a complete victory over the enemy. Should I break my solemn oath, may the severe penalties of the Soviet Law, the overall hatred, and the contempt of the working masses strike me." Contained in Ustav Vnytrennei Slyzhhv Vooruzhennykh Sil Soiuza SSR (Interior Service Regulations of the Soviet Armed Forces). (Moscow: Military Publishing House of the Ministry of Defense, 1971), p. 207.

³⁹Khmel, Education of the Soviet Soldier, pp. 142-143.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 142.

⁴¹Ibid., pp. 142-143.

⁴² Ustav Vnutrennei Sluzhby, pp. 202-211.

⁴³ Radio Liberty Contingency Plan Correspondence, Broadcast Guidance and Summary of Russian Language Program Coverage of Czechoslovakia, June-August (inclusive) 1968, (Munich, 1968), p. 32 (Mimeographed).

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 98.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 162.

⁴⁶ For example see, Editorial, Krasnaya Zvezda, 8 August 1974, p. 1., and Editorial, Krasnaya Zvezda, 1 December 1974, p. 1. Also see Editorial, "Partiinaiia Zabota o Ditsiplinye" ("Party Concern about Discipline"), Voennyi Vestnik, Number 6, June 1973, pp. 2-5, Marshal I Bagramian, "v Osnovye Pobed - Ditsiplina" ("Discipline - The Basis of Victories"), Voennyi Vestnik, Number 8, August 1973, pp. 114-117, and Editorial, "Ditsiplina-Osnova Boegotovnosti" ("Discipline - The Basis of Battle Preparedness"), Voennyi Vestnik, Number 4, April 1974, pp. 2-5.

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