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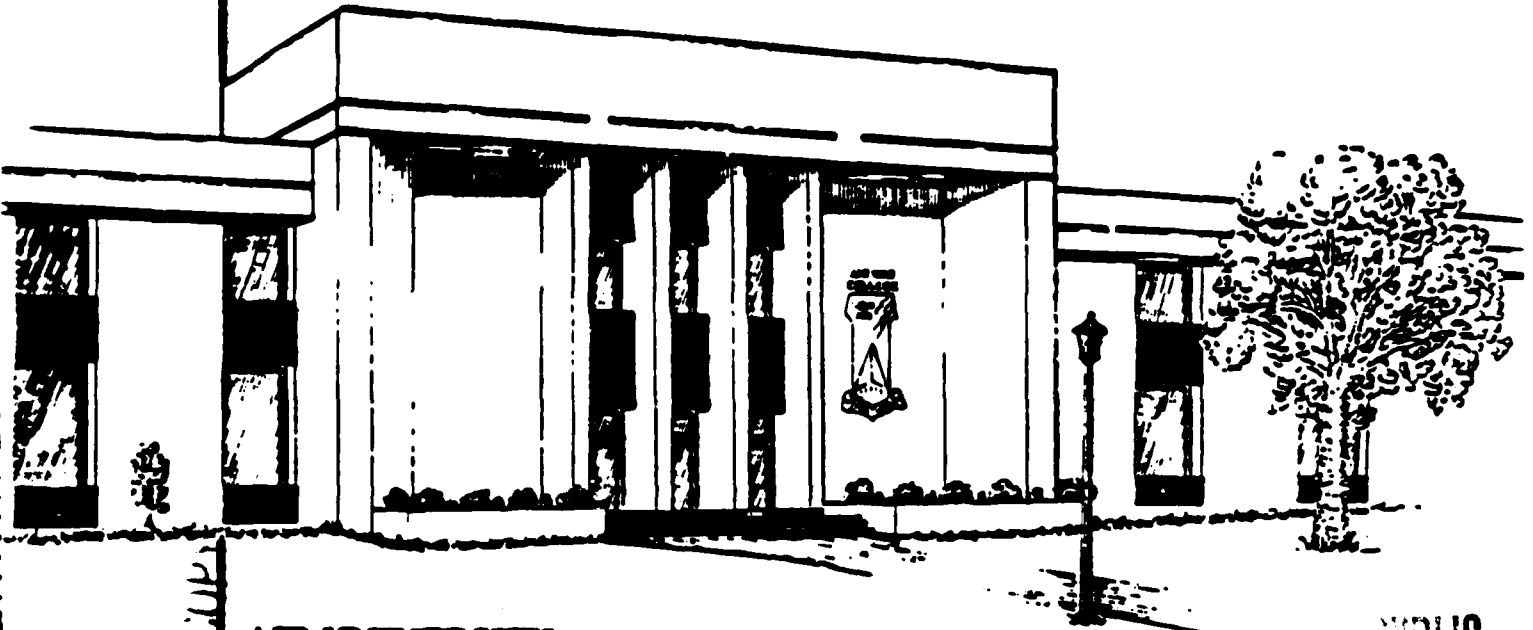
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THE SOVIET OFFICER: A CREDIBLE ADVERSARY

By LT COL MICHAEL J. LACKI

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AIR WAR COLLEGE  
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THE SOVIET OFFICER: A CREDIBLE ADVERSARY

by

MICHAEL J. LACKI  
LIEUTENANT COLONEL, USAF

A RESEARCH REPORT SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY  
IN  
FULFILLMENT OF THE RESEARCH  
REQUIREMENT

RESEARCH ADVISOR: COLONEL DANIEL J. BIGELOW

MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, ALABAMA

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AIR WAR COLLEGE RESEARCH REPORT ABSTRACT

TITLE: The Soviet Officer: A Credible Adversary

AUTHOR: Michael J. Lacki, Lieutenant Colonel, USAF

The intent of this report is to present a review of the training and indoctrination of Soviet officers. The report traces the elements of the communist system which influence the officers' beliefs. Aspects of civilian and professional military education are reviewed. Some elements of the officer's life-style serve to provide another perspective of his life. A summary of the strengths and weaknesses of the Soviet officer corps concludes the remarks.

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Lieutenant Colonel <sup>41</sup>Michael J. Lacki is a command pilot with approximately 4000 flying hours. He was awarded a B.S. degree in Personnel Management from Oklahoma State University in 1968 and a M.G.S. in Social Science from Arkansas State University in 1976. He attended Squadron Officer School in residence in 1973 and completed Air Command and Staff College by correspondence in 1977. Colonel Lacki has had tours in Korea and Guam and has flown 96 combat missions in Vietnam. He is the recipient of the Distinguished Flying Cross, The Meritorious Service Medal with 2 Oak Leaf Clusters, and The Air Medal with 4 Oak Leaf Clusters.

CHAPTER I  
INTRODUCTION

As General George Patton stands and overlooks the battlefield in North Africa where his troops have just defeated the Africa Corps he states, "Rommel, you magnificent bastard, I read your book!" This excerpt from the movie "Patton" dramatically emphasizes the benefits derived from knowing your enemy.

In today's military we are probably more familiar with the technological elements of our current adversary, the Soviet Union, than we are with the man who will command the troops, maneuver the ship, or fly the aircraft which may some day oppose us. If we are to hope to be effective in dealing with our adversaries, it behooves us to attempt to learn as much as possible about our counterparts. By looking at his background, his military training, and his professional education we may gain some insight into how effective he will be on the battlefield. The pursuit of this goal is reinforced by Air Force Manual 1-1, Basic Aerospace Doctrine of the USAF, which states:

Fundamental to understanding war fighting principles is recognition of the three essential factors in warfare: man, machine, and environment.... Man, both friend and foe, is the most complex factor and therefore, is the least understood. This in no way lessens the critical importance for commanders to know their men and to know their enemy. (1:2-4)

To study the Soviet officer we must start at the foundation of his military indoctrination which begins in the elementary schools and follow through to the highest senior service schools.

## CHAPTER II

### EARLY EDUCATION

The goal of public education in the USSR is the preparation of highly educated, well rounded, physically healthy and active builders of communist society, brought up on the ideas of Marxism-Leninism and in the spirit of respect for Soviet laws and Socialist legality, capable of working successfully in various areas of socio-economic cultural construction, actively participating in social and state activity, and ready to defend selflessly the socialist homeland and to preserve and increase its material and spiritual wealth and protect and preserve nature. Public education in the USSR is called upon to ensure the development and satisfaction of the spiritual and intellectual needs of Soviet man. (2:25)

This statement from the Basic Law on Education which was put into effect in the Soviet Union in 1974 clearly places the emphasis in education on the development of a student who is not only educated in traditional curriculum but is also educated in the political ideology which serves as the basis upon which loyalty to the system is built.

While direct political indoctrination does not occur in the early grades, all subjects taught are presented from a Marxist point of view wherever possible. In the higher grades the students are taught "Social Studies" courses which are extensive presentations of Marxist-Leninist theory. As the student progresses into the higher educational system, courses in the philosophy and theory of communism, the history of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, and the principles of political economy are required. These courses are all taught from a Marxist viewpoint and the student is required to pass examinations on these courses to advance. (2:27)

The emphasis on political education is not the solely source of the desired deciation to the Communist Party. Russian history is also heavily emphasized to exploit the strong historical loyalty of every Russian to the motherland. As Nigel Grant notes in his book Soviet Education:

...the system has strong roots in the traditions of the Russian Empire. 'Soviet partriotism' is not only 'love of the socialist motherland' - it contains a strong tinge of straight Russian nationalism as well.... The Second War is referred to as 'The Great Patriotic War'. Geographical atlases bear titles like 'Our Motherland' (nasha rodina has much stronger emotional overtones than its English translation), and such phrases as 'our country' are liberally sprinkled through the history books. (2:31)

In conjunction with the educational indroctrination the schools are also used to develop the sense of discipline which permeates Soviet society. A series of twenty rules serves as a comprehensive guide to all aspects of behavior in the school. Compliance with these rules creates a sense of socially responsible behavior which is ingrained into the children. Failure to comply results in public admonition and embarrassment in front of peers. Hedrick Smith, a correspondent who lived in Russia and whose children attended a Russian school, noted:

The technique of public shaming for misbehavior or poor performance, brutal as it seemed to us, is central to the Soviet system, whether in bringing up children or making adults toe the line in any walk of life. From an early age, all learn the futility of arguing back with authority, of disputing public criticism. (3:200)

Other organizations outside the formal school structure but which work in close harmony with the schools also

help to promote discipline and loyalty to the system. The first one of these which a student will encounter is the Little Octobrists.

The Little Octobrist organization is much less formal than other organizations in which the student will participate as he progresses in school. Its purpose is to prepare seven to nine year olds who are meeting academic and behavioral requirements for entry into the Young Pioneers. Entry into the organization is not mandatory but teachers encourage participation by utilizing members of the group to organize classmates for minor tasks which need to be accomplished.

While the Little Octobrists is a relatively loose knit organization, the All Union Lenin Pioneer Organization, better known as The Young Pioneers, is a highly structured group for children ages 10 through 15. Its apparent purpose is to tie the youth more closely to the state by providing a myriad of educational and recreational opportunities as well as a forum in which more enthusiastic political, moral, social, and military indoctrination takes place. This is reflected in the pledge which the youngster takes upon his entry into the group.

I, a Young Pioneer of the Soviet Union, in the presence of my comrades solemnly promise to love my Soviet motherland passionately, and to live, learn and struggle as the great Lenin bade us and as the Communist Party teaches us. (2:73)

The structure of the Young Pioneers is very much along military lines. Each class has a detachment which

serves as the basic unit of the organization. Within each detachment are informal groups known as links. The entire school then produces a brigade which is nothing more than a grouping of the detachments. The brigade is led by an elected Brigade Council which operates under the direct supervision of an adult Senior Pioneer Leader.

Besides providing a multitude of recreational opportunities and facilities, the Young Pioneers strongly emphasizes the development of social responsibility. A set of eleven rules serves as a code of conduct which stresses moral responsibility to the state. Failure to comply with these rules results in criticism by the group. In more severe cases, the individual may be expelled from the organization. Expulsion is considered a major disgrace.

Military training and explanation of the role of the military are also critical goals of the Young Pioneers. Their handbook, "Tovarishch" (Comrades), regularly has large displays of military equipment and explanations of both officer and enlisted rank. It also emphasizes the need for the individual to prepare himself while in school for service in the military.

In support of these goals, the Young Pioneers conduct military-sport games called Zarnista (Summer Lightning). In these "games" the participants are exposed to military discipline, military regulations, guard duty, and manuevers. Their role in civil defense is also stressed.

The organization for competition at Zarnista further reflects the military aspect of these games. The book The Armed Forces of the USSR best summarizes this organization.

The basic unit of Zarnista is the battallion, headed by a "commander, his deputy for political units with a staff of seven to nine people, and detachments of young soldiers". In each detachment there is a commander, a political officer, commander of sections, three to four scouts, two to three communications personnel, seven to twelve riflemen, two medical corpsmen, two cooks, and an editor for the battallion combat journal. (4:331)

To add perspective to the importance of these games, more than 16 million Soviet children take part in these activities annually. (5:138)

To this point we have examined how the young student is indoctrinated toward the Soviet system and the military. From here we will proceed to the transitional organizations and military training.

## CHAPTER III

### THE START OF A CAREER

Two organizations span the gap between the military orientation which takes place in the schools and entry onto active duty. These two organizations are The Volunteer Society For Cooperation with the Army, Aviation, and the Fleet (DOSAAF) and The All-Union Leninist Communist League of Youth (KOMсомOL). Since DOSAAF is more oriented toward military training, it will be discussed first.

The current DOSAAF organization came into being in 1951 when several groups whose purposes were to support the military were combined into one unified organization. The officially stated purpose for the existence of DOSAAF is "active cooperation for strengthening the military capability of the country and for preparing workers for the defense of the socialist fatherland". (4:326) Membership in the organization is placed at anywhere from 65 to 98 million members depending on the source you choose to accept since no formal numbers are published. Membership is opened to all individuals over 14 years of age and all students are expected to join.

DOSAAF serves a dual purpose. First, it provides to many Russians recreational opportunities which would otherwise not be available. These activities help to keep the populace ready to assume their responsibility in the defense

of the homeland. The second and more important purpose is to provide military training which will better prepare 16 to 18 year olds for active service. This preparatory program was begun in 1967 with the implementation of the Universal Military Service Law which reduced the term of active service for draftees from three to two years. The close ties of DOSAAF to the military are reflected in its structure.

Its Central Committee is directly subordinate to both the Central Committee of the Communist Party and to the USSR Council of Ministers, and most of its leaders are military officers, many on active duty. Thus, for all practical purposes, DOSAAF operates as an adjunct of the Ministry of Defense. (5:138-139)

While DOSAAF provides early military training and indoctrination, KOMSOMOL provides the ideological counterpart. KOMSOMOL membership is open to young adults in the age range of 15 to 27. The age span of this organization is significant since it encompasses groups who are just entering the work force, are in the higher educational system, or are in the military. The goals of KOMSOMOL are political, stressing participation in political work and study of communist theory.

Membership in KOMSOMOL is much more restrictive than the other organizations which we have discussed to this point. This is a result of both organizational policy and individual choice. Only one-third of the individuals eligible to apply for entry into KOMSOMOL choose to do so. This is probably due to the demands which the organization places on its

members. On the other hand, of those that do apply for membership, not all are selected. Applicants must prove themselves worthy of entry through political work and commendable behavior in work or study programs.

Admission to KOMSOMOL can be a key to success in any walk of life in the Soviet Union but the price of access to this key is not cheap. To apply for entry into KOMSOMOL one must be sponsored. Normally this sponsorship is obtained from the leadership of the Young Pioneers but other possible sources of sponsorship are members of the Communist Party or two members of the KOMSOMOL organization itself.

Once entry is obtained, the KOMSOMOL organization charter provides a list of rights and duties which guides the behavior of its members. Some of these duties are: to improve one's knowledge of technology, to help implement Party policies and to explain them to others, to develop criticism and self criticism, to set a good example in labor discipline, to take care of public property, to study Marxism-Leninism attentively, and to be active in the KOMSOMOL organization. Compliance with duties is expected and failure to do so can result in criticism of the member or, in severe cases, expulsion from the organization. (2:79)

KOMSOMOL membership is almost mandatory if a student plans on seeking a higher education. It also appears that the backing of the organization plays a significant role in

both encouraging and assisting applicants to military colleges. Membership in the organization is of particular importance since active participation can lead to membership in the Communist Party, the real key to success.

The student who has participated in DOSAAF, performed adequately in school, and demonstrated reliability in KOMSOMOL may choose to apply for entry into one of the more than 140 military colleges to receive an education and a commission in the Soviet military. These colleges provide a free education and serve as one of the few opportunities a Soviet citizen may be presented to improve his status in life. They are also the primary sources for the large majority of Soviet officers.

There are two types of military colleges in the Soviet Union; those which offer a three year program resulting in a commission as a junior lieutenant and the receipt of a technician's certificate, and those which offer four or five year programs resulting in a commission as a lieutenant and the receipt of an "all union degree" which is the equivalent to those awarded at civilian institutions of higher learning. (4:353)

Several groups of individuals are eligible to apply for entry into these colleges. Students who are graduates of the Suvorov or Nakhimov military training high schools are admitted without having to complete the competitive entrance examinations. (5:153) Other students in the age group 17 to

21 may apply for entry into any one of the military colleges. Upon completion of the entrance examinations, students meet a selection board which has final approval for entry into the particular college. The final group is enlisted personnel up to the age of 23 who have a high school education, pass the entrance exam, and have proven themselves physically and politically qualified. Although the number of applicants to military colleges has declined in recent years, there remains a sufficient number of applicants to allow selectivity.

Unlike the United States military academies whose academic programs are designed to provide an education which allows the graduate to serve in any area of his branch of the service, the Soviet military colleges are specific in that they train cadets to be officers in "particular branches and specialized components" of their armed forces. (4:353)

A statement by Marshal of the Soviet Union Dmitry F. Ustinov, Member of the CPSU Central Committee Politburo, former Minister of Defense of the USSR reflects the importance the Soviet Union places on political and military training in their military colleges.

The Party regards as an important task in its work the training of officer personnel boundlessly devoted to the cause of communism, the Socialist Homeland, commanders, political workers, engineers and technicians competent in warfare. (6:14)

The curriculum clearly supports this statement. Approximately 60 per cent of the curriculum is devoted to specialized military subjects. Thirty per cent is allocated

to what we would consider standard academic studies with heavy emphasis on scientific and technical subjects. The final 10 per cent is devoted to political studies. In conjunction with the classroom training, each cadet spends a portion of each year in the field working with the type forces to which he will be assigned upon graduation. (7:16)

The quality and effectiveness of the training received in the colleges may not be up to the standards the Soviets would desire. In a research report submitted to the United States Army Institute for Advanced Russian and East European Studies, Captain James Marcus summarized some deficiencies. His sources were Soviet professional articles published in a variety of documents within the Soviet Union.

Captain Marcus noted in his research that:

Soviet military educators regard the commander's evaluation of a recent graduate as one of the best sources for measuring the effectiveness of the academic program. This may imply that the grades, achieved by the cadets for their course work and on state examination, tend to be inflated and do not reflect the real situation. (8:15)

These findings were validated by Edward Lozansky, a Soviet exile who formerly taught at the Malinovsky Academy. He stated that pressure was often put on instructors to raise grades even at the higher level schools to maintain respectability. (9:54)

Captain Marcus also noted that the on-the-job training which the cadets receive varies widely in its effectiveness. It appears some cadets are provided the

desired opportunities to interact and learn from the experience. On the other hand, some are utilized by unit commanders as high priced errand boys and are denied the benefits of accomplishing the desired training. (8:16)

Further evidence of possible problems in the officer training program is reflected in research conducted with emigres from the Soviet Union who had served in the military. Extensive, in-depth questioning of these people was conducted by Richard A. Gabriel and recorded in his book The Mind of the Soviet Fighting Man. In nearly every question related to the officers' abilities to function effectively, the respondents rated their officers negatively. (10:15-25, 58-68, 102-111)

The conclusions we may reach from this look at the officer training is two-fold. First, the Soviet officer, unlike his United States counterpart, receives training which is highly oriented toward the job he will perform on active duty. His political training is a key part of his education. Second, there are some problems in the effectiveness of the training program but there are no indications that these problems have affected the Soviet military to any greater degree than the lack of specified training affects the officers of other nations' military forces.

When the cadet completes his required training, he receives his commission as either a junior lieutenant or lieutenant depending on the type of commissioning program. This is the beginning of an active duty career which can last

until the officer reaches the age of mandatory retirement for the highest rank which he achieves. Since there is no up-or-out system in the Soviet military, the newly commissioned officer is virtually guaranteed the opportunity to remain on active duty for a minimum of 20 years even if he never rises above the rank in which he was commissioned. (See appendix)

As a member of the military, Russian society treats the officer well. (10:11) He is provided special privileges which vary in degree depending on his rank. He is paid approximately 20 times more than his enlisted charges and is allowed a great deal more freedom in his off-duty time. The officer is permitted to have his family accompany him on most assignments. Housing is provided on base or the officer receives priority handling in obtaining off base quarters at very low rents, usually 10 to 20 rubles (the equivalent of \$13 to \$27) a month. (5:168) Despite these benefits, the standard of living of a Soviet officer is far below his United States counterpart.

Due to the traditional structure of the Soviet military, the specialized training the officer has received, and the lack of pressure to obtain promotion, the new officer can expect to remain in his initial assignment for a lengthy period. He will probably be performing duties which, in the United States, would normally be accomplished by a non-commissioned officer. This is due to the fact that the Soviet military lacks experienced non-commissioned officers to fill

the gap between draftees and officers. (9:52)

Promotions in the Soviet military depend upon party loyalty and activity, professional ability, and the ability to achieve professional military education through entry into one of the military academies. The order of priority of these requirements is probably as they are listed here but the failure to achieve any of them would severely limit any chance for advancement to field grade rank.

The young officer is expected to remain active in the KOMSOMOL organization or the Party if he aspires to rise in rank. The key to success in the Soviet military is membership in the Communist Party and, for those who have not achieved membership early, this can only be achieved with the support of the political organization which permeates the military establishment. This is best reflected by Richard Gabriel in his book The Antagonists where he states:

As in the American Army, getting high marks on one's efficiency report often displaces the substance of the report. Undoubtedly, one reason why the officer develops bureaucratic perspectives is that his efficiency report is prepared by his superiors in consultation with the unit's political officer.... Moreover, the Soviet officer corps tends toward goal displacement and scapegoating and the emphasis on political loyalty in judging military competence only increases this tendency. In the eyes of the party, an officer is primarily a political rather than a military leader, and Soviet military authorities themselves stress party loyalty as the primary characteristic of a good officer. (11:95)

Job performance in the Soviet military is evaluated in the same manner as it is in the United States military, through the Officer Effectiveness Report (OER). Soviet

officers receive OERs much less frequently than their American counterparts. Reports are prepared in essay form by the individual's commanding officer only when the officer is eligible for promotion. As was noted earlier, the unit political officer has a great deal of influence on the officer's career through positive or negative comments on political activity which he ensures are included in the OER. Negative political comments will definitely limit the officers' opportunities for advanced schooling and promotion.

Entry into a military academy is the third critical element to achieving success. After only a few years on active duty the young officer must start preparing for the examination which may allow him entry into an academy. Senior officers recommend that junior officers spend from 2000 to 3000 hours preparing for these examinations. This equates to approximately three hours of study every day, including weekends and holidays.(4:370) The officer may take the examination three times in attempts to achieve entry. Each academy prepares its own examination and the academy staff is allowed a great deal of latitude in selecting from applicants to ensure officer potential is included in the evaluation process and that the desired balance of nationalities is maintained. An example of topics which may be included in the examination are Russian language and literature (written), mathematics and physics (written), and military subjects relative to the branch of the applicant.(4:371)

If the junior officer achieves success in the areas discussed above, he has opened the door to a successful military career.

## CHAPTER IV

### CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Entrance into a Military Academy is the first step in advancement to senior rank in the Soviet military. The typical officer who achieved this milestone is a captain less than 30 years of age who can expect to be promoted to the rank of major prior to completion of his three to five years at the academy. In the course of obtaining entry, he has proven his political reliability through his performance in his unit and has demonstrated his academic abilities through his successful completion of the competitive examination. He is now recognized as being in the top 20 to 25 per cent of the officer corps.

The military academies, like the military schools, are tailored to specific branches of the service. The curriculum of each academy is centered on the application of weaponry and its use in a combat environment. "Command Profile" officers receive courses in social sciences, operational art and general tactics, tactics of service branches and special troops, the history of war, military art, and other subjects which are applicable to the Soviet military environment. Additionally, the officers study the forces and weapons of the United States and her allies and how to defend against them. Foreign language, drill, and physical training will round out the program. (4:372)

In addition to providing the type of military training described above, the Soviet academies serve as gathering points for the professional thinkers in the Soviet military. Many of the assigned faculty members produce "theoretical and historical military works, manuals, textbooks, books, and brochures." (4:374) They will probably spend a large part of their careers as instructors and staff members at the academies and most will earn advanced degrees in their particular specialty.

It is evident that the Soviets place a great deal of importance on the education and professional development which is provided at the military academies. Although some deficiencies were noted by some authors in discussions of the curriculum, the overall evaluation appears to be that these programs produce an officer who is well prepared both professionally and politically to move into the special track to advancement.

The officer's first assignment after completion of his training will be a special assignment which can be filled only by a graduate of a military academy. These positions are selected by the Ministry of Defense and approved by the Party. They are all key positions which require political reliability. Most are command or staff positions at the battalion level, for non-flying personnel, or as squadron commanders, for the flying personnel.

The officer can expect to serve in the position to which he has been assigned for a period of three to four years. During this time he will continue to be observed, and, if he continues to perform in an outstanding manner, he can expect to continue to progress in rank and responsibility.

Progression in the Soviet military is very close to that in the United States. The biggest difference is that Soviet officers on flying status are required to spend less time in grade, on the average one year less, than their non-rated counterparts. Majors will spend three to four years in grade while lieutenant colonels can expect to spend four to five years in grade. A full colonel has no set time in grade before consideration for general. (4:415)

This period of a Soviet officer's career appears to be the time where both his political and military metal will be tested. It is at this point that he is placed in positions where he must balance the contradictory demands of the professional military officer and those of the dedicated party member. These contradictions are best summarized in the book The Soviet Military And The Communist Party.

The author points out that the Soviet military displays many of the qualities evident in most large professional organizations. These include "(a) high professionalization and demands for professional autonomy; (b) a professional ethos, including strict codes of honor and discipline; and (c) an organizational structure whose levels

of authority are easily discernable and stable." (12:21)  
These qualities are the exact opposites of the traits necessary in a communist system to allow the Party the ability to control the organization. A comparison of a list of traits which are natural to the military and a list of traits desired by the Communist Party further amplifies these contradictions. (12:21)

NATURAL MILITARY TRAIT

Elitism  
Professional Autonomy  
Nationalism  
Detachment from Society  
Heroic Symbolism

TRAITS DESIRED BY THE  
COMMUNIST PARTY

Egalitarianism  
Subordination to Ideology  
Proletarian Internationalism  
Involvement With Society  
Anonymity

These contradictions have been a source of conflict throughout the history of communism in Russia but have been effectively dealt with when it became necessary. The current system of educating and indoctrinating each officer and creating an inseparable tie between the Party, the military, and patriotism appears to be effective. The successful mid-career officer recognizes these conflicts and balances the competing requirements.

Another factor which will determine the success of a Soviet officer is his ability to attract a mentor at this point in his career. An analysis of the leaders in the Soviet military showed that "...patronage is essential if one is to rise to the top ranks of the Soviet Armed Forces. (13:131)

An extremely striking example of this is related in the story of a senior Soviet officer who rose from anonymity because of contacts which his family established. The complete story is in the book The Threat and was related to the author by Edward Lozansky, a former physics teacher at the Malinovsky Tank Academy. It is the story of his father-in-law, Lieutenant General Ivan Dimitrivich Yershov, a graduate of the Frunze Military Academy.

... the Yershov's lacked the essential connections that seem to be the prerequisite for upward mobility in the Soviet forces, and for the next nine years they suffered the penalties. They moved from one garrison post to another, until in 1959 they were living in Kushka, a flyblown frontier post on the Afghan border.... Kushka was the end of the line so far as a military career was concerned. Yershov was a lieutenant colonel by now and there seemed little prospect that he would go any further... (his wife) left Turkmenista and headed for Moscow.... Soon after arriving back in the capital she befriended Galina Sokolov... the wife of General Sergei Sokolov, a wartime hero who was moving up fast through the ranks.... Galina explained to Margarita that Yershov was never going to get on without influential friends—that was the way things were done in the army. Her husband, the general, was now in a position to supply such help.... That was indeed all it took.... By late December, Ivan Yershov had been abruptly summoned from his remote back-water and appointed to the Academy of the General Staff. (9:60-61)

Life for the Soviet officer and his family does not improve significantly with his achievement of field grade rank. The beginning of the example used above gives some hint of what a lieutenant colonel who is not in the fast track can expect. An excellent summary of what can be expected by an average officer is provided by Andrew Cockburn in his book on the Soviet military.

Many of these officers are destined to spend their lives in the backwoods. Unless they are lucky enough to draw a semipermanent posting in a cosmopolitan center like Moscow or Leningrad, they will spend most of their twenty-five year career rotating around the garrison posts and bases of the Soviet Union. Most of these are in remote spots, where life can seem comfortable only by contrast with the hardships endured by the ordinary soldiers. (9:55)

The same narrative provides descriptions of some of the locations of these posts and what the families must deal with.

Viktor Belenko, awarded an elite position as a pilot instructor officer, found himself posted to Salsk, a city of 60,000 in the depths of Southern Russia. He describes it as a drab, dingy, poor city, set on treeless flatlands over which stinging winds howled. Dust intruded everywhere except when rain turned it to mud. There were two movie houses, but they were small and going there usually entailed an hour's wait. There was also an hour's wait for service in the city's few restaurants, and "the fare was not worth the delay". Yet even Salsk seemed a glittering metropolis by contrast with Belenko's next posting, a base near a village called Chuguyevka in far eastern Siberia, where there was no movie theater or restaurant, or even any paved streets or street lights.... (9:55)

An article published in the 5 March 1984 issue of "The Air Force Times" further emphasized difficulties experienced by Soviet military families. These problems were first highlighted in the January issues of the Soviet military newspaper "Red Star". In these articles the wives of Soviet officers lament the fact that they are unable to "continue their professional careers at places of their husbands' service". (14:14) Many highly educated spouses take menial jobs with local industry simply to avoid boredom. The articles also note, "many wives of Soviet officers decide to

remain at their jobs in big cities... when their husbands are deployed. That separation... is one of the primary reasons for divorce". (14:14) The low birth rate in Soviet military families is attributed in these articles to the difficulty of raising a family on military bases, particularly the poor housing and the inadequate child care facilities.

The intermediate years discussed to this point are the dues paying period in the Soviet military. For those who survive the social, political, and military challenges, rewards will be forthcoming. Those who fail to develop the necessary connections for advancement will continue their current existence until retirement.

## CHAPTER V

### THE ELITE

The final hurdle to joining the Soviet military elite is selection to attend The Military Academy of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the USSR named for K. Ye. Voroshilov located in Moscow. Admission to the academy is by "special situation" (selection) and is "limited to those senior officers from all services who are being groomed for top level positions in their respective services, groups of forces, or military districts and at the Ministry of Defense level." (13:120) Students range in rank from lieutenant colonel through general major (one star). There is no age limit for admission but candidates must have had experience as commanders or staff officers at large units and be graduates of military academies.

The General Staff Academy conducts a two year program which emphasizes "working out the most important problems of contemporary military art in combat employing both nuclear weapons and conventional means of destruction". (4:385) While attending the academy, students work with the faculty conducting theoretical research in the fields of military arts and sciences. (15:60) This is the same type research which would be accomplished in the United States by various Pentagon working groups or by contract research organizations.

The importance of the work accomplished in the academy is reflected by quality of the faculty. This is emphasized in the following quote from the book The Armed Forces Of The USSR:

Between fifty and seventy-five generals and admirals are assigned to the academy in various capacities. Most of the faculty members have advanced degrees in military science, and they contribute to books and textbooks on military science. The impact of the academy's work is felt throughout the Soviet Armed Force. (4:386-387)

Besides producing leaders of the Soviet military, the General Staff Academy has also provided training to many senior officers and defense leaders from other communist nations. Some of the more distinguished graduates of the academy are the defense ministers of East Germany, Czechoslovakia, and Romania. Another graduate whose name is recognizable to most United States military personnel is Vo Nyugen Giap of Vietnam. (15:60)

Completion of the General Staff Academy will probably result in assignment to the General Staff Headquarters located in Moscow. Here the officer will work in the most powerful military organization in the Soviet Union, responsible for planning and directing the operations of all the branches of the Soviet military. (9:61) When he leaves the General Staff he will be a high ranking general officer destined to move as far as his political connections will allow.

The long years of servitude to the Party may now pay the supreme dividends. The Soviet leaders "have tried to

bind the military to themselves through political alliances and personal ties intended to keep the military elite committed to the regime; to ensure cooperation and responsiveness in the High Command; and to divide the military leadership by favoring some segments and excluding others from such a preferential relationship with the Party rulers."

(12:32) Having the proper Party connections can result in the officer being one of "a certain number of prominent military leaders (brought) into the highest Party councils, such as the Central Committee and the Central Auditing Commission, thereby bring them close to the decision-making centers where, theoretically, they may present the military's point of view and look out for the military's interests."

(12:29)

Having risen to the highest military ranks and now being a member of the Party elite, the special world of the communist upper class opens to the officer and his family. Hedrick Smith in The Russians describes part of this world very nicely.

The Soviet system of privileges has its protocol: perquisites are parceled out according to rank. At the top, the supreme leaders of the Communist Party Politburo, members of the powerful Party Central Committee, cabinet ministers, and the small executive group that runs the Supreme Soviet, or parliament, get the kremlivsky payok, the Kremlin ration... the very top leaders get home delivery or supposedly use stores right inside the Kremlin and Central Committee headquarters. Deputy ministers and the Supreme Soviet executive group have their special shops at Government House.... The value and quality of the rations are arranged in descending order, according to the rank of those receiving them....

Other special cut-rate food stores cater to Soviet marshals and admirals.... In the basement of Voyentorz (Army-Navy store) on Kalinin Prospect, there is a secret shop for military officers. (3:32-33)

Access to these special facilities is very tightly controlled and every attempt is made to hide their existence from the public. Although it appears that most Soviet citizens know of their existence, the almost comical game of official denial and public complacency serves to preserve face for the government.

Other benefits derived from high rank are endless. We need only return to the story of General Yershov. Yershov has been serving in the General Staff in Moscow when we resume his story.

During their later years in Moscow, their standard of living had already been far above that of most Soviet citizens. They had a large apartment all to themselves and their three children, as well as access to some of the more exclusive special stores. Yershov's salary was augmented by the occasional cash bribe for services his influential position enabled him to deliver, while Margarita had earned something of a reputation as a spekulyant, or "speculator", owing to her sideline of selling goods bought at the special stores to less privileged friends at a handsome profit. (9:62)

These benefits were derived at the lower level of the elite. But as Yershov continued to move up to the position of chief of staff of the Kiev Military District so did his preferential treatment.

But with promotion to Kiev, Yershov and his family became entitled to privileges that were positively feudal. In terms of actual cash money, they were not that rich: Ivan's salary amounted to a little less than 700 rubles a month, or about the same as his son-in-law Edward Lozansky was making from teaching and writing....

As chief of staff for the military district, Yershov was allotted a free apartment in Kiev overlooking the river. Attendant cooks, maids, and chauffeurs were supplied by the Army.... Most of the time the family lived at another official residence, a comfortable country house a few miles out of the city.

Their favorite retreat, however, was yet another country house, or dacha, beside a lake about 30 miles outside the city. The entire area around the lake, which was not shown on ordinary maps, was fenced off and guarded. The only other houses by the water were those reserved for the three other members of the Kiev Military Soviet - the commander, the deputy commander, and the chief political officer. All the houses were substantial eight-bedroom affairs, built since the war for the exclusive use of the military brass. (9:63)

The benefits of special stores where goods unavailable to the populace are obtained at very low prices, of living in three separate residences in an area where three families may share an apartment, and of having chauffeur driven cars in a country where cars are a luxury are but the tangible signs of position. The more subjective trappings of position are also present.

Lozansky recalls the atmosphere of semi-oriental feudalism that prevailed life at the secret lake. "In the course of the afternoon the wives of the other district generals, who were junior to Yershov, would be dropping by with little presents, maybe a basket of fruit or a freshly shot duck. They would be very, very deferential to Margarita or anyone else from the family including me." These gifts were more than simple neighborliness. They were tokens of tribute, in return for which some favor might be granted..... (9:63)

These examples emphasize the means by which senior ranking officials are motivated. To insure that one's loyalty is never questioned, support for any positions which may challenge the party line is avoided. Close regard for the bureaucratic organization ensures proper respect for the

existent power structure. The road to the top is a difficult one and it appears that those who achieve that status move very carefully to ensure they remain there as long as possible.

Retirement is not a goal in the Soviet military hierarchy. To remain in a position of power ensures all the trappings of success remain with you. To retire means to forfeit much of what has been gained. Most of the current Soviet military leadership was born before 1925 which makes them a minimum of 60 years old. How long they remain in their positions is almost totally dependent on how it suits the goals of Mikhail Gorbachov, the current leader of the Soviet Union.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

Lieutenant-General A. Agafonov, Chief of Personnel Department, Main Political Administration of the Soviet Army and Navy described the Soviet officer as seen by the Party in an article written for "Soviet Military Review."

Today the Soviet officer is characterized by such features as communist conviction, boundless devotion to Party and people, conscientious discipline, expedition, initiative, independence, commander's willpower, organizational abilities, high professional competence, general military and technical knowledge, ability to train and educate their subordinates. These features raise the prestige of Soviet officers among the men, making them serve as an example to their subordinates. (6:15)

This very flattering description is balanced by a composite picture of the Soviet officer presented by Richard Gabriel in his book The Antagonists. This composite is based on the results of his study done with emigres who served in the Soviet military.

Along with other shortcomings, the Soviet officer corps is heavily bureaucratized and careerist oriented. It functions within a highly bureaucratic political system and places far too much emphasis upon political loyalty and technical skill. Many Soviet officers are far more concerned with their own careers than they should be. As a result they neglect the troops and the development of critical leadership skills. The bureaucratic corps also reflects many of the problems found in most bureaucracies - especially goal displacement, avoidance of responsibility, and a tendency toward scapegoating.... A basic bureaucratic characteristic is the tendency to avoid responsibility when things go wrong. (11:99)

In reality, the current Soviet officer is probably somewhere between the two extremes.

We have seen that political indoctrination begins in the early years of an officer's life and continues through his entire career. In the early years he is the recipient of the training. His schools and social organizations provide continuous inputs. In his mid-career he becomes the teacher as well as the recipient. When he rises to the top he becomes the source.

To ignore the effects of this indoctrination would be a mistake. The Soviet officer is as dedicated to his system of government as we are to ours. This was validated by officers who have had direct contact with their Soviet counterparts at different locations around the world. Captain Jon Collavo worked with Soviets in Egypt as part of the United Nations Truce Supervisory Organization. Through discussion with these officers Captain Collavo developed these observations:

...the Soviet world view has certainly affected the Soviet officer's personal perception of US/USSR relationship. First and foremost, the US is the "enemy".... When asked why they believe this, the most common reply was, "this is simply so". The US is aggressive, adventuristic, and unbelievably destructive. The only "logical" attitude for the USSR to take vis-a-vis the US is that of a cautious adversary. The Soviet people must always be ready to defend their homeland against the imperialistic US.... All that the Soviets want is PEACE at any cost.... Have no illusions, they truly believe the Soviet way of life is best and communism is the wave of the future. (16:12)

It is reasonable to believe that these observations are valid. The system of indoctrination is effective in producing an individual who honestly believes in his system.

The second major criticism of the Soviet officer is that he is too specialized. We have seen that all of his training, education, and duty from the time he enters school to obtain a commission through his senior field grade career are directly related to his career specialty. Many feel that this creates officers "with narrow professional backgrounds, unable to adapt to changing weapons systems and methods of warfare". (4:391) This does limit the officer's ability to deal with problems or decisions which are not directly in his area of expertise. This was reflected in several articles but was most clearly stated by Major Robert Young, another member of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization, when he wrote, "They were often inflexible with regard to change in duties or missions and reluctant to make decisions that might seem controversial". (17:22)

But this same specialization which limits the officer in some respects is a strength in others. From the time of receiving his commission the officer is ready to go into the field with his unit. Because he is specialized, he becomes very familiar with not only his equipment but also the capabilities of the unit. His advanced military education serves to train him for higher levels of responsibility in his specialty. This allows his efforts to be directed toward developing specialized expertise.

While we in the United States military may believe that, to be effective, an officer must have a diversified

background, the Soviets see an advantage to having a highly specialized officer force. It is not unlikely that both nations base their requirements on; (1) the type of demands placed on their officer corps, (2) the ability of their non-commissioned officers, and (3) the nature of their enlisted force. Both systems use their officers to serve the needs of the political system.

Many of the other criticisms levied against the Soviet officer system are a result of it being a large bureaucratic organization not unlike other large bureaucratic organizations throughout the world. This definitely includes the United States military. The first system which finds a way to overcome this problem may be the first to see real military professionalism.

This attempt to present an objective look at who our Soviet counterpart is, how he got there, and what motivates him is obviously not all inclusive. This is simply an attempt to extract the highlights and include some insights of personnel who have had direct contact with the system.

As was stated in the beginning of this report, if we are to be effective in dealing with our adversaries, it behooves us to learn as much as possible about them. Hopefully, this is but a start.

APPENDIX

RETIREMENT AGE LIMITS

	Active Duty	Reserve First Category	Reserve Second Category	Reserve Third Category
Junior lieutenant, lieutenant and equivalent	40	40	45	50
Senior lieutenant, captain and equivalent	40	45	50	55
Major and equivalent	45	45	50	55
Lieutenant Colonel and equivalent	45	55	55	60
Colonel and equivalent	50	55	--	60
General Major, general lieutenant and equivalent	55	60	--	65
General Colonel, admiral and equivalent	60	--	--	65
Women Officers	Unknown	--	--	50

Source: A. G. Gornyy, ed., Spravochnik po Zakonodatel'stvu Dlya Ofitserov Sovetskoy Armii i Flota (Handbook on Legislation for Officers of the Soviet Army and Navy) (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1970), p. 37.

NOTE 1: The compulsory retirement provision does not affect four and five-star ranks. The law also provides that certain officers may be kept on active duty for an additional five years, as determined by the Council of Ministers. In January 1977, the law was amended to provide that officers may be kept on active duty for an additional five years after the first five-year extension. (4:342)

NOTE 2: Reserve categories are determined by number of times the reserve officer is called up and the length of time he remained on active duty. First category reserve officers were called up four times for three months service each time. Second category officers were called up one or two times for two months each time. Third category reserve officers were called up once for one month. (4:30)

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