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MAINTAINING HEAVY FORCE TRAINING FOCUS
IN THE AGE OF "NEW SOVIET THINKING"

BY

COLONEL JOHN C. EBERLE

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MAINTAINING HEAVY FORCE TRAINING FOCUS
IN THE AGE OF "NEW SOVIET THINKING"

AN INDIVIDUAL STUDY PROJECT

by

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Project Adviser

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U.S. Army War College
Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania 17013
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MAINTAINING HEAVY FORCE TRAINING FOCUS IN THE AGE OF "NEW SOVIET THINKING"

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

All United States active duty personnel today share one thing. The Soviet Union has been the primary threat for their adult lives. While there have been periods, such as Korea and Viet Nam, when the spotlight was diverted temporarily, heavy force trainers have focused on Soviet forces since World War II. During the Korean War, forces in Europe were held in place in anticipation of a second front attack there by the Soviets. The face off across the German border continued throughout the Viet Nam era, despite the large number of soldiers required to fight in Southeast Asia. Throughout the Viet Nam war, it was generally understood that the Soviets were providing military equipment, economic assistance, and advice to the enemy. This furthered the enmity felt toward the Soviets and fueled the passion most Viet Nam veterans put into ensuring that the Army was not left in the condition to which it had deteriorated during the war years.

Over the past year the Soviets have made some remarkable changes, which are challenging our most fundamental beliefs on the limits of East-West relations. The perception of diminished threat is wide spread and challenges even the most hard-hearted Cold War warrior to believe that the Soviet Union has changed. Historical-

ly, the Soviets have been perceived to be untrustworthy. Today, Gorbachev elicits more trust in the West than many Western politicians. The underlying question is whether or not Gorbachev has changed the Soviet leopard's spots permanently. We may not be able to answer that for years.

In the meantime heavy force tactical leaders, particularly in Europe, must provide adequate rationale for maintaining the training focus on Soviet tactics and operational art. The Soviet threat has been the basis for justifying our presence in Europe and our rationale for maintaining our high state of readiness over the years. It has been the basis for establishing and maintaining the morale and cohesion of units, and has given us a reason for cooperation in military communities.

As long as Gorbachev continues to give the Soviets the appearance of a peace-loving nation, policy makers and pundits alike will continue to debate the level and nature of the Soviet threat. Despite the size of the Soviet Armed Forces and the number of nuclear weapons, the race will be on in the United States to decrease the military and to bring the soldiers home from Europe. The new breed of soldier that we will soon be getting will have matured with this picture of a more benign Soviet Union. Questions will inevitably be asked as to why, if the Soviets are no longer much of a threat, are we in Europe and should we be focused on Soviet tactics in our training. This paper will examine some reasons for maintaining the heavy force focus on Soviet tactics and operational art in the face of the current uncertainty.

CHAPTER II

U.S.-SOVIET RELATIONS ESTABLISHING THE REQUIREMENT

In 1950 there was only one power and one people in the world who could prevent chaos and a new, barbarian tyranny from sweeping the earth. The United States had become a vast world power, like it or not. And liking it or not, Americans would find that if a nation desires to remain a great and moral power there is a game it must play, and some of its people must pay the price. ...

...for whether the American people have accepted it or not, there have always been tigers in the world, which can be contained only by force.

T.R. Fehrenbach, This Kind of War, pp. 90-91.

BACKGROUND

In the past year news headlines portray a world situation heretofore unknown; "Yes, It's Real: How Gorby is Cutting the Soviet Threat"¹, "Waning of Cold War Challenges Leaders"², "Pentagon Says Risk of War is at a Postwar Low, but Warns Against Euphoria"³.³ Defense News cries, "NATO's Job Is Over; It's Time To Go Home".⁴

¹David Ignatius, "Yes, It's Real: How Gorby Is Cutting the Soviet Threat," Washington Post, 5 November 1989, p. C1.

²Don Oberdorfer, "Waning of Cold War Challenges Leaders," Washington Post, 30 November 1989, p. A1.

³Michael R. Gordon, "Pentagon Says Risk of War is at Postwar Low, but Warns Against Euphoria," New York Times, 11 November 1989, p. A7.

⁴DeVallon Bolles, "NATO's Job Is Over; It's Time to Go Home," Defense News, 20 November 1989, p. 31.

Political analyst and ex-National Security Council Director, Zbigniew Brezinski, is headlined in the 12 November, 1989 Washington Post with "The Wall Falls-If Gorbachev Keeps Moving America Should Help Out".⁵

Times are changing - joint U.S.-Soviet leader press conferences - the Soviet Foreign Minister declaring the Cold War over at NATO Headquarters. Daily we have been bombarded with images of a Soviet society far more open, and seemingly far less threatening than any of us have ever experienced. It is not surprising that the Sergeant interviewed on Cable News Network from Nuernberg, the night the wall was opened, said, "We need to go home, we have been here too long". Soon we will have young troopers joining the Army who see the Soviets far differently than their leaders, general through sergeant.

The shared experiences of today's tactical leaders convinced us that the Soviets were the primary threat to peace. In fact, most of us fully agreed with President Reagan when he called the Soviets the "Evil Empire". Like Reagan, we saw the Soviets as the bad guys, while we were the guys in the white hats. Because the bad guys were Communists, we knew they planned to attack us some day. It did not take much to keep soldiers oriented on the enemy when the border was closed.

A typical argument for maintaining the training focus in the pre-Gorbachev days went something like this: if we kept our

⁵Zbigniew Brzezinski, "The Wall Falls," The Washington Post, 12 November 1989, p. D1.

vehicles looking good, trained hard, shot well, and stayed out of trouble downtown, we would convince the bad guys that we were too disciplined, too tough, and too ready for them to attack. Therefore, each day without war was another day of victory for us, as our mission was to deter war by being prepared to fight and win, if the need arose.

While this simple explanation has gotten us by for a number of years, we may need a more sophisticated approach to convince this new group, who are brought up with the new "non-threatening" Soviet Union. Sergei Arbatov, a leading Soviet spokesman, has told us that the Soviets are going to destroy our Army-by taking away the threat.⁶

A review of U.S.-Soviet relations since World War II provides a look at how the perceived Soviet threat accelerated to leave an indelible impression on Americans. Several Soviet-U.S. crises will be used to show the unpredictability of the relations between nations and why nations maintain armies to guard their interests. The degree of danger posed by the conflict between the Communist-led Soviets and the democratic Americans is undoubtedly unparalleled, because of the diametrically opposed ideologies, coupled with the presence of nuclear weapons. The unpredictable timing of the crises is illustrative of how quickly the situation can change between rivals with competing interests in a finite world.

⁶MG(Ret) Edward B. Atkeson, "The New Pact Doctrine: Implications for NATO," ARMY, November 1988, p. 14.

The ensuing discussion in this paper will assume that within a world of have and have-not nations continued disagreement is certain. This chapter will show that the timing, cause, and intensity of the conflict are left to chance. Although going to war with the Soviet Union now seems to be remote given the Soviet Union's unprecedented changes, historical conflicts show us that anything is possible-even war-and failure to remain prepared is inadvisable.

NUCLEAR WEAPONS A NEW VULNERABILITY

The end of the Second World War with the dropping of the atomic bombs and the subsequent surrender of the Japanese formally ended the allied effort of the Soviet Union and the United States. Writing in 1970, the Soviet historian V.M. Khaitsman described the effect the bomb had on Soviet thinking and is indicative of the intensity of feelings that the threat of breakthrough technology can engender:

After the end of World War II, in conditions of political atomic blackmail, directed by the ruling classes of the U.S.A., the Soviet Government called up scientists and engineers to create an atomic bomb in the shortest possible time. Effective measures were adopted...under the leadership of B.L. Vannikov, I.V. Kurchatov and M.G. Pervukhin.

Investigations of nuclear problems were conducted at the highest pitch. Scientists understood the importance of achieving completion of the Soviet atomic project; they knew its significance in ensuring the safety of the Soviet Union. The necessity to create an equal atomic weapon prior to the time when its mass

production would be developed in the U.S.A. dictated the fast tempo of the work.⁷

On 29 August, 1949, the Soviets exploded their first bomb. On 23 September President Truman announced the end of the U.S. monopoly in atomic bombs. This was a surprise to the Americans because the U.S. had predicted that the Soviets would not be able to achieve an atomic explosion before 1952.⁸ By possessing nuclear weapons the Soviet Union, for the first time, could reverse its historic strategic position. Whereas in the past it was vulnerable to direct attack while its chief capitalist adversary was not, now it would be able to strike directly at the heartland of the United States.⁹ It was also the first time the United States had seen the extent to which the Soviets were willing to compete in a modern technological arms race, although the Americans would continue to underestimate the Soviet's ability to compete rapidly.

DEFINING CONTAINMENT

The new vulnerability of the United States was not missed by the leaders of the United States, as evidenced by NSC-68, a National Security Council report presented on 14 April, 1950.

⁷Herbert F. York, "The Atom Bomb," Arms Control, pp. 3-11, Sect. I, W.H. Freeman & Co., c1973 by Scientific American, Inc.

⁸Ibid.

⁹"Soviet General Doctrine for War (U)," Soviet Battlefield Development Plan, United States Army Intelligence Agency, June 1987, pp. 3-36 - 3-37.

...,the Soviet Union, unlike previous aspirants to hegemony, is animated by a new fanatic faith, antithetical to our own, and seeks to impose its absolute authority over the rest of the world. Conflict has, therefore, become endemic and is waged, on the part of the Soviet Union, by violent or non-violent methods in accordance with the dictates of expediency. With the development of increasingly terrifying weapons of mass destruction, every individual faces the ever-present possibility of annihilation should the conflict enter the phase of total war."¹⁰

In this context the U.S. set for itself two policies. The first was a policy of developing a healthy international community and the second the "containment" of the Soviet Union. The containment policy had four aims:

1)block further expansion of Soviet power, (2) expose the falsities of Soviet pretensions,(3) induce a retraction of the Kremlin's control and influence, and (4) in general, so foster the seeds of destruction within the Soviet system that the Kremlin is brought at least to the point of modifying its behavior to conform to generally accepted standards."¹¹

NSC-68 further declared that it was cardinal in the policy to possess superior overall power in ourselves or in dependable combination with other like-minded nations. The military power was necessary for two reasons: first as an ultimate guarantee of our national security, and second to maintain that aggregate strength

¹⁰"NSC-68 A REPORT TO THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL," Naval War College Review, May-June 1975, Reprinted in U.S. Army War College Selected Readings, Course 2, Volume III, p. 283.

¹¹Ibid., p. 298.

without which "...containment'-which is in effect a policy of calculated and gradual coercion-is no more than a policy of bluff".¹² It was also recognized that to make the policy work the U.S. would always have to leave open the possibility of negotiation with the Soviets.

By the time NSC-68 had been published the policy of containment had been tried and found to work. President Truman first applied the concept to Moscow's threat to Turkey and to the Communist bid for victory in the Greek civil war. The American response to the Berlin blockade in 1948 confirmed the effectiveness of the policy.¹³ Known as the Truman Doctrine, it was articulated best by George Kennan's observations from the American Embassy in Moscow in 1946. It emphasized that the Soviet Union presented a long-term challenge, not a short range Hitlerian military plan.

It called for a willingness to meet and to frustrate Soviet aggressive initiatives ranging from politics and diplomacy to limited and major war. It held out a decent hope that, under the experience of protracted frustration, and if American society met the challenge which confronted it by exercising vigorously its historic strengths and virtues, Soviet society might undergo slow but important changes which would in the end make it a force less dangerous to American interests on the world scene.¹⁴

¹²Ibid.

¹³W.W. Rostow, The United States in the World Arena, Harper & Row, New York, 1960, p. 221.

¹⁴Ibid.

American military policy developed from 1947 to 1950 focused on Western Europe. The purpose was to develop and sustain American active and reserve military strength so to defeat the Soviet Union in major war, or short of that of making Soviet victory unobtainable.¹⁵ The idea that air power coupled with a monopoly in nuclear weapons could deal with the Soviet threat was popularly backed in Washington in 1948. It was the American way of war, win the "Big One" in a hurry, get the boys home and substitute capital and machinery for manpower. "In Washington of early 1948 the infantryman thus seemed an old-fashioned if not an irrelevant fellow at a moment when the American atomic-weapons monopoly still held."¹⁶

In light of today's situation the scenario sounds familiar. A confusing world situation, an uncertain, albeit much more visible threat, a move to disarm, tiredness with war (or spending to prevent war), emphasis on something other than land force, the American soldier must have been confused. What is my role? Why do I have to do that, if the Soviets can be deterred by nuclear weapons and defeated by air power? What were the consequences? "In sum, the result of United States military policy as it evolved from 1947 to 1950 was that the Korean War found the United States singularly ill prepared."¹⁷

¹⁵Ibid., p. 222.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 223.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 229.

SINGULARLY UNPREPARED

If the United States had had a large, well-trained ground army that it could have committed quickly to Korea in 1950, history might very well have been different. But since 1945, Americans had not prepared for land war in Asia or anywhere else. Most Americans felt that the foot soldier was obsolete and that modern war would be fought with ships, missiles, and planes. The tremendous nuclear power of the air force, however, was not designed to hold ground on the periphery of Asia; it was meant to demolish factories and cities. In most of Asia there were neither; a 'modern' war could not be waged.

T.R. Fehrenbach, This Kind of War, p. 68.

Fehrenbach's words should ring loud and clear with caution for today's heavy force trainer. We will come back to these words in a later chapter. Suffice it to say that winning a war but losing a focus in the interim years until the next war can be disastrous for ground forces. When President Truman called "they were not there" in the meaning of the words of the popular contemporary song.

The Americans had focused on stopping the Soviets on the plains of Europe or in the Soviet homeland with strategic bombers carrying nuclear weapons at the expense of all other alternatives.

Any strategy other than the now familiar strategy of annihilation proved so frustratingly at variance with the American conception of war that it upset the balance of judgment of American officers in the field and threatened the psychological balance of the nation itself.¹⁸

¹⁸Russell F. Weigley, The American Way of War, Macmillan Co., New York, 1973, p. 383.

The great warriors of the Second World War had learned the necessity of ground forces, but they abrogated their responsibility to their nation and to their soldiers by not insisting that the Army stay prepared in the post war era. That strategic bombers could handle the chore of deterrence was the easy answer. The nation collectively let the Army die, and consequently, when it had to fight in Korea, too many of its men died from unpreparedness. There are no easy answers in war, all services are necessary, all are important, and all must be ready to carry their load.

In addition to the ideological war that the United States was fighting with the Soviets up until this time, it also had to contend with the increasing pace of technology. As has already been discussed, the Soviets exploded their first atomic device in 1949, four years after the Americans bombs dropped on Japan. In 1953, the Soviets exploded their first fission bomb, just one year after the Americans. In 1957, the Soviets launched the first intercontinental ballistic missile, followed shortly by the launching of the first man-made satellite Sputnik.¹⁹ The implications of the Sputnik launch were tremendous because 1) the Soviets had beaten the U.S. to the punch, 2) it confirmed an ability of the Soviets to move much faster in the technology field than Americans predicted, 3) it left the U.S. mainland vulnerable to attack in a way which it had no defense and had no immediate capability to

¹⁹Donald M. Snow, National Security: Enduring Problems of U.S. Defense Policy, St. Martin's Press, Inc., New York, 1987, p. 53.

way which it had no defense and had no immediate capability to respond in kind. For the first time the Americans felt they had been beaten at their own game-the introduction of technology. It made the Americans question the value of their educational system and reexamine the way they developed military technology.

THE MISSILE GAP

The ensuing examination of military strategy led to the "missile gap" controversy which resulted in the Americans rushing missile programs in response to Soviet suggestions that they were fielding intercontinental ballistic missiles. In fact, the Soviets were not and the United States ended up fielding an unnecessary generation of missiles. The Soviets on the other hand found themselves behind the Americans in the number of available missiles. The Soviet secrecy and duplicity coupled with the Americans lack of accurate intelligence of the real nature of the Soviet threat had brought unintended consequences on both sides and furthered the suspicion and fear.²⁰ This unnecessarily fueled the arms race, which would nearly exhaust both sides before the arrival of Gorbachev. Again this is illustrative of the consequences of breakthrough technology and the fear that it engenders in the side that finds itself caught short.

²⁰Amos A. Jordan, William J. Taylor, American National Security Policy and Process, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1982, pp. 70 & 319.

The Americans continued to rely on a military strategy of massive retaliation in case of Soviet nuclear attack. The threat of Soviet ICBM's, however, put the effectiveness of that doctrine in doubt as during the "missile gap" there could be no "counterforce" to strike the Soviets, if the Soviets launched first and were able to effectively destroy American strategic bombers.²¹

Relying on deterrence alone the Eisenhower administration had won few positive gains for American policy around the world and had suffered embarrassing setbacks in the Middle East, in the U-2 crisis of 1960 and the cancellation of the Paris summit conference, and most damagingly, in Fidel Castro's conquest in Cuba and his turn toward the Communists.²²

THE UNEXPECTED EVENT

The U-2 crisis is interesting because the United States was pushing hard to get adequate intelligence to confirm the "missile gap". Manned flights over the Soviet Union had been taking place for some time. The President had denied the existence of the flights. On 1 May, 1960 Eisenhower authorized the last flight over the Soviet Union on 6 May, 1960. As luck would have it, the plane was shot down over Soviet territory and the pilot was captured alive. The pilot confessed to the nature of his espionage.²³

²¹Weigley, p. 436.

²²Weigley, p. 437.

²³Story repeated by LTC(P) Stewart Bornhoft, who heard story from General Goodpaster, who was President Eisenhower's National Security Advisor at the time of the U-2 incident.

Amid the Khrushchev "thaw", an earlier period of attempted reform and improved East-West relations, President Eisenhower had scheduled a summit conference in Paris with Khrushchev in June, 1960. Khrushchev walked out of the conference over the U-2 incident the first day. This again heightened tensions between the U.S. and the Soviet Union and illustrates the effect that "out of the blue" events can have in international relations. The U-2 was an accidental happening, although not totally unpredictable. The point of the story here is that, although the crisis had no immediate consequences beyond heightened tension between the U.S. and the Soviets, it was caused by an incident that was largely unanticipated. Had Khrushchev had the nuclear missiles that the U.S. assumed that he had at the time, the consequences could have been far more severe. Because the Soviets believed that the U.S. force was credible, they again were deterred from attacking.

The longer term consequences of incidents like the U-2 and other failures mentioned above were to embolden Khrushchev to test the Americans in places like Berlin and Cuba. Each time the Americans were able to achieve a solution, because they had a credible deterrent to discourage the Soviets from going the last step. As we saw, the "missile gap" caused the U.S. to react quickly to build ICBM's. This led the U.S. to have sufficient deliverable nuclear power to convince the Soviets of its believ-

ability. In 1962 the United States had 720 modern ICBM's, the Soviets 260 of questionable reliability.²⁴

In the meantime American ground forces were reacting to Soviet thrusts by preparing General Defense Plans, training, and remaining forward deployed. There was an awareness of the threat, and there was practical experience from patrolling along the border, and reacting to various U.S.-Soviet crises such as the Berlin Crisis during which U.S. forces were moved forward to occupy General Defense Positions as a demonstration of U.S. will to maintain the peace or to fight if forced. The threat was real and it took little reasoning to demonstrate to soldiers and their families why they were in the Army and why they focused on the Soviet threat.

BLUFF ISN'T ENOUGH

Khrushchev tried to solve his long range nuclear delivery problem by putting intermediate range missiles and nuclear warheads in Cuba in 1962. This led to the most dramatic Soviet defeat in the post-war era. The plot was detected by the U.S. before the Soviets were ready. Faced with U.S. nuclear and conventional superiority, Khrushchev was forced to withdraw the missiles from Cuba. This incident taught the Soviets that, if they were to compete with U.S., they would have to have the real power to back up their actions. The shadow of military power was no substitute

²⁴Jordan & Taylor, p. 339.

for the real thing.²⁵ This incident contributed to the subsequent replacement of Khrushchev in 1964.

The lesson for Americans on the contemporary scene is that credible deterrence comes only with having a credible force. The inescapable fact that we should have learned from Khrushchev is that when playing high stakes poker you better have the cards if you are going to bet the pot. If called astride a bluff, you will lose. The promise of nuclear attack as a retaliation for ground attack will not deter, if your threats are hollow and the consequences of the use of nuclear force unforgivable. The role the heavy force must play in this is to be ready to fight the Soviets even in the face of the most optimistic threat estimates, so that the U.S. never has to resort to the threat of nuclear force for want of a credible heavy ground force to counter Soviet ground forces.

DETENTE A FAILURE TO UNDERSTAND

Khrushchev's replacements, Brezhnev and Kosygin, brought new hope for improved relations just as Khrushchev had earlier been a welcome relief from the intransigent Stalin. From 1965-1975 the Soviet economy improved and they were able to buy more weapons and provide more consumer goods at home. A shift in U.S. attitudes in the late 1960's led to a belief that the Soviet threat may have

²⁵Ibid.

been exaggerated. Nixon was making overtures to the Red Chinese (a de facto enemy of the Soviets since the late 1950's). The United States was deeply embroiled in Viet Nam. The Soviets had us tied up by supplying arms, ammunition, and advice to this third rate nation. Needing a respite and fearing escalation, the United States sought to enforce discipline on a seemingly mellowing Soviet Union through the policy of detente.²⁶ The U.S. saw this as a means to bring to an end the perpetual contest between itself and the Soviet Union and anticipated that the Soviets saw it the same way. The Soviets believed that detente meant that disputes between nations were not to be settled by war. Unfortunately, however, it in no way abolished the basic laws of Marxist-Leninist thought. To them the contest was not over. As Brezhnev explained it at the 25th Party Congress: "We make no secret of the fact that we see detente as a path leading to the creation of more favorable conditions for peaceful communist construction".²⁷ As one analyst put it, "Detente [became] the art of trade-offs between competitors not an arrangement whereby new friends solemnly swore to end the contest."²⁸

The meaning of the need for readiness was once more pounded home for the U.S. ground forces as the Soviets threatened intervention in the Arab-Israel war of 1973. Policy makers found that

²⁶Ibid., p. 341.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Ibid.

detente was not working, and ground forces found that they were on alert for possible deployment. Now more than at any time during the decline of the Army in the Viet Nam era did the requirement for better equipment, better soldiers, better training, better discipline, and renewed focus on the Soviets become apparent. The Army had lost its edge. It had lost its focus. The Arab-Israeli post-mortems were studied with great intensity in the schools and units of Army units world wide.

Why the intensity? Now unlike the Khrushchev days the Soviets had both ground and nuclear parity, if not superiority. The Soviets perceived that the United States was weak and took advantage in the Third World, particularly in Africa with Cuban troops, Soviet advisors, arms, and technicians. Detente was finally broken for good with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.²⁹

Again the promise of better U.S.-Soviet relations was broken. The Afghan invasion may have been perfectly justifiable in the Soviet mind. The Americans saw it as Soviet expansionism, and a threat to U.S. interests in the region. The precise thinking on either side is not as important as the fact that it renewed ill will and drove the two nations apart once more, thus lengthening the list of failed U.S.-Soviet peace initiatives. Last time the U-2 incident was the wedge, this time a move by the Soviets, what will it take to break the Gorbachev harmony? The Cold War has been

²⁹Ibid.

declared over by the Soviets and by American news media. Will it last?

POST COLD WAR WILL IT BE DIFFERENT THIS TIME?

An analysis of United States post-war activity in every war, shows that we drastically cut our forces, reduce military spending and let our readiness slip. Particularly we are hasty to disband ground forces, as Americans have grown accustomed to fighting their wars with citizen soldiers. We only have to look at post World War I and II to see that a large standing Army is only a relatively recent luxury for the United States. The only reason that we were willing to support a large Army in recent times was the containment of Communism.

The post Viet Nam era has been the one exception. We improved our readiness through improved equipment, morale, and training, while significantly reducing the size of the Army. Two differences existed after Viet Nam. First, the perception was that the war was lost. Secondly, the Soviets had vastly expanded their military capability while the United States had spent billions in Viet Nam, at the expense of modernizing to match the Soviet expansion. This created a situation that motivated the government to provide the resources to modernize the military machine, and it motivated the military to get better after the Viet Nam debacle.

Coming out of Viet Nam the military awoke to face a Soviet force much larger, much more capable than ever before. The Soviets

had reached parity, if not exceeded the NATO forces in most categories. In September, 1969, the Soviets passed the United States in the number of ground based ballistic missiles.³⁰ This counterbalance to U.S. nuclear superiority made ground forces in NATO seem more relevant and the massive Soviet ground force equipped and trained for offensive action more threatening. This perception of increased threat coupled with our own efforts to improve wartime readiness and training status in Europe, created a real sense of urgency because of our belief of the inevitability and proximity of a Soviet attack. For many of us that makes Gorbachev's Soviet Union all the more difficult to believe.

It is generally agreed in this country that the Soviet threat is now diminished. If based solely on the flood of Congressional statements on how to spend the "peace dividend", it could be assumed that there is no threat. We know that the Soviets have serious economical and political problems that Gorbachev must control, if he is to maintain his position as leader. Gorbachev has moved his positions quickly in time, as he has in the past clearly stated that he rejects a multi-party system, and that he would maintain the 'vanguard' status of the Communist Party in the Soviet Union.³¹ However, by allowing self-determination in the non-Soviet Warsaw Pact nations and by allowing, if not introducing, multi-party politics in the Soviet Union he challenges the

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Francis X. Clines, "Signals From Gorbachev," New York Times, 15 December 1989, p. A18.

existence of Communism as a monolithic force in the Soviet Union. No one can predict what will come next.

Most Americans admire Gorbachev and want him to succeed. But at the same time, do we know enough about the ultimate outcomes of all of these changes to predict eternal peace and harmony between the East and the West? If the world seems less threatened by the Soviets today than at any time in the post war era, will it remain that way in the future? While Gorbachev seems willing to let other political persuasions play in the Soviet political arena, is that just making virtue of necessity, while he remains a committed Communist? The 24 December, 1989 Washington Post quotes Gorbachev as having said, "I am a Communist, a convinced Communist. For some that may be a fantasy, but for me it is my main goal."

We could end this discussion here by saying simply that as long as the Soviets have an armed force larger than ours, and are led by a committed Communist we must continue to defend ourselves against them in the same manner. But, political reality will not allow that. The American politicians want a "peace dividend" now. The East Germans are pushing for German reunification. The Hungarians and Czechs want Soviet forces out of their countries shortly. In the world according to Gorbachev everything is possible. The "have it your way" or Sinatra doctrine can lead to unthinkable instability in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union as we have seen in the number of conflicts that have already arisen. Soviet history and communist thinking is replete with examples that should give us caution.

As the above examples have shown the best intentions of well meaning men sometimes lead to unintended consequences. The one certainty throughout the post-war period was that regardless of the crisis or form of the proposed solution to the threat there was always a requirement for ground forces. At times we were better prepared to meet the obligation, but there was never a time when air power, nuclear power, or sea power could substitute solely for land power. The uncertainty of policy makers in the past 45 years on exactly how best to deal with a military power with nearly equal, or at times apparently superior force, is understandable. That our policies sometimes deemphasized land power are forgivable given the experience of the decision makers at the time. That the Army had neither the right equipment nor the training to fight the first battle of the Korean war is not. Neither the political nor military leaders of the time should ever be forgiven for sending soldiers to battle untrained, undisciplined, and underequipped. If a nation will send soldiers to war to defend its interests, it is obligated to properly train, equip, and lead them.

The threads that bind 1945 to 1990 are the uncertainty of what lies ahead, the emergence of the United States as the apparent winner of the Cold War, and the concomitant rush to disarm in the face of the uncertainty. Just as West Germany and Japan have emerged from their defeats better off politically and economically than they ever were before the even handed generosity of the Americans in the post-war period, so it seems that defeat in the Cold War could give the Soviets much of what they could never get

through competition with the United States. What lies ahead in U.S.-Soviet relations is uncharted. Will it be a period that leads to permanent reform or a return to past competition?

CHAPTER III

PERMANENT REFORM OR BUYING TIME FOR RECOVERY

Many Americans, who had never adjusted to their country's changed position in the world would never understand. ...

Something new had happened. The United States had gone to war, not under enemy attack, not to protect the lives or property of American citizens. ...

...for whether the American people have accepted it or not, there have always been tigers in the world, which can be contained only by force.

T.R. Fehrenbach, This Kind of War, pp. 90-91.

Current changes taking place in the Soviet Union may mark a change in the world as remarkable as the defeat of the Axis Powers in World War II. It currently seems as unlikely for the traditional repressive forces of Marxist-Leninist-Stalinist Communism to return to the Soviet Union as for a Hitler clone to return to power in Germany. The difference is that the Soviet Union stands today as a nation defeated by its own political system as much as by any external force.

Today, a reforming crusade grips the USSR. Enthusiasts of change call for new laws, new economic mechanisms, even a new and more independent national psychology in place of the old conformism. What Gorbachev calls 'rapid transformation in all spheres of life' are exhilarating to some, threatening to others. For everyone-in the Soviet Union and abroad-they are confusing.¹

¹S. Frederick Starr, "Reform in Russia A Peculiar Pattern," Washington Quarterly, Spring 1989, p. 37.

The one immutable fact that cannot be forgotten among the confusion and the exhilaration is that the Soviet Union remains a major military power.

HISTORY OF REFORM IN THE SOVIET UNION

The history of reform in Russia and later in the Soviet Union shows that periods of reform are normally precipitated by a crisis. Often military defeat has been the catalyst for reform, just as the realization that its failed policies in Afghanistan this time were leading to a long term morass from which it could not achieve victory. During past periods of reform there has been a great flurry of activity to involve the people in making things better fast. Much openness and contact with the outer world is a traditional pattern during reform movements. Russian Tsars and Soviet leaders alike have discontinued their expansionist drives during these times in an attempt to buy time to recover domestic affairs. There is a shift of initiative from the discredited bureaucrats to local officials and from state officials to private forces. The drive for change comes from the top, with a progressive move for more centralized power to make things better faster. The reform movements typically last five to ten years and then die due to the reoccurrence of the same problems that were originally encountered. The solutions always failed because the underlying strategies of the reformers relied on the systems that caused the

problems in the first place.² If Gorbachev cannot break out of this pattern of failed Soviet reform, he is as doomed as his predecessors.

If by some miracle the Communist monolith rises out of its current ashes like a phoenix, it would be well to remember some of its history. Is it likely that the Soviet Union will disband its large armed force as a result of its current troubles? Not likely, if we remember that Russian history shows why the Soviets are predisposed to support a large military. Russia, as an entity dates from around the mid 9th century.³ During the years 1055 to 1462 Russia was attacked 245 times.⁴ The Mongol invasion took place in 1240 and lasted approximately two and a half centuries. During this period the Russians missed the Renaissance and Reformation. These events significantly changed western civilization, but left the Russians unchanged. As a result, the Russians became suspicious and afraid of foreigners, particularly Europeans. Additionally, they learned from the Mongols that only a ruler with a strong armed force could guarantee his people's survival.⁵

It could be hypothesized that the Soviets have missed the post World War II Renaissance as well. Comparing the abysmal economic condition of the Soviet Union and its client states with the

²Ibid, pp. 37-50.

³Christopher Donnelly, Red Banner, p. 36.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid., p. 37.

success enjoyed by West Germany and Japan, who lost the war, and with its World War II allies the United States, France, and Great Britain, it seems likely that some time in the future the Soviets could renew the pre-Gorbachev suspicion and hostility due to their inequitable achievement in the post-war era. Right now they need economic help from the West badly. Consequently, they need respite from their usual enmity with the West.

"NEW POLITICAL THINKING ON DEFENSE"

"When Gorbachev came to power his only obvious aim was economic revitalization."⁶ In order to do this he had to move a nation of people who had grown accustomed to having little and doing little to get it. The Soviet military had grown accustomed to getting whatever it needed during the Brezhnev years at the expense of the rest of the economy. In order to gain control of the people and the entrenched bureaucracy Gorbachev introduced the policies of perestroika and glasnost.

The plan was that these policies would restore trust and confidence in the Soviet political system and would make the Soviet people accountable for their work.⁷ He expected all Soviet institutions, to include the military, to implement his concepts

⁶Stephen M. Meyer, "The Sources and Prospects of Gorbachev's New Political Thinking on Security," International Security, Fall 1988, p. 128.

⁷Natalie A. Gross, "Perestroika and Glasnost in the Soviet Armed Forces," Parameters, September 1988. p. 68.

of restructuring and openness. By all accounts these policies have engendered a much more open Soviet society, while the Soviets still await positive impacts in the economy.⁸

Gorbachev found Soviet military thinking and threat assessments were going to continue to escalate military costs at a rate which would continue to cripple his restructuring of the Soviet economy. By this time it became apparent to Gorbachev that the Soviet status as a world power was standing on a single leg, military power.⁹ The Soviets considered their military power to be sufficient to deter the West, but were aware that it was being eroded by the quickening scientific-technical revolution in military affairs.¹⁰ "From Gorbachev's perspective, rebuilding the political, economic, and social bases underlying Soviet superpower status were intimately tied to economic reform that, in turn, had important implications for defense."¹¹ If the economy was modernized the Soviet technology base would catch up with the West, and hence the Soviet military would share in the economic recovery.

Gorbachev used this line of reasoning to control his Generals and to gain control of the Soviet military agenda. His "new thinking" was intended to reduce the perception of threat from the

⁸Lars T. Lih, "The Transition Era in Soviet Politics," Current History, October 1989, p. 333.

⁹Meyer, p. 129.

¹⁰Bruce Parrott, "Soviet National Security Under Gorbachev," Problems of Communism, Nov-Dec, 1988, pp. 3-4.

¹¹Meyer, p. 129.

Soviets abroad, and to reduce the perception of threat from the West at home.¹² These policies would give the Soviets time to rebuild their economy, while giving Gorbachev options that he would not have in a period of high tension with the West. Whether Gorbachev envisioned the political consequences of his policies thus far is unclear. But, it is doubtful that he could have anticipated the rate of change his policies have wrought. If Gorbachev's policies bring about equally revolutionary changes in Soviet military structure, application and strategy remain to be determined.

The basic components of Gorbachev's "new political thinking" on military security follow: 1) War prevention is a fundamental component of Soviet Doctrine. 2) No war, including nuclear war, can be considered a rational continuation of politics. 3) Political means of enhancing security are more effective than military-technical means. 4) Security is mutual: Soviet security cannot be enhanced by increasing other states' insecurity. 5) Reasonable sufficiency should be the basis for the future development of the combat capabilities of the Soviet Armed Forces. 6) Soviet military doctrine should be based on "defensive" (non-provocative) defense, not offensive capabilities and operations.¹³

¹²Tyrus W. Cobb, "Whither Gorbachev?," Center for Naval Analysis, September 1989, p. 19; and Stephen R. Covington, "The Soviet Military Prospects for Change," Soviet Studies Research Centre, RMA Sandhurst, November 1988, pages unnumbered.

¹³Meyer, p. 133.

These policies lay the groundwork for less military spending at home, while decreasing the perception of Soviet threat abroad.¹⁴ The Soviets have long said that they would not initiate war. The inevitability of war with the West was revoked during the Khrushchev era.¹⁵ Thus Gorbachev's emphasis on war aversion is probably more a political move than a new policy.¹⁶ It certainly plays well in Peoria, Cologne, and Manchester, while it takes some of the wind out of the Soviet military's drive for military expansion. Additionally, it is significant to point out that the integration of this concept into Soviet military doctrine is new.¹⁷

An inability to develop the high-confidence capabilities that would provide for meaningful victory in strategic nuclear war has long tempered Soviet military doctrine and strategy. The unwinnability of nuclear war, coupled with Soviet concerns for the capabilities of high technology precision guided weapons, that provide the destructiveness of nuclear weapons without the effects, led the Soviets to believe that the costs of either nuclear or conventional war may be too high.¹⁸ Additionally, Soviet officers

¹⁴Ibid., p. 134-135.

¹⁵Meyer, p. 134.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 135.

¹⁷LTG Ivan Lyutov, Deputy Chief of Staff, Joint Armed Forces of the Warsaw Treaty Countries, "The Doctrine of Averting War," Soviet Military Review, October 1989, p. 2.

¹⁸Phillip A. Petersen and Notra Trulock III, "A 'New' Soviet Military Doctrine; Origins and Implications," Soviet Studies Research Centre, RMA Sandhurst, Summer 1988, pp. 14-17.

have written that the effects of destroying nuclear power plants in war could have the effect of a nuclear explosion, with all of the physical problems that Chernobyl caused in the Soviet Union.¹⁹

The no war declaration appears to incorporate all of the benefits Gorbachev is apparently seeking from his "new thinking". It engenders trust in the West. Since war with the West is no longer ideologically inevitable, it can be sold at home as a stabilizing influence in East-West tension-led by the Soviets. Finally, it allows Gorbachev control of the military-technical agenda, by allowing him to move away from the "worst case" threat assessment.²⁰

Only by distancing his policies from the "worst case" threat assessment could Gorbachev gain and maintain control of the military agenda and the ever escalating demands to modernize. Likewise it is now apparent since the opening of the Wall and subsequent political maneuvering in the Soviet Union that none of it would have worked under a typical previous "worst case" threat scenario. The Soviet people would not have understood and the conservative party members would have been more of a problem to Gorbachev than they have been.

¹⁹COL. V. Chernyshev, "Conventional War In Europe?," Mirovaya ekonomika i mezhdunarodnaya otnosheniya, vol 2., 1988, pp. 12-20, English translation distributed by Air Force Intelligence Agency, 15 September 1988.

²⁰Mark Kramer, "Soviet Military Power," Current History, October, 1989, p. 339.

By including input from civilian analysts on military policy issues Gorbachev has told his Generals that they were no longer as important as they were in the past. It also emphasized that political action might indeed be more effective than military power in stabilizing the international situation and in enhancing Soviet security.²¹ He should be able to show the effectiveness of his policies by now, as he has gotten positive reactions from the United States and its NATO allies on disarmament in the wake of the apparently docile Soviet behavior.

In the West, Gorbachev's call for increased reliance on political means is always interpreted in the most benign fashion. There is, however, a side to this approach that should make it worrisome to the West, while also making it more acceptable to Soviet traditionalists. That is: political means also include active measures to divide and weaken NATO politically.²² As we now see the benign nature of the Soviet Union, the allowance of East European self-determination and the tacit approval of German reunification could lead to the demise of NATO, as a military institution, faster than any other action the Soviets could have taken.

Since the end of World War II the Soviets have followed the policy of guaranteeing their own security by posing an overwhelming threat to their neighbors. Soviet leaders felt that Soviet

²¹Ibid.

²²Meyer, p. 141.

security was improved by increasing the insecurity of their neighbors. New thinking now says that Soviet security is inextricably linked with American and global security. This can be tied to the Soviets' view of nuclear war. Since no nation can defend itself by military-technical means alone, its security is automatically tied to that of any other nation that can project nuclear attack against it. Therefore, to reduce the risk of confrontation on either the nuclear or conventional battlefield each side must consider the threat that its security measures pose to the other side.²³

This policy seems to lead naturally to the policy of reasonable sufficiency, which is defined as "that level of military force sufficient to repel aggression but insufficient to conduct offensive operations".²⁴ This is where the ambiguity of Gorbachev's defense policies begin. There is no parallel for this type of force posture, and what seems adequate to the Soviets may still threaten the Chinese, Iranians, Poles, or Americans. The policy seems benign, but its very ambiguity may bring us back to the days of detente, when the U.S. thought that the policy meant one thing while the Soviets meant nearly the opposite.

Will Gorbachev's political restructuring discontinue the Soviet drive for world domination in the long run? Or will there be a return to an unwarranted competitiveness with the U.S. after

²³Ibid., p. 142.

²⁴Mary C. Fitzgerald, "The Dilemma In Moscow's Defensive Force Posture," Arms Control Today, November 1989, p. 15.

the Soviets recover economically? One analyst describes it as follows:

It (reasonable sufficiency) means confusion, not political or institutional alignment. Ironically, Gorbachev's best interests are served by this confusion, making reasonable sufficiency a wild card that can be applied as the situation suits him. Reasonable sufficiency can be invoked to call into question any defense program that the General Secretary perceives as superfluous to Soviet security."

Additionally, the policy has been interpreted as one which says to the West, we (the Soviets) will build weapons and maintain a force structure not in direct response to your actions, but we reserve the right to respond. For example, if you deploy a strategic defense in the United States, we may become more offensive in Eastern Europe. In the short term, with the current internal Soviet upheaval this seems non-threatening but in the long term it seems to be a modification of the "dialectic process" which required the Soviets to find a counter means to any system that the West could field.

It appears that it is an attempt to tie modernization in the West to the pace that the Soviets can maintain. It puts teeth to the policy of "mutual security" by leaving unspecified the nature of the Soviet response to any move the West makes. It could lead to sabre rattling by Soviet ground forces or threat of nuclear strike, if the West comes up with a breakthrough technology weapon

"Meyer, p. 144.

that the Soviets cannot match. In the long term it could lead to an arms race much like the one that we have just been through.

The Soviet military's concern with perceived Western high technology weapon capabilities led them to reassess their ability to defeat the West in an offensive thrust in a conventional war.²⁶ Given the Soviet economy's inability to counter with like weapons, and their uncertainty over the U.S. AirLand Battle Doctrine, and NATO's Follow On Force attack tactic, the Soviets felt they had to reintroduce the concept of the strategic defensive.²⁷

The Soviet military envisions this defensive doctrine as a means of stopping a Western attack long enough to mobilize sufficient forces to initiate a counterattack. Civilian analysts have introduced the concept that the defense should be non-threatening to the West. They propose elimination of offensive types of weapons²⁸ This has created an ongoing debate in the Soviet Union. No self-respecting military officer would design a force without offensive capabilities. Do not count on the Soviets to transition to a defensive-defense soon. Soviet doctrine may reflect a defensive orientation, but Soviet strategy, operational art, and tactics are likely to remain offensively oriented. How will we know that it has changed?

²⁶Fitzgerald, p. 15.

²⁷Covington, pp. unnumbered, look in the "Outlook" section.

²⁸Petersen and Trulock, pp. 26-27.

Since Soviet military doctrine is a forecast of the future we may not know for years. While the debate is ongoing it is important for tactical leaders to keep abreast of the changes made in Soviet tactics, force structure, and new weapons. These will reflect the military-technical application of the new doctrine.

We cannot discount the continuing influence of the Soviet military. They have been charged with the defense of the nation. We can be certain that whatever political system emerges out of the turmoil that they will not be relieved from that responsibility.

Given their history of fear of the West and the reemergence of a united Germany, they cannot be expected to let their guard down. They will continue to modernize though at a slower rate given the need to convert military production to consumer goods. When the economy will support it or if the threat is perceived to be great, they will accelerate their modernization. They have proven in the past that they can recover remarkably fast when pressed.

Today the risk from the Soviets is considered low. Are they in a period of recovery from which they will reemerge belligerent and full of vengeance, or are they finally having their version of the Renaissance and Reformation, from which they will return to live in peace and harmony with the rest of us?

The history of reform in the Soviet Union does not portend success for Gorbachev. However, the situation in the Soviet Union is significantly different than during past reform efforts. First, the population is better educated and is much better equipped to

share information than Soviets of the past. The path that Gorbachev is taking is much less narrowly defined by Communist dogma than that of Khrushchev. The current reformers have wider support and have the experience of the Khrushchev failure to guide them.²³ By decreasing the perceived threat from the West and by having relative parity or superiority in all military systems except Naval, Gorbachev has assured himself of bargaining with a full military hand. It is in our interest to reduce military spending as well as his. The major change due to the strength of Soviet military power is that neither side can afford a bluff. Both sides have to listen because of the size and capability of their respective military forces. That makes the Soviet doctrinal changes more believable and appears to give them a long run chance to become the Soviet way of the future as opposed to a short term method for Gorbachev to buy time for economic recovery.

²³Starr, p. 49.

CHAPTER IV

IN CONCLUSION THE FUTURE THREAT

...But America is rich and fat and very, very
noticeable in this world.

It is a forlorn hope that we should be left alone.

T.R. Fehrenbach, This Kind of War, p. 438.

Since World War II the United States has been faced with the certain prospect of a Communist threat. As discussed earlier, the form and intensity of that threat varied over the years. As time progressed, the Soviet Union grew sophisticated land, sea, and air armies all supported by a nuclear force. The combined Soviet Forces were held in check by strong political alliances that possessed adequate land, air, and naval forces; and a powerful nuclear threat.

With changing leadership the Soviets have decreased the perception of threat they pose to the West. Current arms reduction proposals require both the United States and the Soviet Union to reduce force levels to 195,000 in the Central Region of Western Europe. Each side could maintain 20,000 tanks, 24,000 artillery pieces, 28,000 armored troop carriers and 1.35 million men. These numbers, though adjusted downward since the Wall opened, seem superfluous given East European self-determination and requests from those nations for total Soviet troop withdrawals. Regardless of final troop dispositions in Eastern Europe, the enduring fact

is that with 63,900 tanks, 76,520 infantry fighting vehicles and armored personnel carriers, 66,680 multiple rocket launchers, artillery guns and mortars (100 mm or larger), and 3,993,000 men in uniform on 1 January 1990 the Soviets have an armed force much larger than any that the United States will have regardless of any current arms control proposals.¹ Coupling their huge land force with a capable Navy, a large Air Force and over 10,000 strategically deliverable nuclear warheads makes the Soviet military power a threat regardless of the political changes ongoing internally.²

THREAT ONE THE SOVIET ARMED FORCES

The primary threat that heavy force trainers must remain focused on for the present and foreseeable future is the Soviet Army. It may be unlikely that the Soviets would, or could, attack right now. If they did, the heavy forces of the United States and its NATO allies, coupled with the threat of nuclear retaliation is all that stands in the way of the Soviet Union doing whatever it wants in much of Eurasia. Whether stationed in Europe or in the United States, one of the enduring purposes of the heavy force must be war deterrence through readiness to battle the Soviets.

With the instability of the East European governments, the uncertainty over the ultimate outcome of Soviet reform, and the

¹"Defense Spending, Force Strengths Cited," Izvestiya, 16 December 1989, Cited in FBIS-SOV 19 December 1989.

²Ibid.

history of failure in past Soviet reform efforts it seems that the rush to cut defense spending in the United States is precipitous. By maintaining the focus on the Soviets the heavy forces can offer a degree of stability until the results of the changes are more clearly understood. If the situation returns to confrontation between the Soviets and the U.S., the effort will have been obviously worthwhile. If the current pace of reform in the Soviet Union holds, and, if the Soviets follow through on their declarations of mutual security and defensive doctrine, the effort will still not be wasted. The Soviets have seeded the Third World with Soviet equipment and training in their warfighting methods.

From 1980-1988 the Soviets delivered over 7,900 tanks, 14,000 IFV's, 20,000 artillery pieces, 1,700 helicopters, 3,000 combat aircraft, and 32,000 surface-to-air missiles to Third World countries.³ Latin America received 840 tanks, 750 IFV's, 860 artillery pieces, 155 helicopters, 145 supersonic aircraft, and 2,600 surface-to-air missiles.⁴ Gorbachev has said that he has turned off all delivery to Nicaragua and is decreasing military aid elsewhere, that still has not been confirmed. The residual arms left to the Cubans to distribute is no doubt sizable. If the number of Soviet-made small arms found in Panama is any indication, the ability to wage war in Latin America alone is impressive.

³Soviet Military Power Prospects for Change 1989, U.S. Department of Defense document, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington D.C., 1989, p. 23.

⁴Ibid.

The Soviets not only distributed equipment, they also dramatically increased the number of advisors in Third World countries. By 1988 they had 30 times more military advisors in the Third World than the United States.⁵ Even if Mr. Gorbachev's promises of decreasing Soviet activity in Third World countries is now true, the residual effects of all of these Soviet trainers, coupled with their Cuban surrogates is obvious. Additionally, the Soviets sponsor significant numbers of foreign military officers, in their schools each year. There have been many nations' officers trained in the ways of Soviet warfare since the Second World War. Because of these influences the likelihood of finding some application of Soviet tactics in Third World countries is not small.

As we learned in Korea in 1950, war comes at times and places where we often are not looking. The light infantry and airborne divisions have put on impressive displays of their abilities in Grenada and Panama, but nowhere have they had to face a Soviet-made tank force using Soviet tactics. As the British learned in fighting the Japanese in Malaya during World War II, just a few tanks can tip the balance and hasten defeat if there are no tanks and inadequate anti-tank means available to stop them. It will take a combination of heavy and light forces to cope with such a

⁵Regional Conflict Working Group, Commission on Integrated Long-Term Strategy; Supporting U.S. Strategy for Third World Conflict, June 1988, p. 9.

force in the future. Both light and heavy forces must learn how to capitalize on the strengths of the other to avoid defeat.

SECOND THREAT - OTHER THAN SOVIET COMBAT

The second threat for heavy force trainers to consider for the future is combat somewhere other than Europe in a low to mid-intensity fight. This is the fight that is much more likely to occur than the one with the Soviets. It could also be very dangerous because we could be fighting Soviet equipment, perhaps Soviet tactics, but on unfamiliar terrain. In those circumstances the tough lessons learned while focused on Soviet tactics and forces will become invaluable.

If we look at the distribution of tanks in several countries we can see the potential for combat in unfamiliar circumstances. Libya has 1,980 tanks, Syria 4,050, North Korea 3,175, Iraq 4,500, Viet Nam 1,760, Pakistan 1,600, and India 3,150.⁶ It would be foolish to predict conflicts with any of these nations. However, given the regional conflicts that exist, coupled with U.S. interests in the regions, it becomes apparent that the potential for U.S. involvement exists. Further it is apparent that several of these nations have been influenced by both Soviet equipment and training over the years.

⁶The United States Army Posture Statement FY 90/91, p. 10.

In 1964 most of us never thought there would be heavy forces in Viet Nam, but in 1966 the First Infantry Division and 11th Armored Cavalry were there with modified heavy force cavalry and mechanized infantry. Were they effective? Based on their ability to react during the Tet Offensive alone they were worth having there.

The primary lesson for heavy force leaders to remember is that when pressed by enemy fire you will react by instinct. The lessons learned now in troop leading, maneuver, force protection, NBC, resupply, maintenance, and medical evacuation will be what soldiers fall back on to sustain themselves in combat. Whether training against Soviet tactics, or against a fictional doctrineless enemy the way we did prior to the 1970's, our troop leading procedures never change. Lack of reconnaissance and rehearsal will kill soldiers in low or mid-intensity battle just as fast as it will against the OPFOR fighting Soviet tactics at the National Training Center.

The advantage of maintaining the focus on Soviet tactics is that it is a uniquely different system than our own. It requires us to fight outnumbered in many cases, and it trains us to fight against the worst case threat scenario. Even if we never need it, it still provides an outstanding threat model to learn against.

The implication that we are training to kill Russians may be repugnant to some in the future, if the Soviets continue to reform. Soldiers and their leaders should understand that the focus is on

Soviet tactics in training, not Soviet people. If deterrence fails, there will be no qualms about the enemy.

The fact that there is a threat in the world other than the Soviet Union should never be ignored while we focus on training against Soviet tactics and equipment. The experiences of the British in Malaya, the American infantry in the Ardennes, the cavalry and armor in Viet Nam should all be studied and understood, because of the implications for our most likely types of combat in the future. We must continue to prepare for all types of combat in all parts of the world where there are potential conflicts, if we are to stay relevant and useful. We must relearn how to operate with and around light forces, to maximize the capabilities of each. We can never let the light fighters fight tank battles by themselves. Those lessons were learned in the Ardennes and elsewhere.

There is a purpose for heavy fighters as long as there are potential adversaries with tanks and infantry fighting vehicles. Light fighters, as good as they have proven themselves to be, simply cannot shoot fast enough with current antitank systems to stave off a concerted tank-IFV force. We must apply those lessons from history that keep us from repeating the mistakes of the past.

THIRD THREAT THE UNEXPECTED EVENT

The third threat for the future is the unexpected event, which brings unanticipated consequences. The Korean War started before the United States was ready, the opening battles were disastrous. The U-2 incident did not precipitate a war, but might have, if the

Soviets had been in a posture to win. Gorbachev has outlined a doctrine of "reasonable sufficiency" for the Soviet Union. We need our own sufficient force structure adequate to deter war or to fight to win if required. The decisions on the size and structure of the forces will be made by high ranking political and military leaders based on what the nation can afford based on the current threat assessment.

The role of the heavy force trainer is to ensure that the soldiers allocated to him are trained and ready to fight any time and any place they are called. Never again can we allow ourselves to return to the unpreparedness displayed in the opening days of the the Korean War. Neither our soldiers nor their leaders were ready to fight. Our current state of training has been brought about by maintaining a focus on hard realistic training against a believable threat. The lessons learned are applicable anywhere against any foe.

FOURTH THREAT TIME

The fourth and perhaps most dangerous threat is time. Time is a danger to the United States because we are impatient. We want something to happen-if nothing is happening we will make it happen.

It took 45 years for the world to turn to the apparently favorable position we are in today. It took us from 7 December 1941 until May of 1944 to prepare to enter, and get a foothold on the European continent. It took less than a year to reduce the Active Army from

1,435,496 in 1946 to 685,458 in 1947.¹ That was in a period with circumstance somewhat similar to those of today. A war had ended, Americans wanted to get the men home to get on with life, the threat had been beaten, peace would reign forever. By 1948 the Army had been reduced to 554,000. In 1950 the Korean War broke out and by 1951 we had 1,500,000 poorly trained, ill equipped, poorly led men in the Army. By 1956, with the threat of the Soviet Union firmly entrenched the Army was back down to one million, by 1961 down to 858,000 then back up to over one million as a result of the Berlin Blockade. By 1968 the Army was back over 1.5 million as a result of Viet Nam.²

Predictions today indicate a 613,000 man Army by 1994. This is the lowest figure since the 593,000 of 1950. While we cannot predict the dangers this portends, we can say that if history repeats itself we will need a larger Army for some crisis within the next 10 to 20 years. The history that we can ill afford to repeat is the one of getting lazy in our training and disciplinary standards as the first battles of the Korean War taught us. Not only will that decrease the readiness of the Active force, but it also has long range implications for mobilization as we will have failed to adequately train a cadre of officers and non-commissioned officers that can properly plan, train, and lead.

¹"Historical Perspective on Force Structure Reductions 1946-1988," U.S. Army Center of Military History briefing, April 1989.

²Ibid.

The training centers today are a great aid in that process and are an adequate substitute for combat experience. The thought, planning, and learning that goes into today's training is unparalleled in the history of the United States Army. One of the engines that has made that work is the threat tactic scenarios. It fuels the imagination of leaders and soldiers alike. In 1978-1981 when we trained in Europe, we maneuvered against another U.S. unit using U.S. tactics. It was usually neither very challenging nor very instructive for the following reasons: 1) There was little intelligence preparation done, because the primary focus of the force on force exercise was to see who could beat whom without regard to whether the tactics used were sound or not. Consequently, the free play battles normally turned into battles of one upmanship where the risks taken to show up the other guy were not reasonable in an actual combat situation; 2) There was little learning because there was no After Action Review program; 3) There was little relation between the conduct of the training and the expected wartime scenarios because the focus was on another American unit, not on a threat force; 4) Troop leading procedures, reconnaissance, and rehearsals were usually not done because the focus was on maneuver without regard to learning the fundamentals that lead to success. It would be a bad day for the Army to return to those days for want of an enemy. Soviet tactics are different, they are soundly based on their wartime experiences, and they require us to think how to plan, train, and lead against someone other than ourselves.

Time will provide the Soviets the opportunity to rebuild their economy, probably with our help. If they continue to see it in their interest to oppose us after their recovery, they will likely be in a position to mass produce high technology systems to their advantage. As we saw in their race to produce nuclear weapons and rockets to deliver them, the Soviets, when they must, can produce new systems much faster than we generally anticipate. The Soviet military leadership vows to replace quantity with quality in the face of the reductions they are facing.³ With the addition of high technology systems, their historical inclination for large armed forces, improved quality, and their interior lines in Eurasia they could become an even more threatening force than they have been in the past.

If German reunification drives NATO apart in the process, the Soviets will have achieved one of their intermediate objectives. If they get the U.S. to withdraw all forces from Western Europe, they will have achieved another. With no one of equal military power to check them they could quickly become the bully of Europe once again and could accomplish what they could not under the watchful eye of the Americans and their Allies. Reentry into Europe with conventional forces another time could be much more difficult than the first time, if the Soviet were defending the

³General Makhmut Gareyev, "The Revised Soviet Military Doctrine," Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, December 1988, p. 31.

Atlantic coast instead of creating a second front diversion for the Germans.

Only time will tell whether or not these are necessary concerns. In the meantime, there is adequate reason to maintain the heavy force focus on Soviet tactics. When the rest of the U.S. was focused on Viet Nam, the heavy forces held the line against the Soviets. Somedays they were not manned or equipped as well as they should have been. However, they maintained an adequately credible force that kept the Soviets in check. Today we are stronger, better equipped, better trained, and better disciplined than any Army that has preceded us.

If in the long term we fail to modernize, and return to a position vis-a-vis our potential enemies as we were in Korea, we may not be in a position to stop the next Soviet thrust. Senior Army leaders are charged with the responsibility to preserve our fighting ability by justifying and fighting for adequate resource appropriations from Congress. The Chief of Staff is very aware of his responsibility to modernize, as he has made it his fifth imperative to guide the Army through "an uncertain future into the next century".¹⁰ It is unclear whether the nation will be willing to provide the resources to adequately modernize. If they do not, and, if the Soviets are able to bypass us, we could be on the verge of brinkmanship diplomacy again. We do not want to learn the lesson the Khrushchev learned in Cuba-the threat of force backed

¹⁰General Carl E. Vuono, Chief of Staff, United States Army, Address to Association of United States Army, 17 October 1989.

with inadequate forces will not work if your opponent calls your bluff.

CONCLUSION

Our role as trainers of the heavy force is to ensure that we do not allow a return to the days that Fehrenbach describes below regardless of the funding or the reductions:

But the greatest weakness of the American Army was not its numbers or its weapons, pitiful as they were.

...The men in the ranks were enlistees, but these were the new breed of American regular,...

They were normal American youth, no better, no worse than the norm, who though they wore the uniform were mentally, morally, and physically unfit for combat, for orders to go out and die."

...And the training wasn't bad. There were no real training areas in crowded Nippon, so there wasn't much even General Walker of Eighth Army could do about that, though he made noises.

...Discipline had galled them, and their Congressmen had seen to it that it did not become too onerous. They had grown fat.

It was not their fault that no one had told them that the real function of an army is to fight and that a soldier's destiny-which few escape-is to suffer, and if need be, to die."²

To quote General Vuono, Army Chief of Staff,

As leaders, we share a moral responsibility to insure that our soldiers are prepared for combat. I have said it before, and I will say it as long as I wear this uniform-I will not be responsible for the loss of one American soldier because that soldier was not properly trained. That's why realistic training, demanded by me and executed by the officer and noncommissioned officer leaders in our ranks, is the bedrock of everything we do.

¹T.R. Fehrenbach, This Kind of War, Macmillan Co., New York, 1963, pp. 91-92.

²Ibid., p. 100.

In concept and reality, the training in today's Army is exactly what it should be-exciting, demanding, and directly related to the Army's mission.¹³

Today, just as in the post World War II period, we are in a period of transition. On one hand we are all excited and encouraged by the liberalization and openness in the Soviet Union and the independence of the Eastern European nations. The major changes have been political, but there is good reason to believe that there will be significant improvements in the security environment also.

On the other hand the path to the future is uncertain. Many nations have large military forces, which include sophisticated conventional weapons. War in a Third World country is no trivial problem, where a few light forces can achieve quick certain victory over an unorganized unsophisticated enemy. As we saw in U.S.-Soviet relations between the end of World War II and now, relations between nations change precipitously, at times, over unanticipated issues at the most inopportune moment. As Mr. Wolfowitz, the senior Department of Defense official for policy stated: "The prime reality of contemporary global politics is change. U.S. presence is stabilizing. If left to themselves, countries in some parts of the world would pursue their own interests at the expense of others, leading to rising tensions, sharpened rivalries and perhaps war."

¹³Vucno.

The possibilities for change in the lethality and nature of war due to emerging technologies are tremendous. The Soviets know that they are behind. Their history indicates that they will seek ways to catch up. Failing the ability to do that, their policy of reasonable sufficiency allows them to seek alternative methods of competing with the United States, if they perceive a revolutionary breakthrough by the U.S. with which they cannot compete.

Finally, time will give the Soviets an opportunity to reform in a manner that turns them into a predictable friendly competitor, or an opportunity to recover to become a hostile adversary once again. The final outcome of that process will not be known for some time. Past Soviet reform efforts have lasted five to ten years. If we begin to measure this period from the day the Wall opened, we have a long wait to see where ringmaster Gorbachev's travelling circus will go.

Uncertainty is the norm right now. In periods like this it is best to maintain a constant focus somewhere. The heavy forces have continually evolved since World War II to the high state of readiness they are at today by focusing on the Soviet armed forces and tactics. While the likelihood of war with the Soviets seems remote today, what the future brings, with either the Soviets or some other nation with mechanized forces, is unknown. The U.S. Army heavy trainers must continue to concentrate on Soviet tactics and forces until the veil of uncertainty is lifted. If they do, the war fighting preparedness needed to achieve victory on any battlefield will be maintained. We owe the nation and its soldiers

in our heavy units that focus to ensure that we, and they, are ready and capable of winning against any foe. It will not be easy if the Soviets proceed with their reforms and the Army continues to decrease in size-but holding the course until we are sure is the only prudent path.

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