

# THE SOVIET MILITARY DECISIONMAKING PROCESS

by

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The 24th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, held in Moscow 30 March - 8 April 1971, ratified the broad course the Party will take in directing the Soviet State for the next five years.

Because of the secrecy surrounding the Soviet Party/government process, in order to develop a model of the current Soviet military decisionmaking process, it is necessary to utilize historical analogies, organizational symmetries, and assumptions that certain institutions have retained traditional functions. The model, which is admittedly an approximate one, has the virtue of being derived solely from Soviet experience and avoids assumptions that Soviet methods merely mirror those of other countries.

Among Soviet military institutions, the General Staff has remained relatively stable since it emerged in its present form in 1942.

As the planning and executive agency of the Ministry of Defense, it is intimately involved in the decisionmaking process. Because it has been permitted to emerge from obscurity in recent years, memoirs of former Chiefs of Staff and descriptions of its operations have been published which provide a framework for constructing a decisionmaking model.

The General Staff in its present form was developed under Stalin, and it was tarred with the same brush by Khrushchev during his de-Stalinization campaign. While attacking Stalin, Khrushchev allowed some light to be shed on the decisionmaking process which prevailed during the Stalin period, but the dictator himself was depicted as being arbitrary and ill-informed. A considerable amount of criticism was also directed specifically at those who helped Stalin conduct the war—his representatives at the front and the General Staff.

In preparing these criticisms, Khrushchev found and encouraged support from the wartime field commanders, particularly after Marshal G. K. Zhukov was removed from his government and party posts in 1957.

After Khrushchev was himself relieved of his positions in 1964, the current political leadership, in an effort to "objectify" the image of Stalin, permitted the publication of detailed memoirs of some of the military men who worked in the highest levels of command before, during, and after World War II. Generally, they have described Stalin as a more rational leader than the one presented in the revelations of Khrushchev.

The careers of the two authors in question, Marshal of the Soviet Union M. V. Zakharov and General of the Army S. M. Shtemenko, were both connected closely with the Soviet General Staff. In addition, they had the advantage of writing their recollections while still serving on it. The result, one suspects, is

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*The author, left, shown with then General of the Army, M. V. Zakharov in 1958  
Zakharov was named Chief of the Soviet General Staff in 1966.*

impeccable documentation from the Archives of the Ministry of Defense.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to the recollections of Marshal Zakharov and General Shtemenko, there have also appeared the memoirs of former Chiefs of Staff Meretskov and Vasilevskiy, the valuable *50 Let Vooruzhennykh Sil USSR (50 Years of the Armed Forces of the USSR)* which was edited by a commission chaired by Marshal Zakharov, and Yu. P. Petrov's *Stroitel'stvo Politorganov, Partinynykh i Komsomol'skikh Organizatsiy Armii i Flota (The Structuring of Political Organs, Party and Komsomol Organizations of the Army and Fleet)* which when used in conjunction with his earlier work,<sup>2</sup> provides pieces of

evidence from which a picture of the current decision and policymaking process may be assembled.

#### **UNITY OF COMMAND AND COLLEGIAL LEADERSHIP**

Usually, when decisionmaking arrangements in the Soviet forces are considered, the opposing concepts of *yedinonachaliye* (unity of command) and the institution of military commissars come to mind. Military commissars were employed during the formative period of the Red Army (1918-1921) primarily as a means of controlling the activities of the military



*General of the Army, S. M. Shtemenko, Chief of the General Staff, November 1948 - May 1952. Currently Chief of Staff of the Warsaw Pact Forces.*

"specialists"—officers of the Czarist Army who volunteered to serve the new Soviet state but who were suspect because of their class origins. The commissars were phased out in the mid-1920s and restored in the 1937-40 period and again in July 1941. Although the title "military commissar" was the same as that used during the civil war, Soviet sources emphasize that the function of the military commissar during the latter periods was to relieve the commander of political duties so that he could devote full time to military matters.<sup>3</sup>

However, the commissars bore full responsibility, along with the military commander, for their unit's execution of its mission and for its "... steadfast readiness to fight to the last drop of blood with the enemies of our Motherland. ..."<sup>4</sup> Under these circumstances, the commissar was bound to concern himself with more than political indoctrination, since a military blunder by the commander could also cost the commissar his neck.

By the fall of 1942, the quality of Soviet commanders was judged to have improved to the point where military commissars were freed from the previous duties and designated deputy commanders for political affairs. The harmful effect of the commissar system on operations was tacitly admitted:

...In the anticipated broad offensive battles it was extremely important to ensure the maximum initiative of commanders, the rapidity of decisions and flexibility in directing the troops.<sup>5</sup>

The implication was that the commissar system reduced initiative, delayed decisions, and caused inflexible troop leadership.

However, *yedinonachaliye* was reintroduced in 1942 only to units at what the Soviets consider the tactical level—company through corps inclusive. A collegial form of leadership—the military council—was retained at the *front* (Army Group), army, and military district level.<sup>6</sup>



*Marshal of the Soviet Union, A. M. Vasilevskiy, Chief of the General Staff, June 1942 - February 1945, March 1946 - November 1948.*

## THE MILITARY COUNCILS

The military council (*voyennyi soviet*) has been a traditional form of collegial decisionmaking in Russian military history. The famous military council at Fili in 1812, at which it was decided to abandon Moscow to Napoleon, has been described by Tolstoy in *War and Peace*. In the Czarist Armed Forces a military council was generally assembled on extraordinary occasions. At other times the councils were used as consultative bodies.

After the October Revolution, which was accomplished in part on enthusiasm generated by the slogan, "All power to the Soviets," it was appropriate that the Soviet Republic establish soviets (councils) to direct its Armed Forces. At front revolutionary military councils were established for operational and administrative direction of the forces assigned to the respective front or field army. A Supreme Military Council (created on 4 March 1918) provided overall military direction to the Soviet forces. In September 1918, the functions of this body were transferred to the newly created Revolutionary Military Council. The Supreme Military Council was abolished.

When it became evident that a broader based military effort would be necessary to defend the Bolshevik regime, a Council of Workers and Peasants Defense, headed by Lenin, was formed in November 1918 to deal with questions of manpower and resources.<sup>7</sup> The name of this body was later changed to the Council of Labor and Defense<sup>8</sup> (STO).

Thus, during the formative stages of the Soviet military establishment, a tradition was established of providing two collegial bodies at the center of the state structure for directing military affairs. The politburo, which was represented in both, provided coordination and held the power of final decision.<sup>9</sup>

At the 15th Party Congress in 1928, Voroshilov explained that the functions of the STO were still evolving:

... First of all STO has begun to meet regularly under the leadership of the

Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars to decide all questions connected with defense. Besides this, mobilization organs have been established in all of our ministries which here and there have done some significant work. A special industrial mobilization organ has been established in the VSNKh [All Union Council of the National Economy]. Finally, a special apparatus has been established in the bowels of Comrade Krzhizhanovskiy's enterprise—in Gosplan, which is required to consider the needs of defense in any planning of the economy.<sup>10</sup>

The international crises of 1927 and 1928 which spurred the Soviet defense effort were relatively mild compared to what was to come during the next decade. Those which came caused mobilization preparations of a more intensive nature and on a broader scale, but the steps taken in 1928 provided the basic organizational structure for this aspect of overall defense preparations.

Between 1928 and 1937, modifications to these organizational arrangements for directing the Soviet defense effort were tried. A Defense Commission, formed in the Council of Ministers in 1934, assumed some of the functions from the Revolutionary Military Council. In 1937 this commission was renamed the Defense Committee and the Council of Labor and Defense was abolished.<sup>11</sup>

The Defense Committee, chaired by Molotov, included Stalin and Voroshilov among its members.<sup>12</sup> During this period it provided preliminary guidance on defense policies and made decisions concerning mobilization. In 1939, according to Marshal Zakharov, this Committee approved the annual mobilization plan which contained provisions broadening the rights and duties of the military representatives at defense plants. The mobilization plan also called for broad consultations with the heads of factories producing war materials on such topics as target dates for the delivery of arms and equipment.<sup>13</sup>

The Revolutionary Military Council,

abolished in 1934, was succeeded later that year by a consultative organ which was called simply "The Military Council."<sup>14</sup> The fact that the decisions of this Council were subject to the approval of the Minister of Defense (Voroshilov) reflects the strong trend toward centralized decisionmaking characteristic of the Stalin period.

In 1938, the Military Council was divided into a Main (Glavnyy) Military Council of the Red Army and a Main Military Council of the Navy. The late Marshal Meretskov described the activities of the Main Military Council of the Army during the period in 1938 when he, as Deputy Chief of the General Staff, was also Secretary to the Council. From his description and examples of matters heard by the Council given by Zakharov and Zhukov, it is apparent that the Council played an important advisory role in the pre-World War II decisionmaking process. From the examples, it is also clear that the Council considered operational questions primarily, and that questions of mobilization, supply, and equipment were matters for the Defense Committee. The Council, consisting of eight key leaders of the Ministry of Defense and chaired by the Minister, met two or three times a week. At these meetings, reports from military district commanders or chiefs of the branches of the service were heard. Each decision was approved by the Minister and forwarded to Stalin, in the event the latter had not been in attendance. Meretskov comments that this procedure meant that there was practically no military or military economic question which was decided without Stalin's direct participation.<sup>15</sup>

Thus, on the eve of the war there were three bodies charged with directing the defense effort: the Defense Committee, which was concerned with broad, overall defense policy and mobilization of the defense effort; and the two Main Military Councils (the Military and the Naval), charged with the purely military and naval aspects of national defense. This organizational arrangement was similar to that which had existed during the Civil War of 1918-20. When the Soviet Union became involved in World War II, two similar bodies were formed: the State Committee of

Defense and the *Stavka* of the Supreme Command. (*Stavka* is the traditional Russian word for headquarters, now used only for the headquarters of the Commander in Chief or Supreme Commander.) The State Committee of Defense coordinated the overall war effort, the *Stavka* conducted military operations. The General Staff continued throughout to perform its executive and planning functions.

### THE GENERAL STAFF

Marshal Zakharov, in a general discussion of the functions of the General Staff, writing in the present tense, has characterized them as follows:

Speaking of planning in the military area, I would like to stress the following aspect. I am deeply convinced that the General Staff is not only the body which issues directives guiding and leading the Armed Forces, not only the apparatus conducting analytic and generalizing activity in the military sphere; it is also a vigilant eye constantly looking ahead into the future, not taking its eye off tendencies in the general development of military affairs, and also characteristic deviations and peculiarities, which occur, or could occur with a probable opponent on a given question.

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All the documentation connected with the planning of the building of the Soviet Army and the mobilization of human and material resources can turn out to be pointless and not reflect the real defense requirements of the country if it is not reinforced by detailedly thought out scientific calculations and the considerations of the General Staff for the strategic deployment of the Soviet Armed Forces in case a real threat of attack of the imperialist aggressors on our country appears.<sup>16</sup>

Zhukov,<sup>17</sup> Shtemenko,<sup>18</sup> and the present Minister of Defense Marshal A. A. Grechko<sup>19</sup>

have given similar appraisals of the role of the General Staff in the Soviet military decisionmaking process.

When seen on an organization chart of the Ministry of Defense, the General Staff appears to be an almost insignificant body. Its role in planning and operations, however, gives it an importance which far transcends its size. As both Marshals Zhukov and Zakharov have observed, the General Staff draws on the other elements of the Ministry of Defense for the data which is the basis for its plans. The mobilization plans must match the availability of weapons and supplies, and these factors must be coordinated to the overall plans for strategic deployments and operations. In wartime, the General Staff becomes "the working organ of the *Stavka*."

During World War II, day-by-day decisions at the *Stavka* were made on the basis of the reports of the General Staff. These were made orally, usually by the Chief of Staff or the acting Chief (Antonov), who was accompanied by the Chief of the Operations Directorate. Shtemenko provides many examples to demonstrate that Stalin demanded the strictest accuracy in these reports. Usually at these late night sessions, some members of the Politburo were present, as were the members of the *Stavka*—Timoshenko, Zhukov, Molotov, Voroshilov, Budenny, and N. G. Kuznetsov who were, in addition to Stalin, named to the *Stavka* on 23 June 1941.<sup>20</sup> In certain cases, military specialists such as the chiefs of the artillery, armored force, or air force, would attend, would report and give information concerning their specialties. The composition of this group varied, depending on Stalin's desires and on who was in Moscow at the time. On occasions, when decisions were being made on forthcoming operations, the field commanders were called to Moscow to give their opinions.

The recent accounts which attempt to provide a more objective view of Stalin's leadership leave no doubt that he and he alone directed, on a daily basis, the Soviet military effort. He did not, however, direct the war by reference to a globe, as Khrushchev has reported, but on the basis of

the best and most accurate information he could obtain. To supplement the flow of accurate information, he sent his most trusted aides into the field and authorized the creation of a corps of General Staff Officers to provide him with objective information on the combat situation. The rapid series of organizational and personnel changes made by Stalin in the first 18 months of the war appeared to be without plan and are an excellent example of the tendency of dictators, described by Hannah Arendt, to keep organizations under them in a state of flux. Eventually, only the leader is secure in his position, and the men around him begin to believe that without the leader all is lost.<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, by the end of 1942, Stalin had shaped, in the General Staff, the institution he needed if he was to make decisions which would lead to victory.

#### THE GENERAL STAFF TRADITION

It appears clear that the General Staff, having performed such vital functions during the war and continuing to perform these for "years"<sup>22</sup> afterward, developed on its part an institutional tradition for accuracy and execution based on a staff of highly trained professionals. The Academy of the General Staff, established in 1936, has continued to prepare the new generations of staff officers and senior commanders who are beginning to replace the well-known Soviet military leaders of World War II. The maintenance of its institutional tradition has also been enhanced by a remarkably small turnover in its chiefs—only six men held the post between 1945 and 1971.<sup>23</sup>

For officers trained in the General Staff tradition, the wartime experiences, the frequent personnel transfers, and the reorganizations of the high command which were characteristic of the Stalin period, must have left a deep and lasting impression. Reaction to them may have been one of the reasons for the relatively small number of personnel and organizational changes which occurred in the Ministry of Defense after the death of Stalin. Another manifestation of General Staff training and tradition was

Zakharov's remark, published after Khrushchev's dismissal in October 1964, decrying "subjectivism" and "harebrained" schemes.<sup>24</sup>

## POSTWAR ORGANIZATION

In early 1946, the People's Commissariat of Defense and Navy was reorganized and renamed the Ministry of the Armed Forces. Each Military Service—the Army, Navy, and Air Force—was placed under a commander in chief and provided a staff referred to by the Soviets as a main staff (*glavnyy shtab*), to distinguish them from the General Staff. In addition, a new Service was created—the National Anti-aircraft Defense—and the Rear Services, organized as a separate Service during the war, which continued as a separate entity. A military council was established in each Service, and a Supreme Military Council (*Vysshiy Voyennyi Sovet*) was established at the ministerial level.<sup>25</sup> The General Staff, as we have noted above, continued to function as it had during the war. In 1950, when a separate naval ministry was again formed, a Main (*Glavnyy*) Military Council was also again formed at each ministry, and a Supreme Military Council was formed in the Council of Ministers. In 1953, after Stalin's death, the two ministries were once again combined into a Ministry of Defense, the name of which has not changed. The Main Military Councils were apparently replaced by a combined body.<sup>26</sup>

After the dismissal of Zhukov from his post of Minister of Defense in October 1957, one of the charges leveled against him was that he

...insisted on the liquidation of the Supreme Military Council—a collective organ, the membership of which included members and candidate members of the Presidium of the C[entral] C[ommittee], military and political leaders of the army and fleet. . . .<sup>27</sup>

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... Zhukov also attempted to limit the rights of the military councils of the military districts, groups of forces, fleets,



*General of the Army, V. G. Kulikov, Chief of the General Staff since September 1971.*

armies, and flotillas by achieving their conversion into consultative organs for the commanders. He insisted on liquidating the position of Member of the Military Council for cadre political workers, on approving the membership of military councils not by a decision of the C[entral] C[ommittee] but by an order of the Minister of Defense, despite the fact that in the membership of the military councils along with the commander and cadre army party workers there were members of the C[entral] C[ommittee] of the Party—secretaries of Communist Parties of republics, districts, and regions. He in every way depreciated the role of members of the military council and conducted meetings without them.<sup>28</sup>

It is necessary to be very circumspect in treating the accusations against Zhukov, as Yu. P. Petrov apparently discovered when, in

1968, he revised significantly his history of party organizations in the Armed Forces (published in 1964) to prepare it for publication under a slightly different title. In the 1968 version, most of the significant accusations against Zhukov were dropped, including the one that he insisted on disbanding the Supreme Military Council. The latest version, in a footnote, states that the regulation on military councils had been approved in July 1957—four months before Zhukov was accused of attempting to depreciate their role.<sup>29</sup> However, both Petrov versions and the authoritative *50 Years of the Armed Forces USSR* agree that in April 1958 the entire question of the military councils was reviewed, the responsibility and authority of the members were broadened, and the membership of the various councils was fixed by the Central Committee. The latter step was taken in order to prevent commanders from co-opting members to the Council to obtain a majority on a particular question. Within the councils, the relative weight of the technical branches—the Air Force, Tank Troops, Artillery, and the Rocket Troops—was increased with the surprising result that "...if in the early period of their creation, and also later at separate stages of Soviet military construction there were a majority of political workers on the Council, now the majority was made up of military specialists. . . ."<sup>30</sup> However, political representation included not only a uniformed political officer, who was to be known as "Member of the Military Council," but also the regional Party First Secretary. The latter's political influence can be assumed to be much greater than that of the uniformed Council members.

The regulation on the councils issued in April 1958 required that questions coming before them be decided by a majority vote. The decision thus reached was then obligatory for all members of the Council and executed on orders signed by the commander. In event of disagreement, members could report their dissenting opinion to the Central Committee, the Government, or to the Ministry of Defense.<sup>31</sup>

As noted above, the Supreme Military Council was in existence at least until October

1957, when Zhukov's alleged attempt to disband it was reported. Zhukov's alleged attack on the Council as an institution would in itself have been grounds to ensure its continuance—at least through Khrushchev's period of ascendancy. The Council is mentioned in *The Penkovskiy Papers*, which provides information dating from 1961 and 1962. According to these papers, during the Khrushchev period the Council was directly under the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Communist Party and chaired by Khrushchev or, in his absence, by Kozlov or Mikoyan. The Minister of Defense and the commanders in chief of the Services were automatically members of the Council, while a few members of the Presidium were always in attendance.<sup>32</sup>

A work published in 1967 and reissued in 1969 refers to the presence of a "Main (*Glavnyy*) Military Council" in the contemporary military decisionmaking process.<sup>33</sup> Since, as we have seen, the Military Council at the ministerial level was referred to as a "main" Military Council only when the military and naval ministries were separate (from 1938-41 and from 1950-53), this reference may be in error. It does establish, however, that along with the Military Councils at the higher command echelons, a similar council continues to exist at the highest level in the Soviet Ministry of Defense. The decisionmaking process is summed up as follows:

There are organs of collective leadership also directly in the Armed Forces in the form of the Main Military Council, Military Councils of the Services (*vidy*) of the Armed Forces, military districts, groups of forces, and fleets. Military Councils collectively consider and decide all of the most important questions in the life and activity of the troops. The resolutions of the Military Councils are realized by orders of the commanders which ensures the consistent accomplishment of the principle of unified command (*edinonachaliye*) in the operational and strategic echelon of military direction.<sup>34</sup>

Since Zhukov's dismissal, military policies

have been set by a collegial leadership which includes, at levels as low as the field army, local civilian Party representation in addition to the participation of the political officer, who is a Party worker in uniform. At the highest level, which now may be called the Main Military Council, the Party representation may be the General Secretary of the Party and/or other members of the Politburo. The decisions of this Council are in turn reviewed in the Politburo itself, an exclusively civilian organization since the fall of Zhukov (the only professional military officer ever to have membership in that body), before they are sent to the Government and become Party-Government decisions. The result of Party participation at an early level in the decisionmaking process may tend to inhibit the free flow of ideas upward, but this participation ensures an integrated military-political policy.

It is also logical to assume that there exists within the Council of Ministers a State Committee on Defense to provide the overall policy guidance to the Minister of Defense. The ministers of defense-related industries<sup>35</sup> probably sit on this committee to provide industrial and economic advice and coordination for defense mobilization policies. Although there has been no public mention of the existence of such a committee since the end of World War II, there is an abundance of inferential evidence of its activities.

That the general framework of the Soviet decisionmaking process has not changed significantly from that outlined above is also confirmed in a monograph by Colonel M. P. Skirido, published in 1970 by *Voyenizdat*, the publishing house of the Ministry of Defense. Colonel Skirido also confirms that the principles of Party control and collective leadership in the Armed Forces remain in effect. He writes as follows:

The direct leadership of the armed forces in peace time as well as war time is accomplished by the supreme command, the general staff and the corresponding military leaders. Their many-sided activity we call the military leadership. It

is accomplished in accordance with the general directives of the supreme state political organ.<sup>36</sup>

In conditions of nuclear rocket war, collective leadership, according to Skirido, has become an objective necessity caused by the continuous increase in the number and complexity of nuclear weapons in the hands of troops. Other factors which must be kept in mind are the enormous distances over which a modern war will be fought and the numbers of people who will be drawn into it.

In the short period of time which will be available to receive, collate, and analyze incoming information concerning the combat situation, it will only be possible to reach a decision and to issue the necessary orders, according to Skirido, if there is available a collective organ to direct the war. This organ will depend on the General Staff to collect and analyze the information and disseminate the orders once a decision has been reached.<sup>37</sup>

The possibility of nuclear rocket war has in Skirido's view increased the role of the political leadership for six main reasons:

1. Only the political leadership can decide if there will be or will not be a thermonuclear war;

2. Only the political leadership can define the necessity to use means of mass destruction and determine the basic targets and when they will be attacked;

3. Because such a war will be a coalition war, there will have to be a unified political leadership of the coalition, a task which can only be performed by an authoritative, powerful, and flexible political leadership.

4. To withstand such a war only a state which can make maximum effective use of all its military, economic, and moral-political resources from the beginning of the war will be successful. This will require an experienced, sagacious political leadership.

5. The ability to discover in a timely fashion the direct preparations of an aggressor to attack, to anticipate his plans, and to make the decision to deliver a destructive retaliatory strike, will depend on the political leadership to a large degree.

6. In the course of a world nuclear rocket war, the political leadership will have to decide problems of complexity and scope unknown to previous history. These problems will have to be decided under contemporary conditions by other methods and in other periods of time than in the past.<sup>38</sup>

The political leadership will also have to define the war aims in a clear and convincing fashion to convince the masses of the population that they are worth fighting for. At the same time, these aims must be compatible with the forces and means available to the country and the coalition of which it is part. The political leadership is responsible before the war to develop a military doctrine which takes into account the character of a future war, the forces and capabilities of the opposing sides, and the contemporary level of military affairs. The political leadership must also strengthen the economic might of the country—in particular, its defense industry.

Problems connected with civil defense, according to Skirdo, will be incomparably greater than those connected with anti-aircraft defense in the last war. In addition to organizing and executing civil defense measures, the political leadership will be responsible for the general preparation of the population for war, a preparation which will include not only participation in civil defense activities and military training, but also the preparation of the population in morale, political, and a psychological sense.<sup>39</sup>

These powerful arguments for political control of the decisionmaking process have been echoed to varying degrees by the senior Soviet military leaders. Marshal Grechko, the current Minister of Defense, has written that:

The relationship in contemporary war of politics and strategy, of the political and the strictly military leadership, of collegial and one man command—all of these questions the Party will decide on the basis of Leninist ideas of defending the country.<sup>40</sup>

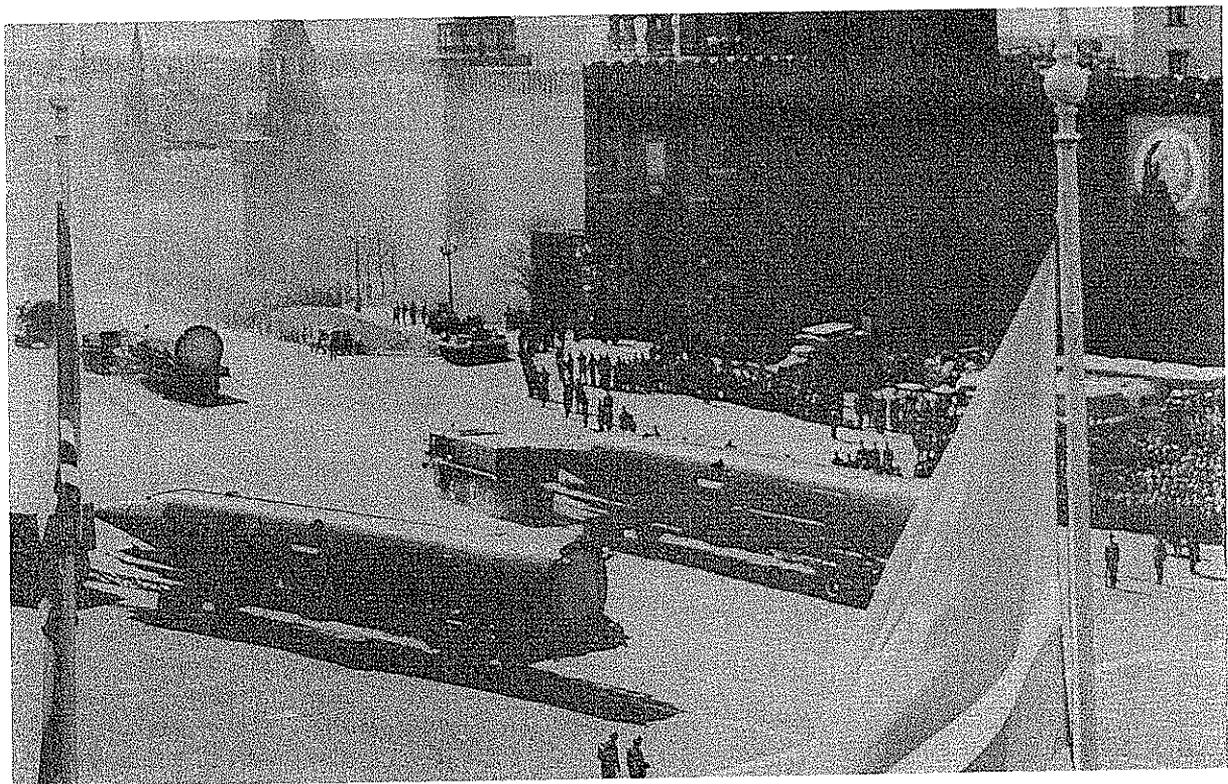
#### **THE CURRENT MILITARY DECISION AND POLICYMAKING PROCESS**

For the Soviet military high command, the

continual changes in command and in organization of the Stalin period and the schemes of Khrushchev have almost certainly reinforced their traditional conservatism. For the Soviet military, the dangers and tensions of the nuclear age and the possible irrevocable results of a badly considered military move in the era of the ICBM demand continuity, broad and deep examination of all alternatives, and a systematic decisionmaking process.

There is evidence that something close to this ideal has been achieved in recent years. The remarkably slow turnover in the high command is one evidence of this; another is the stability of the organizational structure of the high command; and finally there is the evidence which can be derived from the orderly response of the senior military planning organs to policy variations associated with post-Stalin changes in political leadership. The strategic buildup has proceeded steadily; the development of the Soviet surface and undersea navy has progressed both qualitatively and quantitatively; the reinforcement of the Chinese border has proceeded gradually; the Arabs were rearmed quickly, almost as if the Soviets anticipated the results of the six-day war; the invasion of Czechoslovakia was carefully, almost ponderously, prepared and executed.

The military policies for the next few years which were ratified by the 24th Party Congress evolved as a result of collective consideration of recommendations from the Army level through the Supreme Military Council, and at each level the Party was represented, not only by the uniformed political officer, but also by the regional Party Secretary. The final decision on all matters was made in the Politburo: recommendations on matters of strategy, deployments, force structures, and weapons characteristics were made by the Main Military Council; recommendations on military-economic matters were made by the State Defense Committee; and the General Staff collected, analyzed and presented the necessary data to support the requests. The Politburo, during its deliberations, had the prerogative of calling for such further military and civilian expertise



*May Day parade scene on Red Square.*

as it considered necessary. The results were Party-Government decisions transmitted through the Council of Ministers to the Minister of Defense and executed on orders prepared by the General Staff.

Obviously, this is an idealized model of the decisionmaking process and such imponderables as personalities, ambitions, and parochialism must enter into the question.

If there are latent Stalins in the civilian sector, there are probably at least as many in the military who are longing to return to the Stalin style of leadership. The 24th Party Congress did not reverse Khrushchev's verdict on Stalin and Stalinism completely, but it also did nothing to stop the creeping rehabilitation of the late dictator which has been in progress for some time. What would be the impact on the decisionmaking process if there were a more pronounced return to a one man dictator? As we have seen, from the point of view of the process itself, many of its features have been carried over from the Stalin era. And, although Stalin was capricious and

arbitrary in many of his decisions, the important operational decisions were collegial and were based on information and advice assembled by the General Staff. Considering the complexities of modern weapons, their stupendous costs, and their destructive capabilities, it is not likely that any new Stalin would attempt to make decisions based on intuition alone, regardless of how much political power he held.

#### NOTES

1. It is believed that the Military-Scientific Directorate of the General Staff maintains staff supervision over the Archives of the Ministry of Defense. Thus, Marshal G. K. Zhukov acknowledges help from this directorate of the General Staff in the preparation of his memoirs. G. K. Zhukov, *Vospominaniya i razmyshleniya* (Reminiscences and Reflections), Moscow: Novosti, 1969, p. 5.

2. Yu. P. Petrov, *Partiinoye Stroitel'stvo v Sovetskoi Armii i Flota (1918-1961)* (Party Structuring in the Soviet Army and Fleet

(1918-1961)), Moscow: Voenizdat, 1964, was published before the removal of Khrushchev. His *Stroitel'stvo Politorganov Partiinykh i Komsomol'skikh Organizatsiy Armii i Flota*, Moscow: Voenizdat, 1968, covers much of the same ground from a post-Khrushchev point of view.

3. Petrov, *Stroitel'stvo Politorganov Partiinykh i Komsomol'skikh Organizatsiy Armii i Flota*, p. 289.

4. *Ibid.*

5. *Ibid.*, p. 310.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 311.

7. *50 Let*, pp. 33, 56.

8. In March 1920 when some of the active armies became "labor armies" the name was changed to Council of Labor and Defense. *Ibid.*, p. 111.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 63.

10. *XV S'yezd Vsesoyuznoy Kommunisticheskoy Partii-(b) Stenograficheskiy Otchet* (XV Congress of the All Union Communist Party-(b) Stenographic Record), Moscow: Gosizdat, 1928, p. 874.

11. *50 Let*, pp. 198-199.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 199.

13. Zakharov, "Nakanune vtoroy mirovoy voyny," *Novaya i noveyshaya istoriya*, No. 5, Sep. - Oct. 1970, p. 20.

14. *50 Let*, p. 199.

15. K. A. Meretskov, *Na sluzhbe narodu* (In Service to the People), Moscow: Publishing House of Political Literature, 1968, p. 168.

16. Zakharov, "Nakanune," pp. 11-12.

17. Zhukov, *op. cit.*, pp. 226, 705.

18. S. M. Shtemenko, *General'nyy shtab v gody voyny* (The General Staff in the War Years), Moscow: Voenizdat, 1968, *passim*.

19. A. A. Grechko, "25 Let tomu nazad" (25 Years Ago) in *Voенно Istoricheskiy Zhurnal* (Military Historical Journal), No. 6, 1966, p. 12. Grechko refers to the General Staff as the "holy of holies."

20. *50 Let*, p. 256.

21. Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 3rd ed., New York: Harcourt Brace, 1966, pp. 372-374.

22. Shtemenko, *op. cit.*, p. 128, reports that some members of the wartime General Staff served in the General Staff until 1963-20 years.

23. Antonov until March 1946; Vasilevskiy: March

1946 - November 1948; Shtemenko: November 1948 - May 1952; Sokolovskiy: May 1952 - April 1960; Zakharov: April 1960 - February 1963; November 1964 - September 1971; Biryuzov: February 1963 - October 1964. *50 Let*, pp. 478, 519.

24. *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 4 February 1965, pp. 2-3.

25. *50 Let*, p. 478.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 478, nn. 1, 2.

27. Petrov, *Partiinoye Stroitel'stvo v Sovetskoi Armii i Flota (1918-1961)*, p. 462.

28. *Ibid.*, pp. 462, 463.

29. Petrov, *Stroitel'stvo Politorganov*, p. 442 n.

30. *Ibid.*, pp. 442-443.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 443.

32. Penkovskiy, *The Penkovskiy Papers*, pp. 232-233.

33. A. S. Zheltov, ed., *V. I. Lenin i Sovetskiye Vooruzhennyye Sily*, Moscow: Voenizdat, 1st ed., 1967, p. 148; 2nd ed., 1969, pp. 131-132. See also the reference to the "Main Military Council" in Petrov, *Stroitel'stvo Politorganov*, p. 507, indicating that the Council in 1962 had authority to "require" that Party organizations in the Armed Forces strengthen their leadership of the KOMSOMOL.

34. Zheltov, *V. I. Lenin*, 1st ed., p. 148; 2nd ed., pp. 131-132.

35. These would include such ministries as the Ministry of Defense Industry, Aviation, Shipbuilding, Electronics, Radio, General Machine Building, Medium Machine Building and Machine Building. D. F. Ustinov, one of the secretaries of the Communist Party Central Committee who has spent his entire career in the military production area also participates. See Andrew Sheren, "Structure and Organization of Defense-Related Industries" in *Economic Performance and the Military Burden in the Soviet Union*, Joint Economic Committee, Congress of the United States, Washington: Government Printing Office, 1970, p. 124.

36. M. P. Skirdo, *Narod, Armiya, Polkovodets* (The People, the Army, the Great Captain), Moscow: Voenizdat, 1970, p. 136.

37. *Ibid.*, pp. 146-147.

38. *Ibid.*, pp. 121-122.

39. *Ibid.*, pp. 123-127.

40. *Kommunist Voruzhennykh Sil*, No. 20, October 1967, p. 34. ■