A SOVIET NAVY FOR THE NUCLEAR AGE

by

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Though the Imperial Russian Navy had some glorious moments and the modern Soviet Navy has become ever more visible, naval power has never played a primary role in either the Russian or the Soviet scheme of nationhood. The Soviet Navy is only part of a vast, highly integrated array of continental and intercontinental military power, and Soviet military power is viewed by Soviet leaders as merely a single element of a broad "correlation" of political, economic, and military forces in the world. There is no question, however, that military power is critical in this Soviet view of the world, and that the Soviet Navy has managed to flourish.

In fact, the Soviet Navy has undergone a revolution. Its missions and composition have changed dramatically as the implications of the nuclear age have been understood and as past limitations on Russian naval power have been mitigated. While its relative position in the Soviet military pecking order does not appear to have enjoyed similarly dramatic change, the Soviet Navy's emergence as an important foreign policy instrument and its acceptance as a vital element of the strategic nuclear balance make it a powerful claimant on resources. Admiral of the Fleet of the Soviet Union Sergei Gorshkov, the leader and spokesman of the Soviet Navy for nearly 25 years, has had to justify his programs to a military and civil hierarchy that is not naturally disposed to things naval. But he has had something to sell. How the navy of a traditionally continental military power arrived at a position where it commands a significant portion of a large defense budget is the subject of this essay.

STALIN'S POSTWAR YEARS AND THE DAWN OF THE NUCLEAR AGE

An entirely new age in military affairs was dawning in 1945. Continental powers and sea powers would both become intercontinental military powers. There were bound to be nuclear-age implications for Soviet naval policy that would transcend the lessons learned even in the two World Wars, but they

were not clear. Though two and a half centuries of naval history and three wars in four decades had left an uncertain naval heritage, Stalin was not unsympathetic to naval construction and must have had some inkling that an important maritime role was possible in the politico-military environment of a nuclear age.

Whether a change in the environment for naval power was perceived, it soon became clear that the experience of the war would not completely dominate naval policy. There would be contradictory indicators of the navy's position in the turmoil of postwar domestic politics, but the military as a whole experienced this contradiction in the postwar Stalinist period. The international political situation was in flux, too. One clear aspect of the changing alignment of powers in the world was the fact that the major maritime powers were emerging as the forces most antagonistic to the Soviet Union. Precious treasure could not be devoted to any crash building program during the recovery from the war, but there could be an important role for the navy. The building of an impressive submarine force would absorb the bulk of the immediate material expenditure devoted to the navy, but this did not have to close the door completely on more traditional naval units. In such times, it was best to keep options open.

On Navy Day in July 1945, Stalin himself made it clear that the navy—the "loyal helpmate of the Red Army" in the war—would occupy an important place in his postwar plans and policies.[1] Old shipyards would be rehabilitated and new ones built. Other important figures also made it clear that the navy would have a significant claim on scarce resources.[2]

By 1947, the direction, if not the intensity, of naval development in the postwar Stalinist years had been established. There would be much speculation about the emergence of Soviet battleships and aircraft carriers, but such vessels were not to be. Stalin may have thought of balancing his fleet's fighting capabilities with surface ships as well as submarines, but the military uses of the fleet he was creating were defensive ones in terms of conflict with any major maritime power.

In his final five years, there were some indications, as in the late 1930's, that Stalin was seeking to build a more substantial conventional navy. But if Stalin planned a modern high-seas fleet that could vie with the other great maritime powers, the plan died with him. Still, his naval legacy was considerable given the obvious limitations on naval roles for the USSR as understood at the time in a distinctly continental, ground-forces-dominated military establishment. As in the 30's, economic realities militated against expensive naval construction as well. The Soviet Navy in 1953 was, to be sure, a force capable primarily of the defense of the USSR's maritime approaches, with no credible claim for command of the seas in a hot war, but it was the third largest navy in the world.

KHRUSHCHEV: DISCOVERING THE REVOLUTION

After Stalin's death, many longstanding ideas were subjected to intense scrutiny. Military thought, like social, economic, and cultural thought, had been so thoroughly dominated by Stalin that his death was bound to admit some new views. Stalin's military ideas had been too firmly rooted in the past to allow full acceptance of the fundamental changes called for by the blossoming technological revolution in military affairs.

Doctrinal ferment in the first few years after Stalin's death was the result of efforts to break the Stalinist mold.[3] Because it stressed traditional forms of military power, Stalinist military thought was a refuge for traditional institutional interests. The spokesmen for those interests were reluctant to promote a qualitative revolution which would sap the resources and even the logic for maintaining huge conventional forces. But the realities of thermonuclear deterrence were even more compelling. Geographically, the main opponent of the Soviet Union was not even within range of traditional weapons, and that opponent was ahead in the development of the new ultra-range weaponry and its means of delivery.

It was not only a time of transition in military policy, it was a transitional period in

the development of military hardware as well. Institutional momentum and the need to preserve an image of massive military power during this interim era would mitigate the challenge to more conventional forms of power. But the challenge was a fundamental one, and it had its naval component, a point here articulated by Admiral Gorshkov:

> The age-old struggle between old concepts and new ones, which had still not been proven, made its harsh appearance in the course of the discussions which developed with respect to ways in which to develop our Navy in the mid-1950's. Some of the views expressed at the time were extremely 'leftist.' We had among us, unfortunately, some extremely influential 'authorities' who felt that, with the appearance of atomic weapons, the Navy had completely lost its significance as a branch of the armed services. . . . A frequent assertion of the time was that single missiles placed on land launchers would be sufficient for destroying strike dispositions of surface warships and even submarines.[4]

It was clear that the salvation of the traditional military concepts lay in their ability to assimilate the new ones. The nuclear level of deterrence had overwhelming priority, and it was the strategic offensive roles which were most prized.[5] The capability of applying or showing limited force in a flexible and mobile manner was discounted during this period when the effects of the nuclear revolution were being felt initially at the highest levels of conflict. Though the various armed forces would never completely yield the position that final victory must be won by men and conventional means, the 1950's after Stalin's death were a time when attention and resources had to be devoted to assimilating the implications of the nuclear age. In 1956, Admiral Gorshkov reflected the adjustment to nuclear-age realities and gave a hint of the challenge felt by proponents of conventional forces:

> . . . the next war will differ from all previous wars . . . with the massive employment of rocket weapons and . . . means of mass destruction. . . . However, this does not diminish the decisive importance of the ground Army, the fleet and aviation.

Gorshkov also perceived broad implications for the navy in noting that the new technology caused naval theaters to be of "immeasurably more importance than formerly" and that "the fleet must fully correspond to the conditions of the newest technology."[6]

Khrushchev had definite, and negative, ideas about the utility of traditional naval forces. As he consolidated his position atop the decisionmaking apparatus, he tried to impose more forcefully his view that strategic nuclear weaponry largely obviated conventional forces, especially expensive naval units, which he felt were anomalies in the nuclear age. In a message to President Eisenhower about the 1958 Taiwan Straits crisis, Khrushchev made clear his opinion that classic naval power was useless to contemporary nuclear superpowers.[7] And, during his visit to the United States a year later:

> I'll tell you a secret. We were starting to build a big fleet of ships, including many cruisers. But today they are outmoded. . . . From now on we will rely mainly on submarines.[8]

Khrushchev's disdain for the conventional aspects of naval power and his support for

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the nuclear-missile role of the submarine were products of his general desire to rely upon nuclear weapons. Toward 1957, as Khrushchev's views on military strategy became more dominant, they assumed specific form.[9] Though Khrushchev proudly included the navy's nuclear deterrent role in his public statements of Soviet military power, his attitude was a clear sign to the navy that its future depended on its ability to seek out means for and to justify the application of nuclear and missile technology to naval armament.

The navy's expression of the emerging party line on naval development continued to contain strong elements of sympathy for more conventional applications of naval power. Authors acknowledged that "naval science has begun a new period," but warned of errors "arising as a result of a preconceived overevaluation of this or that new means of attack or defense."[10] However, in spite of clear feelings of the need for caution in order to avoid the extremes of Khrushchevian logic in military affairs, authorities continued to scrap warships at an increasing rate, and to divert the men and resources needed for their maintenance to the kind of forces, naval and non-naval, that Khrushchev clearly favored.

In 1957, the Soviets began concentrating on construction of the nuclear submarines planned earlier. The new cruisers which had survived the recent period of less decisive naval policy were fairly safe. In spite of his startling statements, no one expected Khrushchev to scrap these expensive ships. After all, the logic of missile armament in the nuclear age could be applied to these impressive-looking ships as well as to "mosquito" craft. Such ships, armed with missiles, could help to counter the Western carrier, which temporarily was viewed as the main strategic threat to be coped with by the Soviet Navy. And surely Khrushchev noted that large naval units played significant roles in the cases of Lebanon and Taiwan in spite of the validity of claims that such forces were not decisive in a military sense. If Khrushchev did not feel a need to hedge his bet because of such considerations, the economic facts were enough to warrant the maintenance of at least the newer major surface units. In any case, he did not scrap 95 percent of them as he said he would.

At the end of the 1950's, the Soviet Navy reflected a diversity of shaping forces. The sheer momentum of Stalinist construction, the tenacity of more traditional naval thinkers while Khrushchev gathered strength, and a genuine effort to assimilate new technology all aided Soviet naval construction. The strategic threat posed by US aircraft carriers and the opportunities offered by potential strategic offensive and defensive missions, especially for submarines, were great boons to the navy because they were in harmony with Khrushchev's preoccupation with the impact of strategic nuclear weapons on military strategy.

In the 1959 order of battle were 35 cruisers, more than two-thirds of which were well under 10 years old. Eleven cruisers, those of the *Chapaev* and *Kirov* classes, were ships of World War II design, some of which had been completed in the postwar 1940's. The Soviet destroyer force had been extensively replenished. Many of these were of the newer *Skory*, *Kotlin*, and *Tallinn* classes, and more were under construction. Relatively light surface units, undoubtedly justified as classic defensive naval forces, seemed to be thriving. There were 66 *Riga* and *Kola* class ships already in the fleet, and a trend toward innovating and experimenting with small and highly maneuverable units had been established.

The Soviet submarine force of 500 conventionally powered units was on the threshold of the nuclear age. One nuclear unit was near completion and at least two more were fairly close. Many of the submarine construction facilities were being diverted to nuclear construction. Missile armament for submarines had passed through its preliminary stages during the evolution of the longer-range *Zulu* and *Whiskey* classes, and it was becoming increasingly clear that submarines would have a significant nuclear

attack role. This role *required* a much more modern submarine force than the Soviets had maintained throughout the 1950's. There was increasingly less justification for the maintenance of huge numbers of older, shorter-range conventional submarines, but there was also a clear demand for new replacements.

Whatever might have been the Stalinist naval thesis, the emerging antithesis of his heir reflected a different world with different opportunities and dangers. Stalin, firmly in power, might have found it much easier to view conventional naval power as a useful instrument in various kinds of hostility with the other camp in spite of the possibilities of nuclear conflict and traditional geopolitical limitations. Khrushchev, striving to keep control at a time when domestic and international politics were becoming increasingly unruly and fragmented, was bound to be more skeptical even if strategic nuclear considerations and missile technology had not raised questions about traditional notions of seapower. It is not surprising that Khrushchev and his entourage did not produce a positive naval doctrine in the 50's. To the extent that a clearer direction for the evolution of the navy was discernible in 1959, it was a direction defined secondarily by Khrushchev's attitude toward strategic nuclear war and continental defense. The trends in Soviet naval development were still not the products of any clear appreciation of either the potential or the limits of Soviet seapower in the nuclear age.

THE EARLY 1960's: KHRUSHCHEV'S 'NEW LOOK'

It was typical of Khrushchev that he would try to push his notions of military policy to their logical extremes. In some ways, this was to be a blessing to the Soviet Navy, but not in all respects. A strong emphasis on strategic offensive and defensive missions was an enormous benefit to new submarine programs, and it helped to focus attention away from the diminishing strategic threat of aircraft carriers and onto the new challenges posed by intercontinental ballistic missile submarines. However, the preoccupation with strategic nuclear offense and defense did nothing at the time to promote a better understanding of the political uses of naval power, or its utility at low levels of conflict.

It is also typical of the Khrushchev era that, while his notions and schemes left a permanent mark on the future, they were seldom wholly accepted or completely put into practice. This was the case with Khrushchev's attempt to rely on strategic nuclear weaponry at the expense of the conventional military establishment. He managed to finalize the basic shift toward a nuclear-missile navy, but he did not manage to close the door completely upon the evolution of a large and wide-ranging Soviet Navy comprising an impressive variety of ships.

On 14 January 1960, Khrushchev made a landmark speech to the USSR Supreme Soviet.[11] His plans for the Soviet military had much in common with Eisenhower's 1953 New Look for the American military establishment. The preponderance of attention and resources assigned to the military would be devoted to maintaining and improving the nation's rocket-nuclear capabilities. A huge demobilization of troops and the creation of a new branch of the armed services, the Strategic Rocket Forces, made it clear that Khrushchev's preference for nuclear-missile forces at the expense of conventional types of armament was now being expressed with authority.

Khrushchev's New Look line would never be totally accepted, and the logic of nearly complete reliance upon nuclear deterrence would be further eroded by events during the remainder of Khrushchev's tenure, but the New Look had an especially lasting effect on the future of the Soviet Navy. The naval forces that were justified during the first quarter of the decade would be the forces in existence when the ideas began to change.

There was a subtly cool treatment of Khrushchev's policies in the military press, reflecting fears among military leaders that reliance on a nuclear deterrent would be carried to the extreme of limiting the nation's ability to act at times when more

conventional applications of force were needed. There was a pragmatic naval consideration in this resistance to the Khrushchev line. If the entire military faced cuts, the navy could expect to press successfully only its most persuasive arguments. It therefore behooved the navy to embrace the nuclear and missile role to which the navy could lay claim. The image of a navy "undergoing a profound qualitative transformation"[12] was one which would best exploit the possibilities for naval appropriations in the early 1960's.[13]

Submarines were the naval weapon which best fitted into Khrushchevian military logic. The heavy emphasis of Khrushchev's New Look upon strengthening the Soviet nuclear deterrent and his tendency to lean heavily on his nuclear credibility gave the Soviet submarine force a significant claim on military resources.

Surface ship construction occupied a peculiar place in the early 60's. The emerging strategic offensive and defensive missions for submarines at long ranges from the USSR would provide some justification for surface units. Also, to the extent that the carrier was seen as a strategic threat, the increasing strike range of Western carrier aircraft had made questionable the assumption that surface ships carrying surface-to-surface missiles needed to be only light short-range ships. Justification for surface combatants had to be tailored to fit the logic of Khrushchev's New Look notions about the role of the navy, but there were convincing arguments for them in spite of Khrushchev's disdain for surface ships. Khrushchev's own strong endorsement of missile armament was, paradoxically, to be the salvation of surface combatants. The role of missile-armed surface ships would be shifted from an anticarrier emphasis to antisubmarine, and missiles would also help to improve surface ship survivability.

Thus, as far as naval forces were concerned, the New Look was as much a boon as a bane. After the Kennedy Administration took office in January 1961, the Soviet Navy became in addition the beneficiary of a new Soviet appreciation of the challenge posed by the US.[14] Well before the Cuban missile crisis—in which Soviet strategic and naval inferiority was driven home to the world—Soviet policymakers were absorbing the implications of the new administration's resolve to press hard to develop strategic nuclear weapons. One product of this post-Sputnik US resolve was a sharply accelerated Polaris submarine program, a program that was bound to strengthen the arguments of those who were pressing for a major Soviet naval role in strategic defense and attack.

The early 1960's, instead of highlighting the irrelevance of naval power for a continental power, provided a promising atmosphere for development. Obviously, missiles had to be developed. Soviet SSBNs (nuclear-powered fleet ballistic missile submarines) had to be laid down. Both strategic offensive and defensive missions would have to be carried out by a variety of ships operating at greater distances from home to be effective. None of this meant that the USSR was pretending to change from a continental power to a seapower of traditional stripe. There was nothing traditional about it. It was new. A naval doctrine suitable for a great continental power that was to become an intercontinental superpower was not formulated, but some of the hardware that was to support such a doctrine was programmed.

TOWARD THE 1970's: GRASPING THE IMPACT OF CHANGE

A shift toward forward deployment and a more ambitious naval construction program was initiated before Khrushchev was deposed in October 1964. However, the change taking place was more fundamental and sweeping than a shift in naval policy. It was unlikely, in fact, that Soviet naval policy would change significantly except in the context of broader military and political change.

A political, social, and economic offensive, buttressed by an exaggerated image of Soviet nuclear attack capabilities, was the hallmark of Khrushchev's "peaceful coexistence." Brezhnev's detente would rely on no illusions.

The ideological and sociological appeal of the Soviet model was waning, and, as in the past, Russia looked westward to gain the economic elements of modernization. The *substance* of military power, conventional and nuclear, was to be the cornerstone of Soviet foreign policy. It was as a military power that the Soviet Union was recognized as a superpower.

Khrushchev's New Look was necessary, but not sufficient. On the Eurasian land mass the Soviet Union would accept nothing less than domination of the military balance. Equality with the US in intercontinental nuclear forces was an absolute necessity, and superiority was desirable. In the US-Soviet strategic nuclear relationship, under the rubric of detente, negotiations with the Americans and careful management of the competition in high technology were necessary, but there was no question that a profound change was taking place in the relationship between political and military power. There was to be a great impact on Soviet naval policy. The navy of an intercontinental nuclear superpower had to be viewed differently than the navy of a continental power, no matter how large, which had only restricted access to the high seas.

Intercontinental nuclear attack capabilities obviously had first priority. For the navy, this meant that an all-out effort had to be devoted to construction of the *Yankee* class SSBN. Cruise-missile submarines and antisubmarine submarines, though also viewed as important, were put on a slower schedule. Similarly, the major missile-equipped surface combatants, *Kynda*, *Kashin*, and *Kresta* classes, were produced at a measured pace.[15] Construction of the first Soviet antisubmarine helicopter carrier, the *Moskva*, which signified Soviet willingness to devote considerable resources to surface ships for strategic defensive purposes, began in about 1964. Sea trials of *Moskva* were conducted in July 1967.

Meanwhile, the Soviet leadership began to grasp the full impact of the nuclear age for Soviet naval policy. Along with the many other fruits of nuclear superpower status, the Soviet Union acquired limited license for the exercise of traditional naval power. Perhaps a war at sea disconnected from Soviet vital interests in Eurasia would not be a reasonable option that could be underwritten by Soviet nuclear striking power, but more limited displays of naval power were surely feasible policy alternatives. "Showing the flag" was certainly appropriate for a nuclear superpower. So was naval support of friendly Third World regimes or groups. In fact, a whole range of lower-level naval activity was opening up. As the Soviet Navy moved farther out to sea in an attempt to carry out strategic offensive and defensive missions, this new range of politico-military options became clearer.[16]

A limited display of national will and power embodied in a ship or squadron had long been a means of projecting national influence and authority in both times of peace and times of tension. As limited forms of power, naval units require visibility for local effect. To have maximum impact upon events, limited forces must be credibly connected with the entire arsenal of the nation's diplomatic and military tools. Otherwise, they can be isolated or neutralized, leaving the parent state without their capability and discredited in the bargain. Russian naval forces had always been disconnected from the ultimate will and capabilities of the homeland, and so Russian seapower remained a tenuous instrument of national policy. Russia had, therefore, been denied that large spectrum of influences which exist even before a conflict occurs. Soviet seapower in the 1960's began to assert that significant spectrum of influence.

Though some Soviet naval units had operated on the high seas earlier, especially submarines in the late 1950's, the Soviet Navy did not begin to appear on the high seas consistently and for sustained periods until 1963.[17] In that year, extensive Soviet naval deployments to the Mediterranean initiated what was to become a permanent presence there that would grow until about 1976. The initial phase of forward deployment lasted until about the time the *Moskva* and the *Yankee* SSBNs began to appear. Since 1967,

the Soviet Navy has expanded its high seas presence to the point that it is now common to speak of the Soviet "blue water" Navy.

It is not necessary to spell out here all the details of the Soviet Navy's projection of a global image. That has been done well elsewhere.[18] It is important, however, to note the impact of the Soviet move to the high seas. The rationale behind the initial move was no doubt evolved in terms of specific strategic missions, but the impact extends beyond the nuclear level of conflict into the realm of politics. In terms of global perceptions, for example, the record of Soviet and US deployments away from home shores during the first decade of the Brezhnev regime is important. Soviet distant operations increased from 6500 to 52,800 ship-days, while US distant operations decreased from 109,500 to 61,300 ship-days.[19] Obviously, crisp distinctions between "continental powers" and "seapowers" were a thing of the past, at least in regard to global perceptions.

The Soviet leaders, perceiving the impact of Soviet global naval operations as they sent their ships to sea, gained a heightened esteem for the political importance of a naval presence. Also, they did not fail to grasp the fact that they could now share a traditional preserve of their primary adversary and at times deny him the full use of power he had exercised unfettered before the Soviet Navy put to sea. After all, the US was by no means a European continental power and yet she acted freely under her nuclear umbrella and in concert with her NATO allies to deny the USSR the full benefit of her "natural" dominance on the continent. Why shouldn't the USSR act under her nuclear umbrella and with the protection of the well-established doctrine of freedom of the seas to deny the US the full benefit of her "natural" claim to dominate the oceans?

After the fall of Khrushchev, there was growing recognition of the fact that the capability to "command" the seas was not as relevant as it had been in the past. Though in the past competing seapowers sought to completely dominate the seas in a conflict where the primary issue could be settled at sea, this way of looking at naval power was no longer valid. In nuclear war, naval theaters might well be secondary. Short of nuclear war, the ability simply to deny a traditional naval power the command of the seas might be sufficient for the USSR. The Soviets seemed to understand that the maximum utility of the Soviet Navy would not be realized in an attempt to challenge the US for the capability to win an all-out duel at sea, but rather in the Soviet ability to deny the US its traditional defense through US control of the oceans. The Americans' ability to dominate the seas, Gorshkov said in 1965, "had been reduced to nothing."[20] Gorshkov was exaggerating his own capabilities at the time, but it was becoming clear that the denial of US capabilities was recognized as an important function of the Soviet Navy applicable not only in intercontinental nuclear war.

There was growing Soviet appreciation of Western naval capabilities to act at lower levels of tension and in local conflict. The fact that US and British naval activity was usually unopposed was noted often with displeasure. In localized, limited situations where lesser concentrations of naval forces were employed, sea lanes were depicted as "important tools of colonial politics and aggression by the imperialist states." It was at more limited levels of conflict where the "completely free use of the sea lanes by the United States Navy" was being exploited. Of course, when "local" conflicts tended to get more serious, as they did in Korea and Vietnam, the significance of the United States' ability to move with absolute impunity, without any threat of opposition, was greater.[21]

The political impact of a US naval presence without the necessity of actual intervention was appreciated by the Soviets as one of the most prized effects of US naval deployment. Fleet Admiral Kasatonov noted in 1966 that US naval construction and maintenance programs reflected the high value which the US was placing on the capability to exploit the freedom of the seas for the conduct of

"local" and "limited" operations. Kasatonov also noted that United States authorities, specifically the Chief of Naval Operations, valued the flexibility and mobility of the Navy not only for the times it was actually employed in crisis situations and conflicts but also for the "majority of cases when strike groups of the fleet were transferred to areas of 'unrest' in good times, even before political decisions were made."[22]

There were frequent Russian accounts in the 1960's of the actual deployment of naval forces to enforce US policy, and these accounts did not fail to point out that such actions were taken with impunity because they were unopposed. According to one Soviet author, "the most prominent characteristic of the utilization of naval forces by the aggressor in local wars has been the fact that surface ships have conducted them without being seriously opposed."[23] From the Soviet point of view, the US was monopolizing the concept of freedom of the seas, with the lack of an offsetting presence on the high seas providing an enormous political advantage to the rival superpower.

New license for expression of naval power was being engendered by nuclear superpower status in the 1960's. At the same time, the limits of intercontinental nuclear striking power as an instrument of policy were beginning to be understood. Though it would be a long time before the Soviet leadership would have "enough" strategic power for their purposes—perhaps that would never come—it was already apparent that direct competition and potential conflict between the superpowers had to be limited to reasonable levels and less awesome instruments if their policies were not to be hopelessly bound by their capability for mutual destruction. Movement across land expanses had become even more difficult and dangerous in modern times, so that the principle of freedom of the seas, a right to move and be present on three-quarters of the globe and at the doorstep of most of the world's states, had new meaning as a form of Russian national expression.

The navy permitted a new kind of expansion for a great continental power. Naval forces project the image of national power and presence, but in the final analysis they remain the instruments of expansion and not expansion itself. In a world where assimilation of new territories and even the acquisition of allies who are tied too closely to a nation's military power are becoming ever more dangerous and undesirable, the illusion of substantive expansion of national power can help to satisfy appetites for global expression and serve the imperatives of an expansive ideology. Moreover, to the extent that a limited expression of naval power can be related to the genuine substance of Soviet continental and intercontinental striking power, the distinction between the illusion of expansion and expansion itself is blurred in the relationships of the superpowers and lacks relevance in the minds of the vast majority of mankind.

Though we became accustomed to Soviet pronouncements of the political utility of naval forces in the 1970's, the Soviets understood this utility and discussed it openly in the 1960's. In the Soviet press there was already a growing tendency to recognize the navy as an "instrument of policy," and the Soviets relished the fact that the Western press acknowledged the political impact of the Soviet demands for equality of the seas. One author, for example, declared flatly: "When the West writes that the Soviet Fleet has come to be used more often as an 'instrument of policy' then no doubt we agree with this."[24] The use of the Soviet Navy to "strengthen the authority and influence of [the Russian] Homeland in the international arena" and the great political value of "carrying the ideas of [Russian] peace-loving politics to all ends of the globe," were ever more frequently presented as important navy functions in the late 1960's.[25] There was significant attention to the details of port visits, especially to the importance of the impressions made upon the hosts.

That the Soviet leadership had perceived the new opportunities for Soviet naval expression in the 1960's and had seized upon the political utility of denying the exclusive

use of the seas to the United States was, in turn, recognized in the West. Western commentators recognized that the naval opportunity for the USSR was more in the realm of influence rather than in the substance of military power. Perceptive observers noted that powerful naval groupings like the US Sixth Fleet were militarily far superior to Soviet fleets, but more limited as a politcal instrument.[26] One British author, referring to the Soviet presence in the Mediterranean in 1969, said:

> Mr. Healy, the British Secretary of State for the Defense, has offered to blow them out of the water in the first ten minutes of a war: but what is he going to do with them in the event of ten years of non-war?[27]

One of the reasons that the Soviet Navy had an impact beyond its combat power is that it served to restrict both the political influence and the military options of a stronger opponent. This was particularly true in the Mediterranean, where the Soviet naval presence represented a capability for conflict which, though unlikely to be decisive, would have been extremely difficult to limit to the Mediterranean theater. Naval action which formerly could be taken with impunity in the absence of opposition had become a much more dangerous alternative because a direct clash between United States and Soviet forces was possible, and the threat of uncontrollable escalation was always present. In the Soviet press, the Soviet Mediterranean squadron was hailed because it "tied the hands" of the US Sixth Fleet and "removed the possibility of [the Americans] lording it over that area as unceremoniously as in the past."[28] It was made clear that the US could not act again as it did in the 1958 Lebanon intervention,[29] and Soviet commentators did not miss the significance of US recognition of the changed relationship.[30]

Thus, in the 1960's, Soviet policymakers had grasped the political as well as the military significance of the nuclear age for Soviet naval power. To be sure, they were building forces whose first task was to serve strategic offensive and defensive missions, but the presence of the Soviet flag abroad was worth something too. Moreover, there was a growing appreciation of the fact that the ability to keep a stronger opponent off balance (by reducing his range of political and military options to one far less impressive than his potential combat power would seem to merit) has significant rewards in the political sphere which add to the impact of the mere presence of the Soviet flag.

THE 1970's: CONSOLIDATING A NUCLEAR-AGE POSTURE

The basic outlines of the Soviet nuclear-age navy were visible at the beginning of the 1970's.[31] There were 26 cruisers, including 2 *Moskva* class helicopter carriers and 8 missile-equipped *Kresta* and *Kynda* class cruisers. One hundred destroyers, 24 of which carried missiles, were in commission. There were 106 oceangoing escorts ranging from 900 to 1500 tons displacement. There were 125 small missile patrol boats. Comprising the rest of the surface navy were 162 amphibious craft, 275 coastal escorts and submarine chasers, 345 conventionally armed fast patrol boats, and numerous mine warfare vessels.

The submarine force remained huge, as had become traditional by 1970 in the Soviet Navy. There were 303 conventional boats, but some—the *Romeo*, *Quebec*, and *Whiskey* classes—were getting old. There were already about 66 nuclear submarines in commission. Of these, 10 or 12 were *Yankee* class SSBNs and about 6 were new *Charlie* class nuclear submarines equipped with cruise missiles.

This assemblage was not by any stretch of the imagination a traditional navy. It was by 1970 a motley collection of ships that had resulted from changing perceptions of the threat, new realizations of naval opportunities, a traditional Russian naval coastal orientation, and economic realities. Still, one could discern the shape of the Soviet Navy that would probably obtain through the remainder of the century. It was to be a navy for Soviet purposes and not an imitation of any Western concept of seapower. Gorshkov makes this clear:

> It is wrong to try to build a navy in the image and likeness of even the strongest seapower, and it is wrong to define the requirements for building warships for one's own Navy guided only by quantitative criteria and the relative strength of ship inventories. Every country has a specific requirement for naval forces, and only this requirement, determined by the mission of the Navy, can serve as the basis for the development of types of forces, ships types, and weaponry.[32]

The Soviet Navy was not going to pretend to command the seas, but it was also not going to permit the United States unfettered action wherever and whenever it chose to act. The Soviet Navy might not solve the seemingly intractable antisubmarine problem posed by SSBNs, but it would keep trying. A large Soviet SSBN force, equipped as soon as possible with missiles that could be launched from near the Eurasian periphery, had already been decided upon. Domination of the close maritime approaches to the USSR was a "given" for Soviet policymakers and budgeteers. As much as possible, whenever it could be spared from potential combat missions, the Soviet Navy would be used to project the image of Soviet power abroad.

In terms of total number of units, the Soviet Navy would not grow much beyond the level aready reached by the beginning of the 1970's, but there was still progress to be made in modernizing the navy in the directions clearly established. For example, between 1970 and 1977 there would be a net gain in cruisers caused by the introduction of missile units, including the new 10,000-ton *Kara* class, faster than old units were being retired.[33] In the destroyer inventory, there was a gain of 29 missile-armed units against a loss of 17 obsolete units. The first of the *Kiev* class antisubmarine carriers was added to the two *Moskva* class ships. Fifteen smaller combatants with missiles and 20 without missiles were added, but more than 300 obsolete short-range surface units were removed from the list. The attack submarine force declined by 45 units overall, with a loss of 67 obsolete diesel units, but 9 nuclear-powered missile units and 13 nuclear-driven torpedo attack boats were added. Soviet naval aviation had gained 35 Backfire planes, formidable aircraft which have a patrol range of 2500 miles and are equipped with antiship missiles. The Soviets added 21 *Yankee* and 26 *Delta* class SSBNs.

The foregoing adjustments represented a significant qualitative upgrading, finally bringing to realization the vision of a nuclear-age navy seen more than a decade ago. Writings by Admiral Gorshkov in the 1970's were not attempts to persuade a reluctant audience, but rather were efforts to establish in print that the Soviet Navy had "arrived." After all, the programs noted above were all well in train before Gorshkov's major work, *The Sea Power of the State*, was published in 1976.

By the last quarter of this decade, it was understood in the West that future Soviet naval developments would be aimed at strengthening the capabilities already visible, rather than expanding the size of the navy itself. Admiral James L. Holloway III, then Chief of Naval Operations, noted in a statement to the Senate Appropriations Committee:

> The size of the Soviet Navy is not expected to change significantly in the next five to ten years; in fact, there may be a slight decrease. Significantly, however, the Soviets are replacing older ships, submarines, and aircraft with new ones which possess much greater power than their predecessors.[34]

PROSPECTS FOR THE FUTURE

From what has been presented thus far, it is not difficult to estimate future Soviet naval development. It is likely that the Soviet Navy has already "sold" those construction programs which are a logical extension of current clearly visible trends. Naval shipbuilding will continue at the current rate, but because of decommissionings of obsolete units the overall number of units will decline slightly. Significant challenges to the US in the future will come from the continued qualitative upgrading of the Soviet Navy.[35]

Basically, the Soviets will build more and

larger missile-equipped surface ships, including about eight carriers accommodating V/STOL (vertical and/or short takeoff and landing) aircraft. Old units will be retired, but the force of newer missile-armed cruisers will grow to about 70 units. The amphibious force will be upgraded with new units and some larger ones as obsolete units are scrapped. General purpose nuclear submarines will increase by about 50 percent as an even larger number of old diesel submarines are scrapped. The number of SSBNs will probably not change much. Naval aviation will be significantly improved as a large number of Backfires replace older aircraft.

The prospects for future American security depend as much upon US naval developments as upon the future composition of the Soviet Navy. Though the Soviet concept of naval power in the nuclear age remains one dominated by continental and intercontinental military concerns, the Soviet Navy seems paradoxically to have "found itself" in an era of growing Soviet strategic power. This contrasts with the situation in the West, where support for modernizing the US Navy seems to have faded as US superiority in the strategic nuclear balance has simultaneously eroded.

Intercontinental nuclear power has changed the clear distinctions between continental and sea powers, but it has not obliterated the differences. However, while the reductions in US naval general purpose capabilities have not yet made the US inferior in any potential contest with the Soviet Navy, the future is not certain. The following statement was made in February 1979 by the current US Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Thomas B. Hayward:

> My near-term optimism about the Navy is tempered by serious concern over the longer-term trends, should the momentum of past improvement in the Navy's capabilities not be maintained. My recent predecessors testified repeatedly that the long-term trends do not favor the U.S. Navy, and that one can project a point in the not-too-distant future when the trend lines will cross, and we will lose our margin of superiority to a Soviet navy which remains embarked on an aggressive program of expanding its capabilities for maritime operations worldwide.[36]

There was little the US could do about the new naval options open to the Soviet Union as a nuclear superpower. A great deal of latitude for political use of Soviet naval power, extending into denial and interposition roles vis-a-vis the US Navy, was a new fact of life in the nuclear age. So was a large range of strategic offensive and defensive missions. But there is no more reason for the US to accept parity, or something less, on the world's oceans than there would be for the Soviet Union to accept US conventional military domination on the European Continent. Only if the US can muster the will to do so can it remain the world's leading seapower in the nuclear age.

NOTES

1. Cited in "Rech tovarishcha S. Zakharova" ("Speech of S. Zakharov"), *Pravda*, 20 Feburary 1956.
2. See Admiral V. A. Kasatonov, Soviet Navy, "Sovetskie vooruzhenniye sily na zashchite zavoevaniu Oktabrja," ("The Soviet Armed Forces in Defense of the Gains of October"), *Voenno-Istoricheskij zhurnal* (January 1968), 39-40.
3. H. S. Dinerstein, *War and the Soviet Union* (rev. ed.; New York: Praeger, 1962), chap. 2.
4. S. G. Gorshkov, "Razvitie sovetskogo voenno-morskogo iskusstva" ("The Development of Soviet Naval Art"), *Morskoj Sbornik* (February 1967), 19.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 20.
6. S. G. Gorshkov, "V zashchitu bezopasnosti Rodiny" ("In Defense of the Homeland's Security"), *Sovetskij Flot*, 23 February 1956.
7. "Message from Khrushchev to Eisenhower on Crisis in the Taiwan Strait Area," *The New York Times*, 9 September 1958, p. 12.
8. M. Higgins, "He [Khrushchev] Meets Workers at IBM Plant," *The New York Herald Tribune*, 22 September 1959.
9. The 1956-57 turning point in Soviet military strategy is discussed in I. Korotkov, "O razvitii sovetskoj voennoj teorii v poslevoennkh godakh" ("On the Evolution of Soviet Military Theory in Post-War Years"), *Voenno-Istoricheskij Zhurnal* (April 1964), 44.
10. N. Pavlovich, "Voenno-marskoe iskusstvo i razvitija boejoj techniki flota" ("Naval Art and the Development of the Combat Technology of the Navy"), *Sovietskij Flot*, 6 March 1957; see also V. Andrejev, "Morskie i okeanski soobshchenija v sovremennoj vojne" ("Sea and Ocean Communications in Contemporary Warfare"), *Krasnaja Zvezda*, 25 April 1957.
11. N. S. Khrushchev, "Razoruzhenie-put'k uprocheniji mira i obespecheniju druzhbu mezhdu narodami: doklad N. S. Khrushcheve na sessi verkhovnogo saveta SSSR"

("Disarmament is the Way to the Consolidation of Peace and the Ensuring of Friendship Between Peoples: Report of N. S. Khrushchev to the USSR Supreme Soviet"), *Izvestia*, 15 January 1960.

12. "Rech' admirala V. A. Kasatonova" (Speech of Admiral V. A. Kasatanov), *Sovetskij Flot*, 16 January 1960.

13. Specifics of naval construction, including ship types, in the early 1960's can be found in my "The Rise of Soviet Naval Power in the Nuclear Age" (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Harvard, 1971), pp. 94-99.

14. Michael MccGwire, "The Rationale for the Development of Soviet Seapower," an unpublished paper presented to the Triannual Symposium of the Supreme Allied Commander, Atlantic, in Annapolis, Maryland on 20-22 June 1978.

15. *Kynda* production stopped at four in 1965. *Kashin* was produced at a rate of about one a year. *Kresta* was laid down in 1964 and two units were produced by 1967.

16. For a model of the utility of Soviet naval power throughout the spectrum of potential conflict, see my *Soviet Naval Strategy for the 1980's*, National Security Affairs Monograph no. 78-3 (Washington: The National Defense University, June 1978), pp. 8-9.

17. See my "Rise of Soviet Naval Power in the Nuclear Age," pp. 119-60, for a detailed discussion of Soviet naval presence in the 1950's and 1960's.

18. Information on Soviet naval deployment is in Paul J. Murphy, "Trends in Soviet Force Structure," in *Naval Power in Soviet Policy*, ed. Paul J. Murphy (Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1978), pp. 109-34. This paragraph relies on Murphy's figures.

19. A "ship-day" is one ship operating at sea for one day.

20. Sergei Gorshkov, "The Nuclear Fleet: Goals and Miscalculations," *Za Rubezhom*, 29 January-4 February 1965, p. 10.

21. S. I. Filinov, "Vooruzhennaja bor'ba i okeanskie kommunikatsii" ("Armed Struggle and Ocean Communications"), *Morskoj Sbornik* (March 1965), 33, 38-41.

22. V. Kasatonov, "Strategija agressii no more" ("Strategy of Aggression at Sea"), *Izvestia*, 9 January 1966.

23. V. Matsulenko, "Lokal'nye voiny imperializma" ("Local Wars of Imperialism"), *Voenno-Istorichiskij Zhurnal* (September 1968), 44.

24. M. Sagateljan, "V nejtral'nykh vodakh" ("In Neutral Waters"), *Izvestia*, 18 October 1969.

25. V. M. Grishanov, an interview in *Sovetskij Voin* (July 1968), 2. See also "Kommunisti flota v bor'be za vypolnenie reshenij XXIII Sezda KPSS" ("Communists of the Navy in the Struggle to fulfill the Decisions of the Twenty-Third Congress of the CPSU"), *Mortskoj Sbornik* (July 1968), 8-9.

26. Paul R. Schratz, "Red Star Over the Southern Sea," *United States Naval Institute Proceedings*, 96 (July 1970), 31.

27. T. B. Millar, "The Indian and Pacific Oceans: Some Strategic Considerations," *Adelphi Papers, No. 57* (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1969), p. 2.

28. N. P. Nikolaev, "Flag mira na Sredizemnom more" ("The Flag of Peace in the Mediterranean"), *Morskoj Sbornik* (February 1969), 31.

29. On 19 November 1969, Pravda pointed out that the West was obviously more limited in the 1969 Lebanon tension than it had been in 1958. Another article stated point-blank that, though there is always a "danger" of United States aggression, "the situation in Lebanon, and in the Middle East in general, is different and Washington might find it hard to risk an open armed intervention." D. Volsky, "At the Middle East Crossroads," *New Times*, 21 April 1970, p. 28.

30. "What is being mourned here is by no means the loss of a 'balance of power,' but the loss of utterly unrestricted freedom to engage with impunity in any dark deeds. . . ." N. Smirnov, "Sovetskie korabli no Sredizemnom more" ("Soviet Ships in the Mediterranean"), *Krasnaja Zvezda*, 12 November 1968.

31. The details of the 1970 Soviet Naval Order of Battle are in my "Rise of Soviet Naval Power in the Nuclear Age," pp. 108-17.

32. S. G. Gorshkov, *Morskaja Moshch' Gosvdarstva* ("Sea Power of the State") (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1976), pp. 413-14.

33. Comparative information between 1970 and 1977 is extracted from John Collins, *American and Soviet Military Trends Since the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Washington: Georgetown University Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1978), pp. 97, 265-81.

34. Excerpts from Admiral Holloway's statement appear in *Understanding Soviet Naval Developments* (3d ed.; Washington: Department of the Navy, January 1978), p. 67.

35. Drew Middleton, "Soviet Extends Power of Navy to All Oceans," *The New York Times*, 20 March 1979, p. 7. This article draws upon testimony of Rear Admiral Sumner Shapiro, USN, Director of US Naval Intelligence to the Sea Power Subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee. Some of the specifics of current Soviet naval construction, as presented by Admiral Shapiro, also appeared in "America's Challenge at Sea," *Aviation Week and Space Technology*, 19 March 1979, p. 9. For specific estimates of future Soviet naval construction, see Steve F. Kime, *Soviet Naval Strategy for the 1980's*, pp. 18-20.

36. Admiral Thomas B. Hayward, "Summary of Statement Concerning the FY 80 Military Posture and FY 80 Budget of the United States Navy on February 2, 1979," *Navy Policy Briefs* (February-March 1979), 4.