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Red Banner: The Soviet Military System in Peace and War

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broke out, Peary left for four years in Greenland. These were productive years, when Greenland was recognized to be an island, and much was learned about travel by dogsled across the ice. On his return to the Navy, he passed the promotion exams to commander, accepted the presidency of the American Geographical Society, and found a new friend in the White House—Theodore Roosevelt.

With the President behind him, the Navy quickly saw the possibilities in polar exploration.

In the 1905/06 season, the Secretary of the Navy sent Peary to seek the North Pole, saying "Our national pride is involved in the undertaking, and this department expects that you will accomplish your purpose and bring further distinction to a service of illustrious traditions." A sledging season with unusually wide leads in the ice pack prevented Peary from reaching the pole that season.

Again with the active support of President Roosevelt, he set out in 1908 for Greenland. After establishing base camps and wintering-over, he set out for the Pole with Matthew Henson and several Eskimos. By Peary's calculations, he reached the Pole on April 9, 1909 and returned to fame and controversy. Eventually, Congress appointed him rear admiral in the Civil Engineer Corps in recognition of his accomplishments.

What sort of a man was Peary? Peary's diaries and letters show him to be a tough, individualistic driver who was extraordinarily dedicated to a goal that dominated his life.

While he had doubts and concerns for the hardships that his life's work caused for his family, he never deviated. One reads of Peary for a study in grit: this was a man who lost all his toes to frostbite in 1894 and still walked to the North Pole, 15 years later when he was 54 years old.

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Donnelly, Christopher. *Red Banner: The Soviet Military System in Peace and War*. Janes Information Group, Ltd., 1988. 288pp. \$52.50

The primary strength of *Red Banner* lies in the insights it provides on the underlying forces, motivations, and dynamics which act to shape the Soviet military forces and their doctrines.

Christopher Donnelly is the Director of the Soviet Studies Center at Sandhurst. One of his key premises is that the Soviets view war differently than we in the West do. Hence, he opens his book with a section called "Molding the Soviet Military Mind." He writes that "we may all share the same human features, but we possess them in different measures, and we develop different values depending on our experience and our circumstances. If this can be said of individuals, then it can also be said of nations and equally, of armies." In this section he focuses on the environmental, historic, national, military, cultural, and political factors that create the "lenses" through which Soviet

officers view both the West and the issue of warfare. It is here that Donnelly builds the reader's understanding of the "raw" forces that shape the rest of the military. (For example, the lack of terrain features in much of the U.S.S.R. cause the Russian officer to seek other means to protect himself and men, hence the strong Soviet emphasis on deception or camouflage.)

The following section, "The Soviet Military Infrastructure," examines the place of the military in society, its structure, the development of its doctrine and its training. He places emphasis on the education of officers and the impact of the general staff.

Donnelly's final section brings all these factors together in "The Soviet Art of War." After he discusses the development of Soviet Military Art and its current state, Donnelly presents a view of the how the Soviets would try to fight a war today.

Some of the points advanced by Mr. Donnelly are:

- The remarkable consistency of Soviet military doctrine. Although lessons from modern technology have been integrated, so have many from the Civil War and the Great Patriotic War. In fact, the basic doctrinal structure retains much of Czarist, Leninist, and Marxist origins.

- The Soviet Military is essentially a cadre mobilization system, much like the Israelis. Consequently, the Soviets can, with relative ease, transfer divisions currently maintained at a high readiness state to a

lower state without making fundamental changes to their military structure.

- The Soviets see Nato's emphasis on the tactical development of lower level commanders as building very expensive chess pieces, while they focus on developing the best chess masters possible. Thus, even if Nato achieves tactical victories, the Soviets plan to win at the strategic level.

- With the General Staff concept, the Soviets have achieved their own form of "jointness," since an officer's promotion as a General Staff officer is based on his success in that role, and not necessarily on the views of his parent service.

- The Soviets would not use nuclear weapons even when an offensive was "bogged" down. The most likely use would be in response to Nato nuclear actions. But even a Nato "nuclear demonstration" might be ignored if the Soviets were close enough to victory.

Red Banner presents a comprehensive, overall look at the Soviet military structure today. Then, through the depiction of the underlying forces, *Red Banner* also gives the reader a framework to interpret what is happening during the current period of change. Donnelly does all this in a readable and understandable form.

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