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RUSSIAN NAVY - HISTORY AND TRADITIONS

A Staff Presentation Delivered
at the Naval War College
on 23 January 1953, by
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This is the history of a Navy which has lost more complete fleets than any other Navy in the world. It is the history of a Navy that has never been more than second rate; that has never been decisive in world history; and that has never developed a depth of tradition to compare with those of the Western Navies.

Why, then, do we bother to inquire into it? Because this is the Navy that may some day challenge the Western sea powers and thus hazard the security of the Western World.

One of the governing elements of the strategy of an armed force is the pattern of past actions from which its contemporary thoughts have grown. This, simply stated, is the influence of its own tradition on any service.

Military leaders in order to mould an efficient fighting force search for a tradition in which to build. That this tradition, when revived, is stated in terms which are not historically accurate does not impair its value. In this country in its early years we built up John Paul Jones as our naval hero, as the man who best typified the fighting spirit of the Navy. The Soviet leaders, today, are faced with the same problem. Their Navy is too young to have developed a tradition of its own and for this reason they have been forced, whether they like it or not, to search the history of the Tsarist Navy for this ingredient. Since this is the case, the history of the Imperial Navy must contain information which will be of value to Western Naval commanders.

Early in the year, Professor Hans Kohn gave us an interesting thumbnail sketch of Russian history; he omitted, however, the

naval phases of this history. I propose, today, to review this history — with the accent on its naval aspects, to determine whether or not there has been a pattern of naval thought and action running through it on which we can base our estimates of Soviet naval action in the next war.

I have broken this history into four periods.

Because Professor Kohn's "Kievan Period" and "First Period of Moscow Leadership" contain little of naval interest, I have combined them into one, which I call:

- (a) *Landlocked* — This covers that portion of Russian history before she had a Navy and runs up to about 1700.

The "Period of St. Petersburg Leadership," because it contains the bulk of Russian naval history, I have divided into:

- (b) *Opening the Window* — This spans the 18th century and features the reigns of Peter the Great and Catherine the Great. During it, we see the birth and rise of Russian Naval Power.
- (c) *The Treadmill* — This embraces the 19th century and continues into the present century until 1917. Here, the Russians worked hard but stood still as a Naval Power. At the end, we see the death of the Imperial Navy.

The "Second Period of Moscow Leadership" I have termed in my naval history as:

- (d) *The Stern Chase* — This features the Soviet attempt to reestablish their country's naval position.

The Landlocked Period logically starts with the early Slavs, the basic racial stock of the Russians. They established the first federation of Russian city states along the Lake Ladoga-Dnieper river line. These Slavs were excellent boatmen and, under the leadership of Norse princes, they developed a flourishing commerce to the East through the Sea of Azov and the Mediterranean through Constantinople.

Kiev was the capital of this budding commercial power and Novgorod and Smolensk were two of the more important cities. It was well on its way towards becoming a strong maritime power as its trade continued to expand. This growing prosperity continued until about the middle of the twelfth century, at which time their trade started to fall off and Kiev's people began to move to other areas.

The deathblow to this federation was, of course, the Mongol invasion and the sacking of Kiev in 1237. The Slavs at this time migrated in three directions: to the west, the north, and the northeast. It is this last group which interests us. They settled in the area between the Oka and the upper Volga, where they blended with the Finns to give us the Great Russians with the physical characteristics we know today.

They established the principality of Moscow, which soon became the dominant Russian city-state. All of these cities were paying enormous tribute to their conquerors. The Duke of Moscow by "playing ball" with the Tartar Khan, the Mongolian chieftan, had himself named as the leader of all the Russian Princes. This served to centralize the authority and strengthen the Federation.

This was the small seed from which grew the present-day colossus known as the U.S.S.R. The very location of this new federation, located in the center of this great land mass, erased any interest that the peoples might have had in things maritime. The society was basically agrarian; only the Princes maintained an interest in commercial traffic. In this they served as intermediaries

on the East-West trade route from the Volga basin to Novgorod. Manpower became the major interest, and how to acquire laborers to till the soil and how to keep them tied to the estates became the major problem. This led to the system of serfs and to a society in which there was no middle class. The serf problem certainly plagued all the later Tsars and was one of the greatest weaknesses of Tsarist Russia.

So the expansion began and is continuing today. By 1462 the principality had developed into the Duchy of Moscow, which you will note was still landlocked. It was not until 1488, four years before Columbus discovered America, that Ivan III (The Great) expanded his country's territory to the sea by the annexation of Novgorod.

Ivan IV (The Terrible), when he became Tsar in 1533, inherited a Russian Empire which was as good as made. We now see a swing back toward the West and the rebirth of Russian interest in maritime enterprise, although it is to be another 163 years before we see the first Russian fleet.

Ivan had himself crowned "Tsar of all the Russians" in 1547 and from this date forward bent every effort toward developing his country which, he realized, was far behind the other great powers. In 1555, he made use of his one outlet to the sea in the north to negotiate a commercial treaty with Elizabeth of England. This contact he knew would be invaluable to him for obtaining technical experts as well as materials of war for his conflicts with his enemies: Sweden, Poland and Turkey.

Ivan The Terrible was the first Tsar to try for an outlet on the Baltic. In this he failed. He did, however, open the road for eastern expansion by defeating the Tartars on his eastern border and in the southeast he opened a trade route to Persia via the Volga and the Caspian Sea.

Ivan died in 1584 and during the hundred years that followed there was no naval activity in Russia. It will be remembered that

this was the period which saw such wars as the War of the Spanish Armada, the Thirty Years' War, and the Anglo-Dutch Naval Wars during which the Western Navies developed rapidly.

The Landlocked Period shows us that these early Russians fully appreciated the value of water transport and that they were good boatmen. It also shows, I think, that they were commercially minded and that their imperialistic tendencies stemmed from purely commercial motives.

In 1682, almost exactly a century after Ivan the Terrible, Peter The Great became Tsar. Geographically, there had been little change in his country — the White Sea was still his only outlet to the oceans of the world. Politically, Poland had declined in power and was no longer a factor. Sweden in the north (controlling practically the entire littoral of the Baltic) and Turkey in the south (controlling the entire littoral of the Black Sea), were his major enemies.

Peter had spent a large portion of his youth in the German quarter of Moscow and was greatly impressed by the advanced culture of the Western World. He fully realized the backwardness of his country and that it was essential that she break out from her landlocked position. He wanted a "Window in Europe."

His first attempt was in the south. On the Don River he built a fleet tailored for the task. There was one 36-gun frigate, but the main strength of this fleet was in the shallow draft galleys with which he blockaded Azov. The campaign was successful and Russia was established on the Sea of Azov. Since any further movement in this direction would require an entirely different type of Navy, Peter ordered a sailing fleet to be built in his newly acquired bases. This was the first Russian fleet but it was only to last fourteen years. Before its end, in 1710, Peter had added no less than 58 sailing ships and innumerable small craft to this fleet. It was wiped off the board without firing a shot in its defense when the

Tsar was forced to sue for peace in order to extricate himself and his army after a crushing defeat at the hands of the Turks. In addition to the fleet, Peter also lost his bases — so once again Russia had no outlet on the Black Sea.

Meanwhile, the war with Sweden in the north had started. This was an economic war, pure and simple, and was to last for twenty-one years. Peter first obtained bases on the Baltic and then built a Russian fleet in those waters. This fleet has been in continuous existence to the present day. It was shortly after the start of this war that the Tsar built St. Petersburg and designated it his capital.

It is interesting to note that there were two distinct components of the Russian naval forces at this time — the sailing fleet and the galley fleet.

The sailing fleet was designed by and built under the supervision of Englishmen. The ships themselves were the equal of any in the world in so far as sailing and sea-keeping qualities were concerned. However, throughout this long war the fleet never searched out the enemy fleet to force a decision but, instead, was used in defense of its bases, as a covering force for the galley fleet, and for convoy purposes. This original concept of fleet employment seems to have continued throughout Russian naval history. When forced into battle, a stalemate was entirely satisfactory to the Russian admiralty provided they did not lose too many ships.

The galley fleet was built to transport and support the army. The ships, designed by Italians, carried about 200 troops each and were organized in accordance with the army divisions. This fleet seemed ideally suited to the Russian temperament and capabilities as well as to the waters in which it was to operate. Thus, years after they had disappeared from the other seas, we see the galley playing a very important role in the Baltic until the beginning of the 19th century.

It was with this force that the Russians had their greatest success. It was a most aggressive force and really carried the war to the Swedes. Rowing and fighting its way, this water-borne army moved along the south coast of Finland and, finally, near the end of the war, crossed over to the Swedish homeland where they ravaged the coast both north and south of the capital, Stockholm.

During this, the first Russian war involving a naval force, we see instituted the command relationship which has been continued to the present day. All the armed forces in the theater were under a single commander — in some cases the Tsar; in some, a member of the royal household, and in others an Army general who was given the title of "General-Admiral." This command structure has always worked to the detriment of the Navy, which has always been tied to a continental strategy.

Following the successful conclusion of the Swedish war, Peter, just before he died, conducted a short war in the south against Persia by which he obtained territory on the south shore of the Caspian Sea. It was during this expedition that the Caspian flotilla was formed, which has since been maintained in those waters.

Throughout his reign, as he developed his Navy, personnel was Peter's greatest problem. Because he had no merchant marine or large fishing industry which would have served as a training ground for his seamen, Peter was forced to look for foreigners to man his fleet.

Officers and leading petty officers for the sailing fleet generally came from Western Europe while the commanding officers of his galleys were in most cases Italians.

Seamen for the sailing vessels were obtained by simply breaking up the Tsar's regiments and sending them aboard to man the fast growing fleet. While these men were personally very brave, they were just not seamen. In an action in which ships fought at

anchor they gave a very good account of themselves but at sea they did poorly. In the main they had been conscripted from the farm — not only were they ignorant of the ways of a ship but they heartily disliked the shipboard life. It was because of this that the Russian fleet was so badly handled at sea. Also, this was probably the reason for Peter's order that the Swedes would not be engaged without at least a superiority of 3 to 2.

When he died in 1725, Peter left his country the dominant seapower in the Baltic — a position she was to hold until the 20th century. During the long war with Sweden he had added a grand total of seventy-three ships to his fleet; he had developed two excellent bases — Kronstadt and Reval, on the Baltic; and he had greatly expanded his building yards at Archangel. His window on Europe extended from a point just east of Helsingfors, around the end of the gulf of Finland, and along the south shore to Riga. His one failure was to establish Russia on the Black Sea.

It was not long after his death that Russia made her next attempt for an outlet on this sea when, in 1735, Tsarina Anne ordered a fleet built for the purpose. Then, as an indication of the importance she attached to such an outlet, she returned to Persia all of Peter's conquests in order to obtain that country as an ally. Despite all these preparations this attempt, like the first, was a failure on a grand scale. Anne's fleet, like Peter's, was eliminated by diplomatic action without firing a shot. Russia had lost her second Black Sea fleet.

Meanwhile the Baltic fleet had been idle and, as so often happens, it rapidly fell off in efficiency. There was one disadvantage to the Russian sailing ships which I failed to mention previously. They were built of pine, the most plentiful building material, and this gave them the very short life of about eight years. Unless naval interest was maintained and ships continually replaced, fleets rapidly became unseaworthy.

Catherine The Great took over the reins of government in 1762. Her first act was to take her country out of the Seven Years'

War by declaring a state of neutrality. She described the Baltic fleet at that time as: "Scarcely fit to catch herring." She immediately set about to correct this situation.

Six years after Catherine came to power Turkey declared war on Russia. The Tsarina welcomed this war in the south for by it she saw an opportunity to reestablish her country on the Black Sea. In addition to the land campaign, she sent a portion of her Baltic fleet into the Aegean to carry the war to Turkey by sea. This was the first time a Russian fleet had operated in waters not contiguous to the homeland.

Almost at the outset of this naval campaign the Turkish fleet was annihilated in the Battle of Tschesme. With the enemy fleet out of the way, the Russians were in complete command of the Aegean and Eastern Mediterranean. Their ships were active from Egypt to the shores of Thrace, destroying Turkish trading vessels and bombarding the shore establishments. While this had some economic effect, its effects on the military picture were practically nil. It was an excellent example of the ineffectiveness of sea power when it does not have the necessary land forces with which to exploit control of the sea once it has been obtained. Had the Russian admiral been given sufficient troops, he could have carried the war ashore and forced a much earlier decision.

While this naval action was in progress in the Aegean, the Russian land forces had reestablished an outlet on the Black Sea, and in 1771 the third Russian Black Sea Fleet was commissioned. This force showed a good fighting spirit and was most useful in support of the army.

The treaty of peace, ending this war, ceded Azov and Taganrog to Russia, gave Russia the right to maintain a Black Sea Fleet, and reestablished the independence of the Crimea as a protectorate of Russia.

Catherine did not wait long before she annexed the Crimea outright — in 1783. This, together with other signs of aggressive-

ness, forced the Turks to again declare war. The Swedes, who had been waiting for an opportunity to recover some of their lost territory, saw their chance. After the Russians were well committed in the south, they, too, declared war.

This forced on Russia a naval war in two widely separated areas, a war in which her fleets could not support each other. This has been a characteristic of Russian naval wars throughout her history. The number of areas sometimes increased as high as four, but a war in a single area was indeed a rarity. Even in her wars with Turkey her Black Sea and Mediterranean fleets were kept separated by the Turkish Straits.

The war in the Baltic was very similar to the preceding one. The sailing fleet acted as a defensive force while the galley fleet and the army did the fighting.

In the Black Sea, the fleets did little but support the army. It was during this war in the Black Sea that John Paul Jones served in the Russian Navy as a Rear Admiral. He added nothing to his reputation and after a year of bickering over seniority with the galley admiral he resigned from the Tsarina's service.

During these wars, twice in the north and once in the south, the Russian admirals were caught with their forces divided and the main enemy fleet interposed between the two units. In all cases it could have been disastrous, but the enemy did not take advantage of the situation.

The war with the Swedes ended with the boundaries exactly where they had been before the war. In the south, however, Catherine added all the territory between the Bug and the Dniester to her country.

If Peter The Great had been the father of the Russian Navy then certainly Catherine must have been its greatest benefactor. When she died in 1796, she left Russia still the dominant naval

power in the Baltic — she had reestablished the Black Sea Fleet and extended her country's coastline on that sea from Azov to the mouth of the Dniester. Based solely on numerical strength, Russia was the world's second naval power — second only to England.

To my mind, the death of Catherine marks the high-water mark in Russian naval history. From this date to the end of the Imperial Navy it was on a treadmill working hard, but getting nowhere.

During the Napoleonic Wars the Russians were allied first with one side and then the other, shifting their allegiance a total of four times. There were several interesting happenings during this period: first, after the Battle of the Nile eliminated the French fleet, the Russian Black Sea Fleet sortied from the Dardanelles and, by amphibious attacks, cleared the French from the islands of the Ionian and Adriatic Seas. This was the only time in their history that this fleet left its home waters. Second, the Russians lost another fleet when the Tsar agreed to cooperate with Napoleon before he arranged for the safety of his fleet in the Mediterranean. It was blockaded by the English before it could return to the Baltic and was a complete loss to Russia. Third, we see the last major-scale action by a galley fleet when, in 1809, a three-pronged invasion of Sweden was launched. (Incidentally, it was this war which established the present-day eastern boundaries of Sweden). Fourth, when Napoleon started his famous but disastrous invasion of Russia, we see the Baltic fleet being sent to England for safekeeping.

Between the Napoleonic Wars and the next great test of Russian naval strength, the Crimean War, there was little of importance. A short war with Turkey, the commencement of the Sevastopol fortifications, and the establishment of the Aral Sea flotilla were the naval high lights during this period.

The Crimean War broke out in 1853 — in which we see the forces of Turkey, England, and France pitted against those of

Russia. The Russian Navy was sadly lacking in fighting efficiency. They had been left way behind by the industrial revolution.

Although the center of the stage during this war was the Crimea with its famous siege of Sevastopol, to Russia it was a world-wide affair. It was not, however, a glorious page in her naval history.

In the Pacific, after repelling the first attack on her base at Petropavlovsk, she abandoned that port and evacuated all the personnel to her bases on the Amur River.

In the White Sea, she did nothing to deter the operations of the small allied force operating in that area.

In the Baltic, she withdrew her fleet under the guns of her fortresses and kept it there throughout the war.

In the Black Sea, we see the end of the third Black Sea Fleet. At the outset this fleet fought the famous Battle of Sinope, often referred to in England as the "massacre of Sinope." In this action, which took only a matter of minutes, the Russian shell guns made short work of the Turkish squadron of wooden ships armed only with guns firing solid shot.

Soon after this battle the allied English-French Fleet entered the Black Sea, whereupon the Russian Fleet retreated to the protection of Sevastopol where they remained. Some were sunk as block ships and the remainder were sunk to prevent capture just prior to the fall of that fortress.

The Peace of Paris, ending this war, once again denied Russia the right to maintain a Black Sea Fleet.

In so far as Russian naval history is concerned that is about all that can be said, but this war is such an important milepost in the development of all navies that I do not think a brief summary of important events would be out of place.

It was a war fought during the transition period from sail to steam and by the end of this war all the allied ships were equipped with at least auxiliary steam power. It had shown the inability of the wooden ship to withstand the shell gun and this started the race between armor and armament. It was during this war that ironclads first made their appearance when, after the fall of Sevastopol, the French ironclads successfully engaged the fortress at Kinburn. Also, and this is significant, the mine made its appearance in the hands of the Russians. They laid a field off Kronstadt to hamper British operations against that fortress. This field damaged two ships and greatly impressed the Russians, who subsequently have been strong advocates of mine warfare.

Except for a brief war with Turkey in 1877-1879, the remainder of this century may be called a "building period" in Russian naval history. The country was fortunate in having in the Grand Duke Constantine a very able administrator who, as Minister of Marine, energetically undertook the task of once again rebuilding the Russian Navy. The Tsar had proclaimed that Russia should be the third naval power in the world — England and France being the first and second — and, further, that her Navy should be larger than all the minor navies combined.

Between the Crimean War and the next war with Turkey there were several important events. In 1860, culminating the eastern expansion started during the reign of Ivan the Terrible in 1582, Russia obtained by treaty the territory east of the Ussuri River and immediately commenced the fortifications of Vladivostok and the strengthening of her Far East fleet.

There occurred in 1863 a most unusual and interesting event, which is of particular interest to us for it concerned the United States. The Polish revolt had created a tense situation in Europe and it looked for a while as if Russia would be at war with France and England.

General-Adjutant Krabbe, who was running the Navy in the absence of Constantine in Poland, convinced the Tsar that the

best employment of his weak Navy was to send it abroad. He urged that such a weak force could accomplish nothing if bottled up in their home ports, whereas if they were sent to the United States they would be a distinct threat to the English and French trade routes.

The Russian Baltic Squadron, commanded by Rear Admiral Lisovski, was sent to New York; and the Pacific Squadron, commanded by Admiral Popov, was sent to San Francisco.

These admirals had orders that if war was declared they were to attack enemy commerce and colonies in the Western Hemisphere. Whether it is true or not, the Russians firmly believed that this action deterred the British from declaring war. One writer had reported that the Tsar, Alexander, considered this to be one of the greatest practical achievements of the Russian Navy. To my mind, it did illustrate for the first time some sound strategic thinking on the part of top Russian naval leaders. It was the only time in Russia's history that she has considered challenging the Western Sea Powers on the world's maritime trade routes.

In 1870, while the rest of Europe was engrossed with the Franco-Prussian War, Russia demanded and obtained the right to reestablish her Black Sea Fleet. This would be her fourth in those waters.

The building program was now in full swing as the Russian Navy converted from sail to steam. Generally they built ships of conventional design, but in 1873 two distinctly Russian types were launched: a protected cruiser which featured a light armor belt at the water line but otherwise completely unprotected; and the Popovs, or circular ships, which were absolutely round with a round turret at the center. These latter ships, of which three were built, were very stable but unhandy. On one occasion, while trying to ascend the Dnieper, the Popov was caught in an eddy and started to spin. All hands were described as suffering from vertigo, and it was not until it spun out into Kherson Bay that it could be brought under control.

War broke out with Turkey in 1877. This was primarily a land war and is interesting to us only because of the work of the Russian torpedo boats. The first successful Russian torpedo attack was the sinking of a Turkish ironclad on the Danube River by boats equipped with spar torpedoes.

When this war broke out, Russia had thirty-one old and useless ships on the Black Sea and to augment these she procured, abroad, fifteen fast merchantmen. Some of these they converted into torpedo boat carriers. The most famous of these was the GRAND DUKE CONSTANTINE, commanded by Lieutenant Makarov. Only a few of these attacks made by these boats were successful, but they were executed with great daring and were well conceived. There were three types of torpedoes employed: the White-head automobile torpedo was just making its appearance and, though used on several occasions, achieved no success; the towed torpedo, which was almost useless; and the spar torpedo, with which the Russians had their greatest success. These last required that the attacking boat make physical contact with the target. The Russian's ability to press this attack home seems to substantiate an opinion I have of the Russians that they are not lacking in intestinal fortitude and that they are dangerous foes when operating in small boats in shoal and restricted waters.

With the end of the war the building program was intensified. Now the Russians were concentrating on the more modern types and attempting to build classes of ships. In the Black Sea, however, construction was delayed for a few years until the base fortifications were completed.

The war which broke out with Japan in 1904 certainly should have been no surprise to the Russians for to the rest of the world it seemed inevitable. It was obvious that Russian aggressiveness in the Far East was threatening the security of Japan. Korea was the key — the Japanese could not tolerate that country controlled by any foreign power.

Russia, however, could not conceive of this upstart nation, just over fifty years old, challenging the mighty colossus of Europe. They ignored all of the warnings. The first of these was the attempted assassination, by a Japanese national, of the Grand Duke in 1891 — on the occasion of the ground-breaking ceremony for the Trans-Siberian railroad at Vladivostock. During the following thirteen years there were many indications that the Japanese meant business.

The outbreak of war found Russia unprepared. The fortifications of Port Arthur were not complete; the fleet lacked many of the lighter types of ships; the Pacific Squadron was not concentrated; the ships were in a poor state of material readiness; the crews lacked experience, had a low morale, and were poorly trained.

The Japanese, on the other hand, were ready in all respects. Their fleet was concentrated at Sasebo; their ships were in excellent repair; the crews were battle-trained and confident after the recent war with China; the transports were loaded with landing force equipment; and the expeditionary force was encamped and ready to embark on a moment's notice.

This was the situation when, on February 6, diplomatic relations were broken off. Only two days later the Japanese struck. Their landing force, supported by a cruiser division, landed on the west coast of Korea — on Chemulpo, now Inchon. The preceding night their torpedo boats had attacked the main Russian fleet laying outside of Port Arthur and the main fleet, under Admiral Togo, had taken up a position to cover the landing.

Admiral Togo, unlike the Swedish and Turkish commanders in the earlier wars, fully appreciated his advantageous position. He realized that both tactically and strategically he was interposed between the several Russian detachments.

In the strategic picture, he was located between the Pacific Squadron and its source of reinforcements in Europe. In the local

theater, he had the main enemy fleet at Port Arthur, three new armored cruisers and some smaller craft at Vladivostock, and two ships at Chemulpo. (These, incidentally, were sunk the first day by the cruisers supporting the landing). He was determined to defeat these separated units in detail.

This war falls, naturally, into two phases. The first is concerned with the annihilation of the first Russian Pacific Squadron by combined Army-Navy action. The second, a purely naval affair, concerns the destruction of the Second Pacific Squadron, commanded by Admiral Rozhdesvenski.

The Japanese realized that the success of their operations hinged on their control of the sea; if this was not maintained the army could not be supplied.

Togo stationed a cruiser division in the Straits of Tsushima to guard the line of supply to Korea against raids by the Vladivostok cruisers and then, with the rest of his force, concentrated on bottling up or destroying the main fleet at Port Arthur. The waters off this port held the center of the stage for the first eleven months of the war.

After the first torpedo attacks the Russian fleet had entered the harbor for protection. The Japanese made three major attempts with block ships to close the harbor, but were unsuccessful.

The Russians then resorted to defensive mine fields and light force action against the Japanese armies working down the peninsula to lay siege to the port.

The Japanese also used mines off the entrance and then tried to lure the enemy fleet over them by bombarding the forts and the fleet in the harbor with their heavy ships.

Both sides had some success with these tactics but the Japanese got the better of it and it was not long before the fortress was closely besieged.

On paper, the Russians had sufficient force to defeat the Japanese aims. The poor state of training and, more important, the inept leadership prevented it. There was a short period in March when it looked as if they would wrest the initiative from the enemy — when Admiral Makarov, the energetic lieutenant of torpedo boats in the last war with Turkey, arrived to assume command of the naval forces. It was at once apparent that he had lost none of his energy as he started preparing his fleet for offensive action. Repairs were rushed. He took his ships to sea at every opportunity to train them, with the result that Russian naval morale started to rise. Unfortunately, after one of these training cruises the flagship, the battleship PETROPAVLOVSK, struck a mine and sank — taking this fine officer to his death.

His successor was not of his ilk. The fleet now remained inactive in port. Guns were landed from some of the ships to add to the shore defenses. It was not until the Tsar, himself, ordered the new commander to break out that any move was made.

On August 10, the Russians sortied from the harbor for a run to Vladivostok. They were met by the entire Japanese fleet. In the action that followed, the Russians were severely mauled and the admiral killed. The second in command then took the fleet back into Port Arthur — having lost one battleship, two protected cruisers, one light cruiser, and six destroyers.

The Second Russian Pacific Squadron left its base at Libau, in the Baltic, for the long passage to the Far East on October 15. The Japs, fully informed, increased the tempo of their operations against Port Arthur in an attempt to eliminate the Russian fleet before the arrival of the reinforcements. In this they were successful as the fortress fell on January 1, and with its surrender the entire enemy fleet was destroyed.

While the main Russian fleet had been inactive at Port Arthur, the Vladivostok cruisers had been active against the Jap-

anese commerce. In all, they made five sorties from their base and accounted for a sizable number of merchant vessels.

With the end of the First Pacific Squadron, the stage was set to receive Admiral Rozhdesvenski with the Second Pacific Squadron when he arrived.

After steaming 15,000 miles this heterogeneous squadron arrived in the Straits of Tsushima on May 27, where they were intercepted by Admiral Togo's fleet fresh from its bases. The battle of Tsushima, lasting two days and a night, completely eliminated the Russian force.

It was following this action that President Roosevelt tendered his good offices and the war was brought to an end by the Treaty of Portsmouth.

The greatest error of the Russians in this war was their failure to grasp the one significant fact that the Japanese fleet was essential to their land operations and, further, that this fleet could not be replaced if once destroyed. If, instead of tying their fleet to the fortress, they had engaged the Japanese in a decisive battle the results might very well have been different. It made no difference how many ships the Russians lost if they could destroy the Japanese heavy units. If this had been done by the Pacific Squadron, then the Second Pacific Squadron, when it arrived, could have easily established control of the sea and the enemy forces on the mainland would have been left unsupported.

In comparison, the Japanese made few mistakes. Admiral Togo's tactics were necessarily cautious for he realized that his foreign-built heavy ships, if lost, could not be replaced by the Japanese industrial complex. Considering this limitation, little fault can be found with either the strategy or the tactics of this Japanese admiral.

Following this war, the Russians were once again faced with the familiar problem of rebuilding their Navy. And, once again, they were fortunate in having men capable of the task. After several years, during which the unbelievably inefficient administration fumbled with the problem, Admiral Grigorovitch was appointed Minister of Marine.

He started to clean house at once and reorganized the entire naval establishment. With this completed, he then laid out a long-range building program which, by 1930, would give Russia a strong fleet in the Baltic — the backbone of which would be 24 battleships and 12 battle cruisers, supported by light cruisers and destroyers. The Black Sea Fleet was to be as large as the combined fleets of the other Black Sea powers, but no types were specified.

This program far exceeded the capacity of Russian industry and World War I started before it was even well underway. With the outbreak of this war, the Russians immediately abandoned Libau as being too close to the German border. They withdrew their naval forces into the Gulf of Finland and laid an extensive mine field across the entrance from Hango to Nargen. The naval forces were considered to be nothing more than additional defenses for the capital.

While maintaining the strategic defensive, the Russian light forces were used for occasional offensive forays. The destroyers and cruisers were used to lay offensive mine fields off the German coast and the Island of Oland. These mines took a large toll of German ships, both combatant and merchant types.

Russian and British submarines operating from Russian bases were very effective in the Baltic against German transports and their supply route to Sweden.

In the Black Sea, the Russian fleet had a greater freedom of action but was used primarily to support the army. In addition to these operations they bombarded the Turkish ports in Anatolia

and during the Allied campaign in the Dardanelles they cooperated by bombarding the forts on the Bosphorus and by making naval demonstrations off the Turkish Black Sea Coast. These had some effect, as they drew off three divisions from the main defense line to guard against possible Russian landings. It was at this time that we see for the first time a submarine used to lay mines — when the Bosphorus entrance was mined in this manner.

With the failure of this campaign Russia's fate was sealed, for without this vital line of supply her military machine rapidly lost its effectiveness. The White Sea route could not handle the volume required.

March of 1917 marks the end of the Tsarist Navy. The fleet mutinies, in conjunction with the revolution within the country, effectively removed the Russian Navy as a fighting force.

During the period of the civil wars (1917-1921), the Red Fleet was just a collection of ships and men.

When the Communist regime was finally established, in 1921, it found itself faced with a long stern chase if it was to catch up with the navies of its probable enemies.

The Navy at this time was under the administration of the Minister of Defense, Mr. Trotsky. It had suffered heavily during the war and now consisted of only four old battleships, a few old cruisers, some destroyers and submarines. Many of these were damaged and unfit for service.

The policy now seemed to be to build a Navy of destroyers and submarines. Also, the naval air arm was started with a training school at Sevastopol.

The first Five Year Plan made no provision for the Navy. It merely tolerated it as an auxiliary of the Army, which received by far the greatest share of the funds appropriated for the armed forces.

By 1929, it was reported by a fairly reliable source that there were only 8 destroyers and 8 submarines in the Red Navy fit to put to sea.

The second Five Year Plan, starting in 1933, seemed to indicate an increased interest in the Navy. Contracts were let in Italy and France for cruisers and destroyers, and a building program was started in the yards at home.

During the thirties there was quite a controversy within naval circles as to the proper naval doctrine for the Red Navy. Lenin's teachings were interpreted as meaning that the Navy was an indivisible part of the Red Army. Naval leaders of the day adopted the motto: "Down with the Doctrine of Command of the Seas." In the tactical field these same men tried to adopt the principles of Marxism. They arrived at a theory in which there would never be one grand naval battle but, instead, a continuing action. They hoped to be able to develop tactics which would result in attacks from all points of the compass, using all arms of the military service.

By 1937, the new naval building program was well underway. Although a few heavy ships were laid down, the great majority of ships were in the lighter categories. The concentration was on destroyers, mincraft, and submarines. In addition, there was great effort made to expand the naval air arm.

As the importance of the Navy increased, it soon became evident that it could not be administered efficiently under the (then) existing organization. Late in this year the Navy was set up as a separate ministry, divorced from the Army and the Air Force.

During the next two years there was a large purge of naval officers, by the end of which time there were less than 200 officers remaining who had entered the service before 1917.

Just as in World War I, World War II caught the Russians at the outset of an ambitious building program. The Navy, in 1939,

consisted primarily of submarines and small craft. What heavy ships they had in commission, except for four 8000-ton KIROVS, were of World War I vintage. Their new ships were MTBs, AMs, DDs, and SSs.

There is a striking similarity between the employment of the Red Navy in World War II with that of the Imperial Navy in World War I.

The Baltic fleet once again was moved back into the Gulf of Finland to act as the support for the right flank of the Red Army. This time, however, their position was not as favorable, since Germany had bases in Finland which they did not have in World War I. The Germans' primary objective was to contain the Russian fleet, and to this end they laid an extensive mine field across the Gulf of Finland and off the principal Russian bases in this area.

A further indication of the preoccupation of Germany with the Soviet naval forces was the selection of initial targets for the Luftwaffe. It will be noted that on the first day of hostilities Kronstadt, Murmansk, Odessa, and Sevastopol were the targets hit.

As the Red armies were pushed further and further to the east, giving up one base after another, the fleet was finally forced into the extreme eastern end of the Gulf of Finland. Here, the large ships were moved into Leningrad to gain added AA protection and, at the same time, to add their fire power to the defense of that city.

The main Soviet offensive effort in these waters was by submarines, which continually tried to break out into the Baltic; some did and were quite effective, but at least 40 were lost to mines.

In the Black Sea, with a much greater freedom of movement because there were no extensive mine fields and there were very meagre enemy forces opposing them, the Red surface forces were much more active, yet they were not effectively employed.

At the outset, it looked as if the Red admiral was going to use his fleet effectively. He sent his two newest flotilla leaders

to bombard the German main base at Constanta and to disrupt the enemy naval efforts at their source. He lost one of the ships to mines in this attempt and never again sent ships to operate in that area. This was a mistake, for by offensive action he could have contained the German Navy in the mouth of the Danube; but, instead, he let them get out — and then he had to search them out over a wide area.

His light forces worked in cooperation with the Army in the defense of one port after another as it retired to the east and, at the same time, tried to interrupt the German water transport. In this later action they had some success but were unable to slow the German advance.

By the time the German advance was stopped the Russian Black Sea Fleet was in a sorry state. With the exception of two old light cruisers all of their heavy units were laid up in Poti and Batum. Only light, small craft were left to them. These they used in amphibious operations and against the German evacuation forces as the tide of battle turned toward the west.

The naval air arm, which could have been so valuable during this phase of the war, had been all but eliminated during the retreat to the east. In fact, by the time the Germans had reached Sevastopol the Russians were using old pusher-type flying boats for ground strafing in defense of that fortress.

In the Arctic, the Russians had a sizeable force of light craft that had been transferred to those waters via the Baltic-White Sea canal system. These forces, together with some naval infantry, were successful in stopping a German land attack on Murmansk. Thereafter, the submarines, motor torpedo boats, and submarine chasers operated against the German lines of supply. Although I think that the Russian claim of 1.5 million tons of German shipping is high, the Germans have admitted that this action had serious effects on the efficiency of their forces in that area.

Unfortunately, these forces did not work far enough afield to prevent the air and submarine attacks against the Murmansk convoys. This job was left, primarily, to the British Navy.

German action, primarily the Luftwaffe, in both the Baltic and the Black Seas had almost completely eliminated the Soviet naval power. The surrender of the Italian fleet had reduced the Allied naval force requirements. Pending the final disposition of this fleet, and to bolster the strength of the Red Fleet, the British loaned the U.S.S.R. the ROYAL SOVEREIGN, 9 ex-U. S. destroyers, and 4 submarines; and the United States loaned the MILWAUKEE, 24 mincraft, and 24 sub-chasers.

After the war these ships were returned and the Soviets received ships from the navies of the defeated powers. If one looks at "Janes," today, he will see that in almost all categories there is in the Red Navy a hodge-podge of old Russian, Italian, German, and Japanese ships superimposed upon more modern Russian ships of diverse designs. This situation must pose a difficult spare part and maintenance problem.

The position of this force within the military establishment, if we can believe the utterances of the Soviet leaders, does not seem to have changed. The Navy is still subordinate to the Army.

Following World War II, the U.S.S.R. was the first to unify her armed forces when, on February 25, 1946, the Army, Navy, and Air Force were once again placed under a single commissar.

This did not last long for, as once again the naval building program began to develop and the importance of the naval establishment increased, the Navy was divorced from the Army and the Air Force and made an independent Ministry. This took place in 1950 and is the organization under which the Navy operates today. It may be an indication of a changed status.

Looking back over this summary of Russian Naval History, there is one point which immediately becomes apparent: since the

days of Peter The Great the national leaders have been bound, bent, and determined to have a Navy. In addition, I think that there are other conclusions, based solely on this history, which are important. You should bear in mind that if you were to analyze the Soviet Navy, based solely on current intelligence, you might arrive at conclusions other than those which I will now state:

First. The geographical separation of her many coastlines certainly has had an effect on her naval policies. To my mind, the relatively recent attention given the North Sea route and the concentration of effort on her extensive canal systems are significant and these two projects will rapidly increase in importance for it is by these that Russia hopes to overcome the handicap of widely separated coastlines.

Second. There^s is a possibility that the dispersion of naval strength in the over-all national strategy, forced on them by geography, has influenced the thinking of the naval commanders in the field. These commanders, who for so long have seen the separate fleets, have unconsciously assumed this to be the proper disposition in the field of tactics as well.

Third. Since the origin of the Russian state, it has always had an aggressive foreign policy — a policy of expansion. At first, it was to the East and West; and as the limits were approached in these two directions, it has shifted toward the south where it remains today. Since they firmly established themselves on the Black Sea, it has been their ambition to make this a Russian lake. The proposals of Catherine to Joseph of Austria, in 1780; and Molotov to Hitler, in 1940, were almost identical (i.e., that control of the Straits be a joint Turkish-Russian affair and that Bulgaria be expanded to the Aegean to serve as a buffer between Europe and that critical area).

Fourth. In contrast to this aggressive foreign policy, the Russian Navy has always been defensively minded and for this reason has generally failed to support the national aims. The fort-

ress fleet concept and the extensive use of defensive mine fields are evidence of this.

Fifth. The Russian Navy has always been considered a part of the Red Army. It has been designed to operate in waters contiguous to the homeland as a support force. It has not been considered as a force with which to challenge the West's control of the high seas.

Sixth. Because of her geography, the Russian people have never been forced to use the sea and, consequently, are most unfamiliar with it. This lack of a seafaring population has greatly hampered the authorities in developing either a Navy or a Merchant Marine. The government, in its attempt to interest the people in the sea, has never been able to overcome their orientation toward the soil. The Russian, for these reasons, has always been a poor seaman and has always heartily disliked operating at any distance from his shores.

Seventh. In contrast to the last characteristic, the Russians have always been good boatmen. In the use of small boats on the rivers and in their coastal waters they have proved themselves to be most capable and a dangerous foe, both in ship-to-ship combat and in amphibious operations.

In short, gentlemen, I firmly believe that the consistency shown throughout this history is one of the best examples of Professor Kemble's thesis—the study of this history can indeed be invaluable to our naval commanders.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Captain Robert A. Theobald, Jr., USN

Captain Theobald was born in Portsmouth, N.H., on 17 September 1910. He was graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy with the Class of 1931.

His first four years of commissioned service were spent in the gunnery departments of the old battleships USS MARYLAND and USS NEW MEXICO. In June of 1935 he commissioned the new destroyer USS DALE (DD353) as torpedo officer. Since that time all of his sea duty has been in connection with destroyers.

After sixteen months as an instructor at the U.S. Naval Academy, he recommissioned the USS RODGERS (DD254) as executive officer, and when this ship was sold to the British, he proceeded to San Diego where he recommissioned another of these famous four stackers, the USS CHEW (DD106), also as an executive officer. He next transferred to the destroyer leader USS PORTER (DD 356) as gunnery officer and then became executive officer of the USS SMITH (DD378). He was in the SMITH when World War II began and after one year became her commanding officer. He retained this command until March 1944, when he was ordered to the United States to commission the USS JOHN W. WEEKS (DD701) in which he returned to the Pacific war zone. In June of 1945 he became Chief Staff Officer to Commander Task Flotilla Three.

Returning to the United States in 1946, he was assigned to duty at the General Line School, Newport, R.I. as Head of the Seamanship and Navigation Department.

He returned to sea in 1949 as Readiness and Training Officer on the Staff of Commander Destroyers Atlantic. After one year he was ordered to command Destroyer Division 42.

In 1951 he was ordered to duty under instruction at the U.S. Naval War College in the course in Advanced Study in Strategy and Sea Power. After two years as a student, Captain Theobald became staff adviser for the Course.