

Naval War College Review

Volume 47
Number 2 *Spring*

Article 27

1994

The Role of Intelligence in Soviet Military Strategy in World War II

Jeffrey Canfield

David M. Glantz

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review>

Recommended Citation

Canfield, Jeffrey and Glantz, David M. (1994) "The Role of Intelligence in Soviet Military Strategy in World War II," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 47 : No. 2 , Article 27.

Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol47/iss2/27>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Naval War College Review by an authorized editor of U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. For more information, please contact repository.inquiries@usnwc.edu.

144 Naval War College Review

seems to have filled in most of the gaps in our knowledge of Soviet warships of this period. He also provides much-needed information on the performance of these ships.

Also well written and worthy of our attention are the chapters on Russian shipyards and naval ordnance. Breyer has thoughtfully provided both a map of the shipyards in the St. Petersburg (Leningrad) area and layout diagrams of two of them. The ordnance chapters cover virtually every weapon, from the 305mm (12-inch) battleship gun to minesweeping gear. He also gives details on Soviet fire control equipment of the period. One interesting consequence of the organization of this work is that some weapons, e.g., the 181mm (7.1-inch) guns and the turrets of the *Kirov*-class cruisers, are discussed though these ships are not covered in this volume. He has also included a brief appendix describing the salvage of the battleship *Imperatritsa Mariya*. All the notes are placed at the back of the book.

The text and data are complemented by a plethora of photographs and illustrations. Although some of the former are not pristine, they are still quite useful. The drawings are vintage Breyer, well executed, clear, and precise. However, his decision against a uniform scale does render comparisons between various ships more difficult. As well, the segregated type-period format will present a problem for readers who want to trace the progression of any particular vessel throughout its career. This difficulty is exacerbated by the lack of an index, but one will be provided in the final volume of this series.

Overall, Breyer has given us an excellent summary of the first twenty years of Soviet warship development. In particular, he has shown that the Russian and Soviet navies were consistently aware of the potential of submarines. Despite the absence of an index, this book should be regarded as the premier source for information on the evolution of Soviet warship construction. It should be consulted by anyone with a strong interest in early twentieth-century warships in general, and the Soviet fleet in particular. One can only hope that Conway will complete the publication of this series with a minimum of delay.

PETER K.H. MISPELKAMP
Pointe Claire, QC
Canada

Glantz, David M. *The Role of Intelligence in Soviet Military Strategy in World War II*. Novato, Calif.: Presidio, 1990. 262pp. \$27.50

The subject of conflict on the Eastern Front during World War II has been revisited in fundamental ways by military historians over the past several years. Colonel David Glantz of the Soviet Army Studies Office at Fort Leavenworth has dominated the field in analysis of the Soviet war experience. His impressive corpus includes exemplary studies of Soviet airborne operations, theater strategic campaigns, operational art, deception, and in the present instance, military intelligence. This is the third of three volumes Glantz has produced on Soviet intelligence and deception during World War II. In it

he examines the role of intelligence in the strategic campaign planning process. While his new book will not suffice as the last word on the subject, Glantz artfully lays a foundation upon which subsequent researchers can build.

The "intelligence" referred to denotes the Soviet term *razvedka*, a combination of the otherwise distinct concepts of intelligence and reconnaissance. Glantz's scope is limited to military intelligence in support of the strategic ground campaign. Diplomatic, naval, and air intelligence dimensions separate from support of ground combat are absent from the treatise. He employs information available in official Soviet military histories and studies, memoirs of participants, and German intelligence materials to evaluate the "combat impact of *razvedka*," first examining the planning and execution of operations during each major phase of the war, then focusing on the role of *razvedka*.

Glantz begins with the initial period of war, from the opening German assault to the debacle at Kharkov and the drive toward the Don, evaluating *razvedka* during this phase as a "shaky foundation upon which to base strategic assessments." Recognition of the failure of intelligence, however, prompted the General Staff to institute a systematic review of operational lessons learned, compiled from 1942 to 1948 in *Shornik materialov po izucheniiu opyta voiny* (Collection of Materials for the Study of War Experiences). This process resulted in improved doctrine and procedures governing intelligence collection, processing, and analysis activities.

Reviewing the second period, which encompassed Soviet counterof-

fensives at Stalingrad and Kursk, Glantz highlights the relationship between strategic *maskirovka* (deception) efforts and *razvedka* as the means to validate deception planning. He illustrates how improved procedures resulted in an effective command and staff system for front-level planning of air, agent, partisan, commando, radio, and troop *razvedka* operations, while lower echelons conducted tactical *razvedka* through direction of observation posts, troop *razvedka*, and reconnaissance in force. The overall improvement in the quality of intelligence functions at all levels facilitated effective strategic planning.

Turning to the third and final period, Glantz describes the carefully orchestrated series of successive and simultaneous front operations, wherein major forces were shifted between fronts secretly to deny information on the timing and scale of planned offensives. Operational success was facilitated by the ability of *razvedka* elements to identify redeployments of German forces and validate the effect of Soviet deception efforts. This success reflected enhancement of intelligence handling achieved through reorganization of *razvedka* functions at the front level.

Glantz concludes that intelligence was seldom the critical factor in determining the success or failure of Soviet strategic operations. He reminds us that the relationship between *razvedka* and strategy was shaped by the three components of the process—intelligence collection, intelligence analysis, and "political-military decision making." Failure during any step in the process, particularly the last, could and often did negate the value of the other elements.

While inherently valuable as one of the few authoritative works on the subject, the book suffers from a number of flaws and constraints. Its methodology proves unsatisfactory in its simplistic assessment of the contribution of intelligence to the overall process, as being either positive or negative during each phase. Also, the few maps prove wholly inadequate, there are no supporting tables of organization or orders of battle, and careful editing might have eliminated considerable repetition. Further, a number of interesting issues simply lie beyond Glantz's ken. Those seeking a definitive explanation of the strategic intelligence failure of June 1941 must await revelations yet to come from Moscow. Little information is provided on scientific and technological aspects of Red Army intelligence collection and processing or on the organization of military intelligence functions at the center (i.e., in Moscow). Glantz's sources also preclude either a comprehensive discussion of the value of Ultra intelligence or speculation on Soviet code-breaking efforts. Readers will want to consult other sources, notably F.H. Hinsley et al., *British Intelligence in the Second World War*, Volume 2, (London:HMSO, 1981) to understand how little we know of these aspects.

In the final analysis, this book does not entirely stand on its own merits but should be read in conjunction with Glantz's other works on the subject, *Soviet Military Deception in the Second World War* and *Soviet Military Intelligence in War* (London: Cass, 1989 and 1990). The deluge of memoirs and revisionist analyses appearing in Russian military journals and the imminent prospect of

limited access to Defense Ministry archives will allow military historians to redress some of the deficiencies addressed above. In the meantime, we are fortunate to have a guide as qualified as Colonel Glantz to prepare the way.

JEFFREY CANFIELD

Lieutenant Commander, U.S. Navy

Blank, Stephen J. and Kipp, Jacob W., eds., *The Soviet Military and the Future*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1992. 328pp.\$49.95

Stephen J. Blank of the U.S. Army War College and Jacob Kipp of the Command and General Staff College offer a timely compilation of essays on the future of the Soviet military in the aftermath of the U.S. victory in Desert Storm and the failed coup in Moscow in 1991. Drawing from the works of individuals in government service, research organizations, and universities, *The Soviet Military and the Future* examines not only the ground, air, and naval forces but also the roles of the defense economy, "sufficiency," new threats, and ethnic issues in shaping the direction of the armed forces. Although the disintegration of the Soviet Union into fifteen states has overtaken much of its discussion, the book highlights problems experienced by the Soviet military that have only been exacerbated in the Russian armed forces today.

Phillip A. Peterson, Senior Research Fellow at the Potomac Foundation, and Joshua B. Spero, of the Institute for Strategic Studies at the National Defense University, note that reform must cover