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Commissars, Commanders and Civilian Authority: The Structure of Soviet Military Politics

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American capability but because the United States would not want them to be controlled by a hostile power? What sort of threat would such a contingency pose for the United States? The author does not examine any of these questions.

While the book is useful for its summary of America's bilateral relations with each of the six islands covered, discussion of how each of them fits into America's broader relations with NATO (for Greenland, Iceland, and the Azores) and the Caribbean (for Bermuda, Jamaica, and the Bahamas) would have been useful. Thus, the overall impression is that the book is incomplete and that further research should have been done.

MARK N. KATZ

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Colton, Timothy J. *Commissars, Commanders and Civilian Authority: The Structure of Soviet Military Politics* (Harvard University Russian Research Center Study No. 79). Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1979. 365pp.

Even a very superficial appraisal of Soviet military power as it has developed over the past two decades would indicate that a strong and harmonious community of interests is shared by the Soviet political elite and its officer corps. The dominant analytical perception among Western specialists on Soviet affairs, however, holds that this interinstitutional relationship is essentially conflict-prone with the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) maintaining firm control over the Military Establishment in "carrot and stick" fashion by means of a vast network of military party organs down to the lowest unit levels. For this reason, the work at hand has considerable value in providing an interesting and authoritative reappraisal of Soviet party-military relations that treats

those areas of confluence and conflict in a balanced and objective manner.

Organized in a three-part, twelve-chapter format, Professor Colton's assessment literally goes back to "square one" in retracing the historical development of Soviet party-military relations from the Bolshevik Revolution to the present day. In fact, his attention to historical detail and use of a vast array of Russian-language source materials adds considerable weight to his basic argument that the Soviet military, organized from the outset as a communist armed force, has made key institutional gains by virtue of its longstanding cooperation with the CPSU political elite rather than from any notable instance or distinct pattern of party-army conflict. In developing the key features of Soviet military politics and reevaluating the relative stability of party-military relations, Colton places major focus on *how* the military and CPSU have interacted and *why* their relationship has persisted without any basic change over the six-decade history of the Soviet state.

Roughly two-thirds of the book deals with the military party organs controlled and directed by the Main Political Administration of the Soviet Army and Fleet, which has separate channels of communication to both the Minister of Defense and the CPSU Central Committee. Part I examines the structure, roles, administrative functions and political monitoring capabilities of the military party organs since the creation of the Red Army and offers some lively insights into that MPA-directed apparatus. Colton makes special emphasis that the organs' party-political work within their assigned units or ships' crews is hardly at odds with professional military activities and goals; rather, its scope of effort has been fully integrated within the mainstream of normal military training and organizational endeavors to enhance the achievement of maximum combat

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readiness. Moreover, and in contrast with prevalent Western perceptions, the majority of Soviet political officers also have received some specialist training and often have performed professional command and staff tours in the type of military units where they serve in a purely political role. He further asserts that, unlike its organizational counterparts elsewhere in Soviet society, "the military party apparatus has assimilated many of the characteristics of the command structure with which it is integrated in so many ways" and views itself in a somewhat elitist image as "soldiers of the party" with all of the innate pride of professional accomplishment in both the military and political spheres.

In Part II, Professor Colton includes a trio of chapter-length case studies that provides an in-depth treatment of the military party organs during three key periods in Soviet history: the Stalinist purges during the late 1930s; the Great Patriotic War of 1941-45; and Khrushchev's relief of famed Soviet military leader Marshal Georgi K. Zhukov from his post as Minister of Defense in October 1957. Each of the studies contains solid insights into the traditional Soviet party-military relationship that challenge popular Western images. Colton argues, for example, that it is often forgotten that Red army and navy political commissars suffered equally with their military counterparts in Stalin's concerted campaign to eliminate "Old Bolsheviks" and replace them with more reliable *apparatchiki*. In his chapter on World War II, he makes special note that Soviet field commanders, particularly at the higher echelons, often used their political officers' privileged access to Stalin's immediate entourage in order to secure badly needed forces and material prior to and during combat operations. With respect to Marshal Zhukov's dismissal, he refutes a longstanding Western analytical view that the famed

leader's relief occurred primarily because he sought a considerable reduction of CPSU controls over the military. Rather, Colton argues, the Khrushchev-Zhukov clash is best understood as a more personal encounter strictly confined to the inner sanctum of elite-level Soviet politics than an indicator of a much wider interinstitutional struggle so frequently implied in most Western accounts of that affair.

In his final section, Part III, Colton seeks the sociopolitical rationale for the persistent stability of Soviet party-military relations. In observing the military's coercive and ideological capabilities along with its traditional participation in the Soviet political process, he develops a steady pattern of intergroup reliance that is of mutual benefit to both institutions. In that vein, Colton also points to large-scale military involvement in several extra-institutional issue-areas, e.g., defense industry and premilitary training, wherein both political and military interests are served in accord with national policies. For the future, he anticipates no major alteration of the traditional party-military relationship although he notes that it is conceivable that a greater military involvement may occur within the higher levels of national policymaking. At best, Colton concludes, the Soviet military outlook on substantive national issues for the future should remain "fundamentally conservative," particularly with regard to increased autonomy for ethnic minorities, consumer-oriented economic measures and other major matters that might threaten its own vested interests in the Soviet regime.

Amply supported with several helpful appendixes and extensive source documentation, Colton's assessment presents a convincing argument for a more thorough evaluation of the traditional Soviet party-military relationship beyond the

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prevalent conflict model. While it may spark some controversy among Soviet specialists in the West, this original and incisive analysis deserves serious and thoughtful consideration in reaching a better comprehension of the present and future trends in Soviet military affairs.

JOSEPH E. THACH, JR.
OASD(PA)

Elliot, Peter. *Allied Minesweeping in World War II*. Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1979. 201pp.

It was a personal delight to read this book about minesweeping, the poor cousin of the naval service, seldom recognized for the vital, tough, and dangerous job performed. It was doubly interesting for me because photographs of my own ship, U.S.S. *Chief* (AM 315) appear not only in the text but on the cover.

The book emphasizes the great problems faced by the Royal Navy during their ordeal of cut and try methods of sweeping the ingenious influence mines devised by the Germans. In the earlier days of the war, before effective countermeasures for magnetic and acoustic mines had been devised, the Royal Navy experienced heavy losses to mines to both mine-sweeping craft and coastal convoys. Reading this book brings home the degree of debt owed to the Royal Navy mine countermeasures establishment by our own. In return for their knowhow bought at such a bloody price, some 50 Fleet Minesweepers and countless YMSs (perhaps the most effective magnetic sweeper built) were turned over to the U.K.

The author has provided a thorough and excellent explanation of the techniques of minesweeping and of the ships and equipment involved. The glossary of terms is complete and there are many helpful photographs and diagrams. There are some few errors

worth of this book or to prevent its recommendation to those who are or have been associated with minesweeping nor to those who may just want to learn what it's all about.

ARTHUR WINSLOW II
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Fioravanzo, Giuseppe. *A History of Naval Tactical Thought*, translated by Arthur W. Holst. Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1979. 246pp.

In 1942, the Naval Institute published Admiral S.S. Robinson's *A History of Naval Tactics from 1530-1930: The Evolution of Tactical Maxims*. That study has long remained the standard, one-volume treatment of the subject in English. Like so many other works in the field, however, it is a descriptive volume that provides a mass of detail without a careful focus. Admiral of the Fleet Fioravanzo has taken a different approach in his small volume. He has sought to develop general concepts focused on the development of tactics, rather than on descriptions of specific tactical actions and battle orders. It is a worthwhile approach to a complex subject that has often lacked stringent analysis.

Written in 1956, Fioravanzo's book was not published until 1973, and it appears now in English for the first time. The volume is very much a personal contribution to the study of naval tactics, and it clearly reflects Fioravanzo's many published writings. As such, it is not the result of specialized, academic research into the subject, but rather the fruit of an active life in naval affairs.

This volume is a valuable contribution for the English-speaking world because it demonstrates the insight of an officer from a quite different naval heritage. There is much of interest in these pages that reflects Italian naval thinking in the first half of the 20th century. In particular, Fioravanzo has