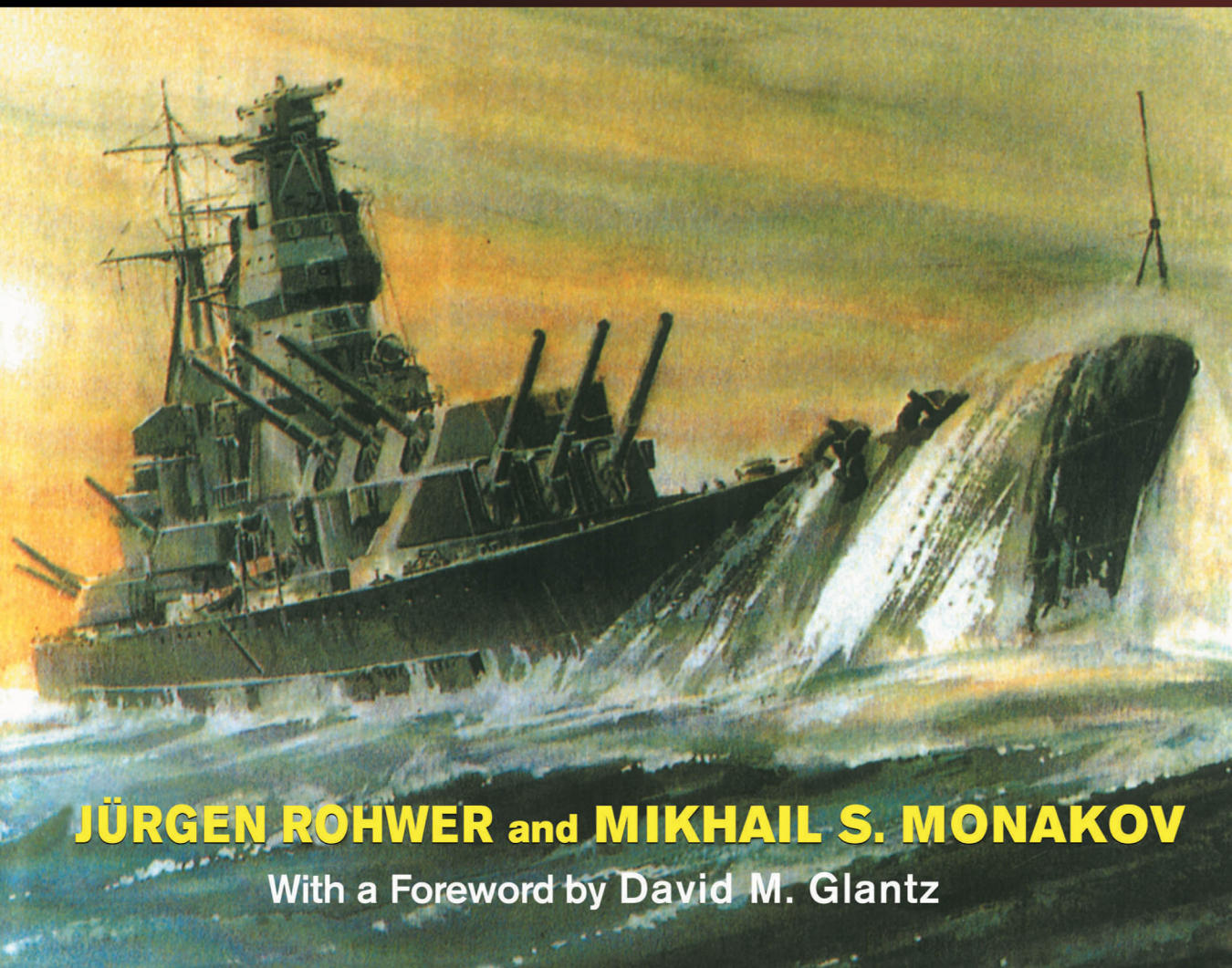


STALIN'S OCEAN-GOING FLEET

ROUTLEDGE

SOVIET NAVAL STRATEGY AND SHIPBUILDING PROGRAMMES 1935–1953



JÜRGEN ROHWER and MIKHAIL S. MONAKOV

With a Foreword by David M. Glantz

Stalin's Ocean-Going Fleet

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STALIN'S OCEAN-GOING FLEET

Soviet Naval Strategy
and Shipbuilding Programmes
1935–1953

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Contents

List of Plates	ix
List of Drawings	x
Foreword by David M. Glantz	xi
Series Editor's Preface	xiii
List of Abbreviations	xv
1. Introduction	1
2. Historiography on the Soviet Navy	4
3. The Reconstitution Phase, 1920–25	6
Condition of the Soviet Navy after the Civil War	6
Personnel	7
First Plans for a Reconstitution of the Navy	8
The <i>RKKF</i> and International and National Politics	9
Changes in the Personnel Situation	11
Strategic Considerations	12
Manoeuvres	13
The Restoration of Ships	14
4. The Consolidation Phase, 1925–32	19
Stalin on his Way to Dictatorship	19
New Discussions about Strategy	20
The Start of the First Shipbuilding Programme	24
Tanks or Battleships? What Fleet Do We Need?	24
The First Five-Year Plan (1928–32)	27
The 'Small War at Sea' Theory	29
First Repressions of Leaders and Engineers Accused of Sabotage	30
Foreign Aid from Germany	32
Foreign Aid from Italy	34
Shipbuilding in the First Five-Year Plan	35
5. The Second Five-Year Plan, 1933–37	41
International Politics and Strategy	41
Shipbuilding and the Forced Industrialization Programme	42
Strategy and Shipbuilding Plans	43
Foreign Aid during the Second Five-Year Plan	45

Submarine Building in the Second Five-Year Plan	46
Medium Submarines	46
Small Submarines	48
Big Submarines	48
Surface Ships in the Second Five-Year Plan	49
Cruisers	49
Destroyer Leaders and Destroyers	51
Minesweepers	53
Motor Torpedo Boats and Other Small Vessels	53
Reasons for Delays during the Second Five-Year Plan	54
6. The Change to the Big High Seas and Ocean-Going Fleet	58
Stalin's Role	58
International Situation	59
Domestic Policy and the Start of the Purges	60
A New International Naval Arms Race	60
First Soviet Battleship Plans	62
The Spanish Civil War	64
7. The Third Five-Year Plan	69
The Great Purges against the Army and Navy	69
The Strategic Considerations in 1935–36	70
The Pacific Fleet	72
The Baltic Fleet	72
The Black Sea Fleet	73
The Northern Fleet	73
The Battleship Building Plans of 1936–37	74
Changes in Strategic Planning and New Purges	77
New Leaders and a New Strategy in 1939	79
The Pacific Fleet	80
The Baltic Fleet	81
The Black Sea Fleet	83
The Northern Fleet	84
The River Flotillas	85
The Shipbuilding Organization in the Third Five-Year Plan	85
Foreign Aid in Shipbuilding in the Third Five-Year Plan	88
The State of the Soviet Fleets and the Shipbuilding Programme in the Summer of 1939	90
Old Ships and Submarines	90
New Surface Ships	90
Submarines	92
New Battleships and Battlecruisers	94
Aircraft Carriers	97
Light Cruisers	98
Destroyer Leaders and Destroyers	99
Smaller Surface Combatants	100
Operations and Tactics Reconsidered	102

8. The Second World War: The First Two Years	110
Soviet Foreign Policy in Spring and Summer 1939	110
The First Period of Soviet–German Co-operation 1939–40	111
Changes in the Strategic Situation, Autumn 1939–Summer 1940	114
Change from Co-operation to Confrontation, Autumn 1940	116
New Changes in the Soviet Naval Strategy in 1940	117
New Changes in the Shipbuilding Programme	119
Conferences on Operations and Tactics in October and December 1940	121
Hitler and the German <i>Wehrmacht</i> Prepare for ‘Barbarossa’	127
The Debate about a Preventive or a Pre-emptive Attack in the Historiography	130
Soviet Preparations for War	131
The Soviet Navy at the Start of the Great Patriotic War	135
9. The Great Patriotic War, 1941–45	144
The German Attack	144
Consequences for the Soviet Navy of the German Attack up to mid-1942	145
Planning and Design Processes during the War: Surface Ships and Vessels	148
Battleships and Battlecruisers	150
Heavy and Light Cruisers	151
Aircraft Carriers	152
Destroyer Leaders and Destroyers	153
Patrol Ships and Minesweepers	154
Small Surface Combatants	156
Building and Planning the Submarines	158
Big Submarines	158
Medium Submarines	159
Small Submarines	160
Special and Midget Submarines	161
Lend-Lease Deliveries of Naval Vessels	162
Lend-Lease Ships for the Northern Fleet	163
Lend-Lease Ships for the Pacific Fleet	165
War Booty Ships up to the End of the War	167
Operations and Losses from mid-1942 to the End of the War	168
Baltic Fleet	168
Black Sea Fleet	168
Northern Fleet	169
Pacific Fleet	170
The Soviet Fleets at the End of the War, September 1945	170
Baltic Fleet	170
Black Sea Fleet	171
Northern Fleet	172
Pacific Fleet	172
10. From 1945 to the End of Stalin’s Regime	178
First Plans for the New Navy	178
The Soviet Diplomatic Offensive, 1944–45	179
Ships as Reparation	179
Return of the Lend-Lease Ships	184

The Ten-Year Programme of 1945 (1946–55)	185
Experiences, Strategies and Industrial Capacities	188
Reorganization of the High Command and Purges	190
New Discussions about Strategy	191
Completion of Ships from Pre-war Designs	192
New Surface Ships	193
Battleships	194
Battlecruisers and Heavy Cruisers	195
Light Cruisers	197
Aircraft Carriers	199
Destroyers	201
Patrol Ships	202
Minesweepers	203
Small Combatants	204
Submarines	204
Big Submarines	205
Medium Submarines	205
Small Submarines	206
New Technologies and Changes in the Programme	209
Nuclear Power and Nuclear Weapons	210
Cruise Missiles and Rockets	210
Politics and Strategy, 1951–56	215
11. Why Did Stalin Build his Big Ocean-Going Fleet?	221
Appendices:	225
1. Warships and submarines of the former Imperial Navy, serving in the <i>RKKF/VMF</i>	226
2. Warships of the <i>RKKF/VMF</i> , laid down or ordered, 1926–45	229
3. Submarines of the <i>RKKF/VMF</i> , laid down or ordered, 1926–45	243
4. Lend-Lease vessels in the <i>VMF</i> , 1941–53	257
5. Soviet warships and submarines lost, 1939–45	260
6. Warships and submarines, taken as war booty into the <i>VMF</i> , 1944–53	268
7. Warships of the <i>VMF</i> , laid down or ordered, 1945–53	276
8. Submarines of the <i>VMF</i> , laid down or ordered, 1945–53	283
Note on Soviet and Russian Sources	293
Bibliography	299
Index:	315
Names	315
Ships	319
Projects	331

List of Plates

Between pages 48 and 49

1. Submarine *D-6/Spartakovets*.
2. Three patrol ships of *projekt 2, Uragan*-class.
3. Destroyer leader *Leningrad* of *projekt 1*.
4. Big submarine *P-1/Pravda*.
5. Small submarine of series VI.
6. Medium submarine *S-56*.
7. Destroyer leader *Tashkent*, of *projekt 20-I*.
8. Big submarine *K-21* of series XIV.
9. Cruiser *Kirov* of *projekt 26*.
10. Destroyer *Gordyi* of *projekt 7*.
11. Destroyer *Soobrzitel'nyi* of *projekt 7-U*.
12. Minesweeper *Iskatel'* of *projekt 53*.
13. Battleship *Sovetskaya Ukraina* of *projekt 23*.
14. Battleship *Sevastopol'*.
15. Medium submarine *S-125* of series V-bis 2.
16. Destroyer *Ognevoi* of *projekt 30*.
17. Heavy cruiser *L*.

Between pages 144 and 145

18. Battleship *Arkhangel'sk*.
19. Light cruiser *Admiral Makarov*.
20. Cruiser *Frunze* of *projekt 68K*.
21. Cruiser *Sverdlov* of *projekt 68-bis*.
22. Destroyer *Smetlivyi* of *projekt 30-bis*.
23. Destroyer *Besslednyi* of *projekt 56*.
24. Patrol ship of *projekt 29*.
25. Destroyer *Neustrashimyi* of *projekt 41*.
26. Patrol ship of *projekt 42*.
27. Patrol ship of *projekt 50*.
28. Big submarine of *projekt 611*.
29. Medium submarine of *projekt 613* in the original version.
30. Small submarine of *projekt A615*.
31. Nuclear submarine of *projekt 627*.
32. Missile destroyer *Prozorlivyi* of *projekt 56M*.

List of Drawings

1. Aircraft carrier project <i>Komsomolets</i>	21
2. Fast battleship project <i>Frunze</i> , design variant A	27
3. Battleship <i>projekt 21</i>	62
4. Battleship <i>projekt UP-41</i> from Ansaldo, Genova	63
5. Battleship <i>projekt 25</i>	74
6. Battleship <i>projekt 23</i>	76
7. Battlecruiser <i>projekt 69</i>	77
8. Battleship design of Gibbs & Cox, variant B	89
9. Heavy cruiser <i>projekt X</i>	96
10. Aircraft carrier <i>projekt 71A</i>	97
11. Destroyer leader, <i>projekt 48</i>	99
12. Light cruiser <i>projekt MK</i>	152
13. Experimental submarine <i>R-1</i>	161
14. Experimental submarine <i>M-401</i>	162
15. Transport submarine <i>projekt 607</i>	163
16. Battleship <i>projekt 24</i>	194
17. Battlecruiser <i>Stalingrad</i> of <i>projekt 82</i>	196
18. Aircraft carrier <i>projekt 85/VI</i>	200
19. Medium submarine <i>S-99</i> of <i>projekt 617</i>	207
20. Fore part of test missile cruiser <i>Admiral Nakhimov</i>	212
21. Missile battlecruiser <i>projekt</i> variant <i>F-25A</i>	212
22. Light cruiser <i>projekt 64</i>	213
23. Missile submarine <i>B-62</i> of <i>projekt 611AV</i>	213
24. Missile submarine <i>K-96</i> , ex <i>B-92</i> , of <i>projekt 629</i>	213
25. Missile submarine <i>projekt P-2</i>	214
26. Nuclear missile cruiser, <i>projekt 63</i>	215

Foreword

Legions of historians, Western and Russian alike, have written literally thousands of volumes about the formation, evolution, and performance of the Red Army in peace and war. These works range from the heavily censored tomes of the Stalin era, through the slightly more candid revelations of Brezhnev's time and the remarkable products of Khrushchev's de-Stalinization and Gorbachev's *glasnost*' programmes, to the superb works prepared by such Western historians as Malcolm MacIntosh and John Erickson. More recently, a veritable flood of Soviet archival releases, though selective, has added flesh to or corrected much of what has been previously written. Sadly, however, virtually all of this literature has focused on the Red Army alone, relegating the Red Navy and its history to a state of benign neglect. In large measure, Jürgen Rohwer and Mikhail Monakov have corrected this grievous omission.

This imposing volume fills a yawning gap in the historiography of the Soviet Armed Forces by providing a uniquely complete account of the creation and evolution of the Soviet Navy in peacetime as well as during war. Exploiting a wealth of hitherto-inaccessible archival materials, the authors, both of whom are authorities without peer in their field, present a coherent narrative, organized chronologically, that traces the institutional and physical development of the Soviet Navy within the essential context of evolving naval strategies.

The book is replete with unprecedented detail regarding a wide range of topics. Most important for those interested in military history, it surveys the Soviet Navy's record in war, ranging from its reformation during the Civil War years through its emergence as an ocean-going force during the early Cold War years. The work provides unique insights into Soviet naval developments, strategic, operational, institutional, and intellectual, during the turbulent crises and conflicts of the late 1930s, including the Spanish Civil War, the Russo-Finnish War, and the conflicts with Japan in the Far East. Above all, it details the Navy's contributions to Soviet victory in the 'Great Patriotic War' with Nazi Germany, including a wealth of detail on the naval dimension of that titanic conflict.

Above and beyond the Navy's wartime experiences, this book spells out the actual composition of the Soviet Navy throughout each period of its development, painstakingly revealing the processes of ship development and design within the context of evolving naval doctrine and naval operational and tactical techniques. While doing so, it examines such controversial but hitherto-forbidden topics as the effects of the Great Purges on naval command personnel and force effectiveness, and the scope, intent, and consequences of Soviet-German naval co-operation prior to the outbreak of the Second World War.

Readers will be fascinated by the authors' extensive, authoritative, and detailed appendices – almost 100 pages in length, which read like a 'Who's Who' for actual naval hardware (ships). In addition, the author's historiographical survey and extensive bibliography, which contains a host of primary archival source materials, stand as stark evidence to the book's vast scope and unique authenticity. *Stalin's Ocean-Going Fleet* will be the standard work in its field and will likely retain that

august status for many years to come. It will, undoubtedly, become a fixture in the library of all interested in the subject.

DAVID M. GLANTZ
Carlisle, PA
January 2001

Series Editor's Preface

This is truly an important book. Jürgen Rohwer, for many years editor of the German naval journal *Marine-Rundschau* as well as head of the Library for Contemporary History at Stuttgart, and Mikhail Monakov, Soviet naval officer and now Chief of the Historical Branch in the Main Staff of the Russian Navy, have provided the first analysis of Soviet naval shipbuilding policies between 1935 and 1953. Using formerly closed Soviet naval records, Rohwer and Monakov revise many standard interpretations of the Red Navy and offer bold, challenging new concepts and ideas. The very idea that Josef Stalin was a champion of a Mahanian blue-water battle fleet will come as a surprise to many. And that Zhukov was contemplating a 'pre-emptive counterattack' against Nazi Germany early in 1941 will no doubt stimulate debate on this topic as well.

The authors use the first five chapters to bridge the period from the Imperial Navy of 1918 to 1937 – a time when the Soviet Navy still consisted primarily of modernized ships of the Tsarist fleet. There existed no coherent naval strategy, just endless debates among the adherents of cruiser warfare ('small war at sea') and those of a blue-water battle fleet ('old school'). The fleet was dispersed among four theatres: the Baltic Sea, the Black Sea, the North, and the Far East. Stalin's purges of alleged 'enemies of Soviet ideals' and 'saboteurs' (30,514 military and naval personnel were shot) were important for naval policy insofar as the dictator now came round to the notion that the USSR needed an ocean-going fleet. This became official defence policy in December 1935, and the 'Big Navy Programme' of May 1936 included 24 battleships of 43,000 to 75,000 tons each to be built by 1947. In part, the breakdown of the naval accords of the Washington conference of 1922 and the London conference of 1930 had urged action upon Stalin. Furthermore, Germany had launched its first *Deutschland*-class 'pocket battleships' and France the *Dunkerque* and the *Richelieu*; thereafter came the *Bismarck*, *King George V*, *North Carolina*, *Littorio*, and finally the *Yamato*. Obviously, the Soviets could not afford to fall behind and still hope to be a global naval power.

Rohwer and Monakov reject the standard argument that no operational concept accompanied this massive naval buildup. They argue, rather, that there *was* a unified operational concept: the fleet would attain 'mastery of the sea' in the Sea of Japan, in the Gulf of Finland, and in the Black Sea; in addition, it would repel any invasions from the sea in the Baltic Sea and the Northern Sea. In 1939 Stalin entrusted the 'big ocean-going fleet' to a protégé, the 36-year-old N.G. Kuznetsov. When war came in 1941, the fleet was obviously still very much on the drawing board. But the authors reject another standard interpretation, namely, that Stalin now shifted resources and emphasis exclusively on to the land forces. They argue, using Soviet naval records, that fleet-building remained a top priority, yet one that Stalin refused to share with Kuznetsov! With their naval bases in the Baltic Sea and in the Black Sea quickly threatened with German occupation, the Soviets had no choice but to pursue a 'small war at sea'. Construction of heavy units was cancelled from 1942 to 1944.

Admiral Kuznetsov emerged with detailed plans for a blue-water fleet as early as August 1944. Stalin remained keen as ever on naval expansion, and in November 1945 approved a ten-year naval

expansion act that called for a Red Navy of no fewer than 5,800 warships. By February 1950, Stalin, no doubt fearing the power accumulated by the Red Army's marshals through their success in the Great Patriotic War, created an independent Naval Ministry. The 'big ocean-going navy' was on the books again. And despite a veritable revolution in military affairs – jet and rocket propulsion, nuclear weapons, electronic sensors – Stalin remained wedded until the end to the concept of a Mahanian battleship fleet. Whether this fleet was designed to thwart perceived naval threats or whether it was the first step on the road to Soviet global naval power, as these authors assert, awaits further research. For Stalin, as earlier for Hitler, the 'big ships' were visible manifestations of power; generally speaking, Stalin's naval policy exhibited 'an offensive tendency'. Scrapped by N.S. Krushchev and Z.G. Zhukov after the dictator's death in 1953, the 'big ocean-going navy' was resurrected by S.G. Gorshkov, only to end in failure and defeat in the Cold War.

Overall, this is an impressive and original work of solid research in Soviet naval archives that were closed until recently. The book revises many of our standard concepts of Stalin and the sea, and it makes a major contribution to the historiography of Soviet naval policy, defence policy, and strategic studies. The authors' meticulous analysis of the purges is an added bonus to what is already a superb piece of scholarship.

Holger H. Herwig

List of Abbreviations

A/A weapons	anti-aircraft weapons
A/Cs	aircraft
APSS	code name for midget submarine
BUMS	combat regulations for Naval Forces
ChF	<i>Chernomorskii Flot</i> (Black Sea Fleet)
D/Cs	depth charges
FYP	Five-Year Plan
GAVA	<i>Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Voennyi Armiya</i> (State Archive of the Army)
GKO	<i>Gosudarstvennyi Komitet Oborony</i> (State Committee for Defence)
GRT	gross registered tons
GRU	<i>Glavnoe razvedyvatel'noe upravlenie</i> (Main Intelligence Directorate)
KB	<i>Konstruktorshoie Byuro</i> (Design Bureau)
KBF/Kfl	<i>Krasnoznamennyi Baltiiskii Flot</i> (Red Banner Baltic Fleet)
KVF	<i>Kaspijskoe Voennaya Flotiliya</i> (Caspian Naval Flotilla)
MGs	machine guns
MGSh	<i>Morskoe Genralyi Shtab</i> (Ministry of Naval Forces and the Naval General Staff)
MTBs	motor torpedo boats
Narkom	<i>Narodnyi Kommissar</i> (People's Commissar)
NF	Northern Fleet
NKVD	<i>Narodnyi Komissariat Vnutrennykh Del</i> (People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs)
NTK	<i>Nauchno-Tekhnicheskii Komitet</i> (Scientific-Technical Committee)
OGPU	<i>Ob'edinennoe Gosudarstvennoe Politicheskoe Upravlenie</i> (United State Political Administration)
OTZ	<i>Operativnoe Tekhnicheskoe Zadanie</i> (Operational Technical Requirements)
REDO	<i>Regenerativnyi edinyi dvigatel' osobyi</i> (closed cycle drive for submarines)
RGA	<i>Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv</i> (Russian State Archive)
RGA VMF	<i>Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Voenno-Morskogo Flota</i> (Russian State Archive for the Navy)
RGVA	<i>Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Voennyi Arkhiv</i> (Russian State War Archive)
RKKA	<i>Raboche-krest'yanskaya Armiya</i> (Red Workers and Peasants Army)
RKKF	<i>Raboche-krest'yanskii krasnyi Flota</i> (Workers-Peasants Red Fleet)
RVS	<i>Revvoensovet</i> (Revolutionary War Council)
SF	<i>Severnoyi Flot</i> (Northern Fleet)
SKR	<i>Storozhevye korabli</i> (patrol boat)
SNK	<i>Sovet Narodnykh Komissarov SSSR</i> (Council of People's Commissars))
STO	<i>Sovet Truda I Oborony</i> (Council of Labour and Defence)

t	metric tons, used for submarine displacements
t stdd.	standard tons, used since 1922 Washington Conference for displacements of warships
<i>TOF</i>	<i>Tikhookeanski Flot</i> (Pacific Fleet)
<i>TsGA</i>	<i>Tsentral'nyi Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv</i> (Central State Archive)
<i>TsK VKP(b)</i>	<i>Tsentral'nyi Komitet VKP (b)</i> (Bolshevik Party's Central Committee)
<i>TsKB</i>	<i>Tsentral'noe Konstruktorshoe Byuro</i> (Central Design Bureau)
<i>TTZ</i>	<i>Taktico-Tekhnicheskoe-Zadanie</i> (tactical-technical requirement)
<i>VMF</i>	<i>Voенno-Morskoi Flot</i> (Naval Fleet)
<i>VMS</i>	<i>Voенno-morskіe sily</i> (Naval Forces of the USSR)

EQUIVALENT MILITARY AND NAVAL RANKS

	<i>Soviet military rank</i>	<i>Anglo-American rank</i>
(1935–39)	(after 1939)	
<i>Komandarm</i>	<i>Marshal SSSR</i>	General of the Army
<i>Komkor</i>	<i>General Armіya</i>	General
<i>Komdiv</i>	<i>General Polkovnik</i>	Lieutenant-General
<i>Kombrig</i>	<i>General Leitenant</i>	Major-General
	<i>General Mayor</i>	Brigadier-General
	<i>Polkovnik</i>	Colonel
	<i>Podpolkovnik</i>	Lieutenant-Colonel
	<i>Mayor</i>	Major
	<i>Soviet naval rank</i>	
(1935–39)	(after 1939)	
<i>Flagman Flota 1 Ranga</i>	<i>Admiral Flota SSSR</i>	Fleet Admiral
<i>Flagman Flota 2 Ranga</i>	<i>Admiral Flota</i>	Admiral
<i>Flagman 1 Ranga</i>	<i>Admiral</i>	Vice Admiral
<i>Flagman 2 Ranga</i>	<i>Vitse Admiral</i>	Rear Admiral
	<i>Kontr Admiral</i>	Commodore
	<i>Kapitan 1 Ranga</i>	Captain
	<i>Kapitan 2 Ranga</i>	Commander
	<i>Kapitan 3 Ranga</i>	Lieutenant Commander

1

Introduction

Planning for this book started in earnest when the authors first met during 'Kieler Woche' (Kiel Week) in June 1993 aboard the newest destroyer of the Russian Baltic Fleet, the *Nastoiichivyi*. But this meeting had a long pre-history. Both of us had worked for a long time on the history of the Russian and Soviet Navy.

Jürgen Rohwer was for 30 years editor-in-chief of the German naval journal *Marine-Rundschau*, which since the early 1960s had published several articles by competent authors, such as *Kapitan 1 Ranga* V.I. Achkasov, Admiral V.F. Tributs, Admiral N.N. Amel'ko, and even Admiral of the Fleet of the Soviet Union S.G. Gorshkov.¹ Jürgen Rohwer had also published many articles in German-language and foreign journals² and edited Soviet publications in translation.³

As an officer in the Soviet and Russian Navy, Mikhail Monakov took a course at the Higher Naval College in 1971 and a Higher Naval Officer's Course in 1976, before becoming Chief of the Historical Branch in the Main Staff of the Russian Navy. He started publishing, together with several colleagues, a Naval Dictionary⁴ and articles in the journal *Morskoi sbornik*, of which he became a co-editor. Most important was his series of articles about the 'Doctrines and Fates' in the journal from 1990–94.⁵

We were both for many years hampered to different degrees by the inaccessibility of the relevant archives in the Soviet Union. Up to about 1990 we were only able to count on the more or less official publications by Soviet authors, who used materials provided to them by the officials responsible, or on intelligence sources in Western archives and publications in Western countries. Even though Rohwer had had contact since 1975 with the then Director of the Institute of Military History of the Soviet Army, Lt-Gen. Prof. P.A. Zhilin, during the annual meetings of the International Commission of Military History (ICMH), there was no real exchange of materials possible during this period of 'stagnation'. This began to change when in 1988 *General Polkovnik* Prof. D. Volkogonov and his assistant, *Kapitan 1 Ranga* I.A. Amosov, became the Soviet representatives at the ICMH. During the International Congress of Historical Sciences held in Madrid in 1990 they arranged a meeting with the then head of the archives of the Soviet General Staff, *Polkovnik*

I. Venkov, and his assistant, then Major O. Starkov. With their unconventional assistance Rohwer was allowed access for the first time to important documents on the shipbuilding plans of the Soviet Navy from 1926 to 1941. These became the source for several articles in Western journals and publications.⁶ They were also the basis for the presentation of a joint paper by Rohwer and Amosov at the Naval History Symposium of the US Naval Academy at Annapolis in 1993 on parallels between Stalin's and Hitler's naval programmes, published in a slightly different version in Germany.⁷

This was also the starting point for our meeting aboard the *Nastoichivyi* in preparation for our first joint article on our topic.⁸ Of great importance for our work was the close co-operation with *Kapitan 2 Ranga* S. Berezhnoi, an expert on the building dates of Russian and Soviet warships and submarines, who had already published some books with detailed documentation on the fate of all ships from 1917 to the present and who provided us with the dates for the appendices in this book.⁹ Sadly, Capt. Berezhnoi died in November 2000.

NOTES

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2

Historiography on the Soviet Navy

For a long time the history of strategic thinking and planning in the Soviet Navy between 1922 and the reconstruction of the government following the death of Joseph Stalin in 1953 has been obscured. Since the Second World War many publications have appeared in the Soviet Union about the history of the Soviet Navy since the revolution.¹ These gave many details about general developments and the various conferences held but always followed the pre-set party line. Details of the internal discussions on strategies and shipbuilding programmes were seldom revealed. The information on persons involved was mainly restricted to those not prosecuted during the time of Stalin, and the accounts on shipbuilding were restricted to some unrelated details on several ship-types and summaries of the ships built or laid down during the first three Five-Year Plans. Yet no information on building dates was given. Western experts took great pains to sift out from the sketchy materials the truth about the shipbuilding programmes.²

With the onset of *Perestroika* and *Glasnost* in the 1980s many and far more detailed publications appeared in Russia,³ and since 1990 more details have been released from what had been up to then secret archives. Combining the earlier publications and the new materials, it is now possible to present a more accurate description of the development of naval thought in the Soviet naval, military and Party circles as well as an accurate tabulation of the reconstruction and building programmes of the years 1922–41 and some hints about the planning for the Fourth Five-Year Plan.⁴

Besides the books mentioned there are many articles in Russian journals and periodicals such as *Morskoii sbornik*, *Sudostroenie*, *Gangut* and others about the different ship and submarine types, not only the built and finished ones but also the uncompleted projects. Such articles will be mentioned when relevant developments are being described. We are very grateful for the assistance received from some of the authors of these books and other Russian colleagues, such as *Kapitan 1 Ranga* Igor A. Amosov, *Polkovnik* Igor Venkov, *Podpolkovnik* Oleg Starkov, *Kapitan 2 Ranga* Sergei Zonin, K.B. Strel'bitskii, and the late Col.-General Dmitrii Volkogonov. Western experts on the Soviet Navy also gave us much very interesting and helpful advice, such as Siegfried Breyer (Hanau, Germany), Rolf Erikson (Phoenix, USA), Professor Willard

C. Frank Jr (Norfolk, USA), Dipl.-Ing. René Greger (Prague, Czech Republic), *Capitaine de vaisseau* Claude Huan (Paris, France), and Jürg Meister (Canowindra, Australia).

NOTES

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3

The Reconstitution Phase, 1920–25

CONDITION OF THE SOVIET NAVY* AFTER THE CIVIL WAR

At the beginning of this period the principles of the Soviet State's military policy were determined by the fact that the Civil War of 1918–20 had ended in decisive victory for the Red Army. It seemed that the system of political and strategic leadership of the Soviet Armed forces, formed during the Civil War, had proved its efficiency, but at the same time it became quite clear that numerous formations of the Red Army were not able to match this because of the poor financial and material resources which the Soviet state could allocate to satisfy defence needs. The massive reduction in the size of the Army and Navy during the first months after the Civil War was not accompanied by measures for the preservation of their combat readiness. This resulted in a serious loss of combat capacity, a decrease in discipline and in some cases loss of command and control.

In February 1921, the incompetence and arbitrariness of party and state officials caused mass disobedience among the Baltic Fleet personnel. On 1 March 1921 a rebellion in the Kronshtadt fortress garrison broke out. It had to be violently suppressed by Red Army troops under the command of M.N. Tukhachevskii.¹ The problems of feeding the urban population and events such as Kronshtadt made the problem of transition to the 'new economic policy' (NEP) all the more acute,² and forced the leadership of the country to accept urgent measures for strengthening the ideological and administrative control over the armed forces, to search for ways of tightening up the discipline and political reliability of Army and Navy personnel in order to restore the combat capacity of the troops and forces.

The People's Commissar for the Army and Navy, Leon Trotskii, had in 1919 proposed a defensive strategy in the Baltic and Black Seas, but an offensive strategy in the Caspian Sea. Two years later, at the end of 1921, a special commission, echoing his ideas, directed him to strengthen the Caspian

* The Soviet Navy's official name until 1926 was the *Raboche-krest'yanskii Krasnyi Flot* or *RKKF* (Workers-Peasants Red Fleet); for the convenience of the readers the authors will use the terms 'Red Fleet' or 'Navy'.

Flotilla as a vehicle by means of which to export the Bolshevik revolution to the East.³

But at that time external and internal conditions were not suitable for the development of an adequate military doctrine and, consequently, prospective plans for military reconstruction. An analysis of the Bolshevik Party's resolutions and the Party's Central Committee decisions on military questions reveals that the measures which were carried out by the Soviet leadership were of a short-term character. Those measures corresponded to the main purposes of:

- strengthening the leading role of the Party in the Army and Navy
- reducing the size of the Armed Forces to the smallest possible level
- liquidating extraordinary and excessive supply agencies and introducing a system of scheduled state deliveries
- improving the social structure of personnel and its political reliability.

The obvious insufficiency of these measures could be concluded from an objective analysis of actual conditions in the Red Navy in 1921. The most exact characteristic of this state was given in the mid-1920s by the People's Commissar for the Army and Navy and the Chairman of the Revolutionary War Council (equivalent to Minister of Defence) M.V. Frunze. He said:

We have lost the greater and better part of the Navy's strength and a great majority of experienced and competent commanders, which were more important for the Navy's activities than commanders in other services; we have lost several naval bases and imported a number of non-commissioned naval personnel. It meant, we had no Navy.⁴

Personnel

The upheavals during the Civil War and the purges following the mutiny at Kronshtadt led to many changes in the high command and to the promotion of former ordinary seamen, such as M.F. Izmailov, K.I. Dushenov and G.I. Levchenko, who graduated from the Naval War College of the Red Navy in 1922, of non-commissioned officers, such as I.K. Kozhanov and M.V. Viktorov, and even party functionaries, such as V.I. Zof, I.M. Ludri and A.P. Aleksandrov. But the deficiencies of the new commanders forced Trotskii to retain some of the former Imperial Navy officers, such as E.A. Berens, A.V. Nemits, A.P. Zelenoi, A.S. Maksimov, B.B. Zherve, M.A. Petrov, A.V. Dombrovskii and L.M. Galler among the higher ranks, and younger officers such as F.K. Raskol'nikov, V.A. Kukel', I.S. Isakov and E.S. Pantserzhanskii as *specialists* to support them.⁵

When the Naval Academy reopened after the end of the Civil War, B.B. Zherve and M.A. Petrov took over the courses taught by Major-General N.L. Klado, often called the Russian Mahan, who had died in 1919. And owing to the lack of matériel, funds, and also personnel, even Trotskii was at first opposed to any reinterpretation of the established principles of military and naval strategy. Notwithstanding the gap between theory and the ships

available, instruction at the Naval Academy and the Naval War College continued until 1925–27 along the lines set by the ‘classical school’ of naval strategy in which battleships played the decisive role.⁶ To fill the gaps in personnel eligible for future promotion to the higher ranks, officer candidates were recruited from the Party and the Komsomol’ youth organization and pushed through the first courses at the Naval College. Some of them, such as N.G. Kuznetsov, V.A. Alafuzov, and V.F. Tributs, would hold the most important posts in the Navy during the Second World War.⁷

First Plans for a Reconstitution of the Navy

According to the complement tables of the fleets in 1921 the *RKKF* had on the active list 223 combat ships, including one battleship, 24 destroyers and torpedo-boat destroyers, 13 submarines, 6 mine- and net-layers, 101 minesweepers, 11 gunboats, 16 patrol ships, 51 combat motorboats, and also 152 auxiliaries.⁸

In comparison, at the beginning of the revolution in 1917 the Imperial Russian Fleet had on active service 18 battleships, 14 cruisers, 84 destroyers and torpedo-boat destroyers, 22 torpedo boats, 41 submarines, 45 mine- and net-layers, 160 minesweepers, 11 gunboats, 110 patrol ships, and 42 combat motorboats.⁹

The overall displacement of the *RKKF*’s main combatants was only 16.2 per cent from the overall displacement of the Russian Imperial Fleet, because 77 per cent of the largest combatants such as battleships, cruisers and *Novik*-class destroyers had been lost or put out of action. Sixty-one per cent of the most modern ships, built between 1910 and 1917 had been lost.¹⁰ The continued fighting in the Far East had no effect on the Navy, because no ships were left there.

In the Baltic the Russian Fleet was reduced to one serviceable battleship, one old cruiser, 9 *Novik* destroyers, 4 smaller torpedo-boat destroyers, 11 submarines, and many damaged vessels or remnants of obsolete classes of ships. These could not be repaired or modernized, nor could the unfinished new vessels be finished, owing to lack of funds. Up until 1925 most of them had to be sold for scrap, even three of the launched but laid-up hulls of new big battlecruisers. The *Borodino*, *Navarin*, and *Kinburn*, together with some other vessels such as the old armoured cruisers *Gromoboi*, *Admiral Makarov* and *Bayan*, had to be sold to Germany in 1922/23 for scrap in order to obtain some foreign currency.¹¹ The new-found independence of Finland and the Baltic states in the meantime bottled up the few seaworthy ships in the innermost waters of the Gulf of Finland.

In the Black Sea, the last operational vessels, especially the modern battleship *General Alekseev*, had sailed with the remnants of the Vrangal Army to Istanbul and then to Bizerte. Only unserviceable wrecks, one cruiser and one submarine in a damaged state, and some unfinished vessels remained behind.¹² Similarly, only one obsolete small destroyer and one submarine were left in the Arctic with the evacuation of the Allied intervention troops. They had taken off some of the vessels there, like the old battleship *Chesme*, and the cruisers *Varyag* and *Askold*. In the Caspian Sea there were ten smaller torpedo-boat destroyers, four submarines and four gunboats.¹³

These facts resulted in a serious reduction of the combat potential of the *RKKF*. In 1917 the summary weight of main calibre (8–12in) guns pro salvo was 44,720kg or 60 per cent of the summary weight of the main calibre gun salvo of the German ‘High Seas Fleet’ in 1916. There were only twelve 12in guns aboard the sole operational *RKKF* battleship *Marat* (ex-*Petropavlovsk*) in 1921. Practically all combat ships needed repairs of some kind or another, and the largest surface ships were in need of capital repair and modernization.

There were 441 coastal guns in 1917, including 262 in the Baltic, 158 in the Black Sea, and 21 in the Arctic. By the end of the Civil War and the foreign intervention in Russia (1918–20) the overall number of coastal guns was only 154, including 88 in the Baltic and 66 in the Black Sea. The Arctic coastal artillery was completely lost. The state of the guns and equipment of the coastal artillery was evaluated as unsatisfactory. The most essential of the losses in the Baltic was a sharp reduction in the ‘sea defence depth’. The distance from Petrograd to the front line of the ‘Main Defence Position’, preventing an enemy invasion from the sea, was shortened from 280 nautical miles (500km) to 50 nautical miles (90km).

Naval Aviation was deleted from the *RKKF*. Its small formations in the Baltic and the Black Sea remained only in operative subordination to the naval commanders. By 1921 the total number of naval planes in Russia was 36 old ones.

The distressing state of the Red Navy was caused by the deep crisis which had spread over the whole country. The economy was disrupted by ‘war communism’¹⁴ and economic experiments by the Bolshevik Party. It was impossible to keep the Red Fleet ships in technical and combat readiness, when the Russian industry was in ruins. In 1921 Soviet shipbuilding yards produced only 8 per cent of the 1913 level.

The elaboration of long-term plans for the Navy’s restoration and development were at first prevented also by the military-political situation which had formed in the world at the beginning of the 1920s. The so-called ‘Versailles’ system was clearly unstable. At the start of its creation the Soviet State was completely excluded from the process of discussing and elaborating the most important decisions on problems of international security, including negotiations on naval arms limitation.

The RKKF and International and National Politics

During the 1920s the Soviet leadership was seeking ways to compensate for the deterioration in its strategic situation on the seas, at first by trying to get a favourable international legal regime for its own littorals, and also to participate on equal rights in negotiations on naval armament limitations. However, these attempts were doomed to failure, because the Soviet government had then no diplomatic relations with the Allied powers, and the Soviet state was too weak to be recognized as important by the Great Powers. In 1921–22 Soviet Russia was not invited to the conference at Washington on naval arms reduction, which brought the ratio for battleships and aircraft carriers for Great Britain, the United States, Japan, France and Italy to 5:5:3:1.75:1.75. Germany and Soviet Russia remained excluded, but they had concluded a

treaty on 16 April 1922 at Rapallo which restored diplomatic relations and provided a structure on which to reconstruct economic relations.¹⁵ Again at the Lausanne conference in 1922–23 the Soviet delegation was not able to insist that combat ships be prohibited from passing Black Sea exits, despite the fact that such a decision would be of vital importance for the interests of the Soviet Union. But the Great Powers did not find it necessary or possible to consider those interests at this time.

Besides that, the Soviet Navy's development was influenced by subjective reasons:

- The lack of unity in the opinions of the Soviet highest political and military leadership about the main political aims, and the strategic and operational character of a future war
- The utopian character of the Bolshevik Party's doctrine, based on the theory of 'World Revolution' and the concept of an 'armed people', which diverted thinking away from the search for adequate forms and methods to defend the national interests
- The uncompleted analytical work and theoretical research on the experience of sea warfare during 1914–18
- The absence of significant navies in the neighbouring states and, as a consequence, the feeling that there was no direct threat from the sea
- The low level of theoretical and practical education of the high-level military leaders promoted during the October Revolution and the Civil War
- A lack of understanding about the nature of naval activities and its importance for the development of the Soviet state by its leaders
- The lack of trust in the loyalty of the commanders' corps of the Navy, in which, at the beginning of the 1920s, 80 per cent were former Imperial Russian naval officers.¹⁶

In 1922–23 the Soviet government undertook measures which resulted in important qualitative changes in the priorities of military construction. These had immediate effects on the status, combat efficiency and also personnel strength of the Navy.

The measures were:

- A significant reduction in Navy personnel from 86,560 men in March 1921 to 36,929 by December 1921
- A curtailment of the Navy's share in general military expenditure to 8.7–9.7 per cent, and a sharp reduction in appropriations for ship-building and repairs from 26.1 to 8 million rubles (70 per cent)
- The elimination of the post of Commander-in-Chief of the Republic's Naval Forces, and the abolition of the Naval General Staff
- A 'filtration' (political purge) of naval personnel, which resulted in the illegal repression of more than 400 former Imperial officers

- The initiation of three mobilizations, during which 1,900 Party members and 4,600 members of the *Komsomol* (the Communist Young League) were called up into the Navy.

Objective analysis shows that those measures were contradictory in character, and their long-term consequences exercised both positive and negative influences on subsequent developments in the Navy. But first of all it should be noted that the results expected by the Party and the Soviet state leadership were basically achieved. The Soviet leaders prevented the complete loss of combat ships, auxiliaries, and naval bases. The descent into moral corruption of the Red Fleet personnel was stopped.

In 1921–23 the shipbuilding yards completed one destroyer, two submarines, and finished the restoration of one battleship, four destroyers, one submarine, five gunboats, seven minesweepers, and two combat motorboats. At least 171 combat units and 172 auxiliaries underwent repairs.¹⁷ The system of educating and training personnel was fully restored. From 1922 normal training processes and naval activities were renewed. By the end of 1923 the Baltic Fleet had twice conducted naval manoeuvres, and the Black Sea Fleet once. During this period Soviet ships made 40 cruises, including three cruises in the high seas.

The minesweeping formations of the Navy completed minesweeping operations in the Soviet littorals, covering 1,422.9sq. nautical miles and swept 345 mines.

All this testified that as a result of the measures undertaken conditions in the Navy were starting to normalize. But some negative trends did continue – in particular the reduction in the number of ships. In 1922–24, 180 units were struck from the active list and sent to the scrapyard.¹⁸ As mentioned, there were even some new and unfinished ships sent to be scrapped in Germany, like the three launched but laid-up battlecruisers. Twenty-nine units were transferred to the Sea Border Guard.

Changes in the Personnel Situation

Filtration, purges and the desire to increase the proportion of ‘working-class’ representatives among the higher and senior naval commanders resulted in significant changes in the ‘social origin’ of the command personnel. The number of ‘old’ officers was quickly and steadily reduced. In 1922 the share of commanding personnel from ‘workers’ was 8.4 per cent, from ‘peasants’ 20.4 per cent, and ‘others’ 71.2 per cent. By 1926 the figures had changed to ‘workers’ 15.7 per cent, ‘peasants’ 35.9 per cent, and ‘others’ 48.4 per cent. But these changes caused problems of another sort. In 1924 the shortage in the commanding corps was about 24 per cent, and remained so over the following years. There was a steady drop in the general level of education and professional abilities of the commanding officers, including the superior commanders. For example, V.I. Zof, the Chief of the Soviet Navy from 1924 to 1926, and his successor R.A. Muklevich were both Party functionaries, who had not even received primary naval education. Trying to minimize the negative consequences of such a policy, Soviet leaders decided to step up the

naval school system and the number of naval students in order to raise the educational level of the commanding personnel. In the spring of 1922 the Naval Academy renewed its work. By a decision of the Party's Central Committee (TsK) a special preparatory course was introduced for Red Navy commanders who had participated in the Civil War from 1918 to 1920. But only 9.6 per cent of students from the first set had received higher education and about 19 per cent had not even graduated from high school.

Strategic Considerations

In consequence of this lack of adequate education and experience, the Soviet Naval authorities could not formulate a real plan for the development of the Navy, without using the expertise of the remaining 'old' officers. The first drafts of the strategic missions of the Soviet Navy were presented in the explanatory notes for the restoration programmes elaborated at the beginning of the 1920s. At first the prospective strategic missions were formulated in February 1921 by the authors of the draft called 'The Decree for the Re-establishment of the Sea Power of the Republic'.¹⁹ In accordance with this decree the Red Fleet should have been able to carry out:

- Operations to defend the sea borders of the Soviet state
- Operations to defend sea communications
- Operations to support Red Army troops.

The main sea theatre was considered to be the Baltic, where the Red Fleet should be able to achieve 'mastery of the sea'. The authors of the draft thought that it was possible, because the Imperial German Fleet had been annihilated and the navies of the other Baltic powers were not comparable with the Soviet Baltic Fleet. It was assumed to be enough to create a number of mine-artillery positions on the eastern approaches of the Baltic Strait zone to prevent the main sea powers from interfering in the struggle between the Red Fleet and the navies of the Baltic states.

A similar plan was worked out for the Black Sea Fleet. The achievement of 'mastery of the sea' and a blockade of the Bosphorus were considered the main strategic aims there. These were believed to be achievable in the future.

The Soviet High Command stated that the Arctic and Pacific Oceans would be very important in the future, but in the mid-1920s it was thought possible to abstain from the deployment of naval formations in the Arctic and the Far East until the restoration of Soviet industry. They believed that a temporary loss of those areas would not pose a mortal threat to the Bolshevik government.

In August 1921 the members of the Navy Reorganization Committee, including Trotskii, Kamenev, Nemits, Gusev and Zof, affirmed the main strategic missions of the Soviet Navy.²⁰

In the Baltic:

- the support of the *Karelskii Front* operations
- the education of personnel for the future Navy.

In the Black Sea:

- to maintain a strong coastal defence.

In the Caspian Sea:

- to maintain ‘mastery of the sea’.

In the Arctic:

- to defend the fishery
- to defend the two main areas in the mouth of the Northern Dvina and the Kola Peninsula.

For the first time, the basic idea of the Soviet Navy’s application was outlined in autumn 1921 by Nemits, the Commander-in-Chief of the Red Fleet and Chairman of the Naval Branch of the ‘Military Industry Re-creation Committee’. Nemits suggested that the rest of the old fleet be deployed to defend the coastal flanks of the Red Army and to create powerful defence positions in front of Kronshtadt. It should, he said, be possible to equip the defence positions with 465mm coastal guns, new mines, powerful formations of modern submarines, seaplane units and only small surface-ship formations.

Manoeuvres

The plans were tested during the first naval training operations. The first manoeuvres of the Baltic Fleet took place in the autumn of 1922. The sole battleship, eight destroyers, four submarines, eleven minesweepers, eleven airplanes, the Kronshtadt fortress garrison, and Sea-Guard formations (one destroyer, seven patrol ships, a minesweeper, a motorboat and several coastal guard posts) had

- to weaken the enemy fleet before it approached the forward defence position
- to fight against the enemy squadron in the forward defensive position as far as possible, but if the enemy should penetrate the forward defensive position not to allow the enemy fleet to approach Kronshtadt
- not to allow an enemy landing at any point situated east of the Krasnoflotskii Fort.

In September 1923 the Navy’s readiness was tested with regard to carrying out landing operations supporting the Red Army formations which were in action at the seashore. At the same time the Red Navy had to prevent an enemy penetration into the eastern part of the Gulf of Finland.

The possibilities of repulsing an enemy amphibious operation against the Crimea were tested during manoeuvres of the Black Sea Fleet in November 1923. At the same time the Caspian Flotilla carried out some training for landing operations in support of the Army from the coastline.

But the high-ranking Soviet commanding officers could not give assurances

that the Red Navy was able to carry out its main strategic missions. In their opinion, the Navy needed well-trained and experienced personnel, new surface combat ships and submarines, a modern coastal defence and a naval aviation. At the same time they believed that the leaders of the state and the Bolshevik Party just after the restoration of the Soviet economy would allocate more funds to the development of the Navy. On 8 November 1923 the Revolutionary War Council (*RVS*) approved the establishment of a Scientific-Technical Committee (*NTK*) to solve the problems of the administration and the pre-projects for new shipbuilding. As chairman of the former, *Kontr Admiral* P.N. Leskov was nominated. The Committee had several sections for artillery, shipbuilding, mine warfare, one mechanical-electrical section and one for submerged operations, one for communications and one physico-chemical section. Until 1925–27 the principles of Soviet naval strategy corresponded with the ‘classical school’ and there was a gap between the theory and the ships available. The most prominent theorists of the Red Fleet, such as the author of the Naval Tactical Manual and the first draft of the Naval Battle Instructions, M.A. Petrov, and the professor of the Naval Academy, B.B. Zherve, asserted that battleships would play the decisive role in future sea warfare.

The Restoration of Ships

Apart from the efforts to solve the personnel problems and to develop a strategic concept, the main emphasis was put on rebuilding ships for active service. The ‘Decree of the Re-establishment of the Sea Power of the Republic’, presented by some of the *spetsialists* as early as February 1921, proposed rebuilding the four existing battleships of the *Gangut*-class, which were in great need of repair, finishing the last battlecruiser *Izmail*, as well as four unfinished light cruisers of the *Svetlana*-class and five 1,300-ton destroyers of the *Novik*-type, and keeping in active service one pre-*Dreadnought*-battleship *Andrej Pervozvannyi*, the old cruiser *Aurora*, nine destroyers of the *Novik*-type and 16 600-ton destroyers built between 1906 and 1909, for the Naval Forces of the Baltic Sea.

In the Black Sea the situation was worse, because the last serviceable ships had left in late 1920 with the Vrangeli squadron – of one battleship, one cruiser and five destroyers – for Bizerte, where they were interned in December 1920. Only the old cruiser *Pamyat merkurija* could be re-commissioned in 1922 as *Komintern*. Besides the wrecks of old battleships and smaller vessels there were some unfinished ships, one battleship, four cruisers and eight unfinished or scuttled modern destroyers available, which could be finished, salvaged or repaired.

However, the plan had to be reduced in scale, owing to the situation in the shipbuilding yards and the lack of financial funds. Most of the unfinished ships had to be sold – as previously mentioned – for scrap in Germany in order to obtain some foreign currency or be scrapped in Russia. The following example illustrates the reluctance of the government. On 29 October 1924 the Chief of the Naval Forces (*Voенно-морские силы – VMS*) of the Red Workers and Peasants Army (*Raboche-krest’janskaya Armija – RKKA*), E.S. Pantserzhankii, obtained the approval of the Council of Labour and Defence (*Sovet Truda i Oborony – STO*) for the general repair and completion of two cruisers and five destroyers from

the pre-war programmes. Up to 1925 only three battleships, two cruisers, and 14 destroyers in the Baltic could be restored to active service, some of which had to undergo general repairs for some years. The old small destroyers had to be scrapped. In the Black Sea only two of the cruisers and five of the destroyers were finally commissioned, the last cruiser not until 1931.²¹

But other plans were prepared. One proposed the rebuilding of two of the damaged or unfinished battleships, converting the unfinished battlecruiser into an aircraft carrier, finishing four of the unfinished cruisers and five destroyers, and bringing home the ships of the Vrangel squadron. In December 1924 a commission with the shipbuilding engineer A.N. Krylov and the former Chief of the Naval Forces E.A. Berens was sent to Bizerte to ascertain the state of the ships before entering into negotiations for their restitution. However, they found the ships in poor condition, and so nothing came of this expedition. The ships were finally scrapped in France.²²

Another plan envisaged the building of eight new battleships, 16 cruisers and more than 40 destroyers. And during the conference at Rome in February 1924 of the sea powers not represented at the Washington Naval Conference in 1921–22, the Soviet delegate, E.A. Berens, proposed a battleship tonnage of 491,000 tons, almost as much as the 525,000 tons allowed to Great Britain and the United States.²³ Some *spetsialists* in the Soviet Navy were planning an ocean-going homogeneous fleet with all types of warships, able to compete with the fleets of the other sea powers.

The first real planning for new naval shipbuilding began after Pantserzhanskii was replaced by Zof as Chief of the *VMS RKKK* in December 1924. A leading role during the development of the programmes was played by some former officers of the Imperial Fleet, such as S.P. Blinov, the Chief of Staff of the *VMS*, and A.A. Toshakov, Head of the Operational Department of the Staff. A five-year project for the strengthening of the *VMS* was prepared under Toshakov and presented in March 1925. It was based on the experiences of the Great War and took industrial capacity into consideration. For the active defence of the coasts of the USSR in the Baltic and the Black Sea strong homogeneous fleets were needed. In the Baltic it was proposed to have six battleships, including four new ones, four monitors, eight cruisers, two aircraft carriers, 28 destroyers, 17 submarines, 36 motor torpedo boats and 36 patrol cutters as well as three minelayers. For the Black Sea the proposal contained four battleships (two new ones), four cruisers, one aircraft carrier, 12 destroyers, 17 submarines, 24 motor torpedo boats, 36 patrol cutters, and two minelayers. The authors of the project proposed dispensing with a fleet in the Far East for the time being, but strengthening the Amur Flotilla somewhat by eight gunboats or river monitors, six armoured cutters and two minelayers. For the Caspian Flotilla it was considered enough to have the two existing destroyers and two gunboats.²⁴

Such numbers were the first and maximum variant of the plan. The second variant, co-ordinated with the industry, was cut down to solve only the minimum needs for the actual tasks for the fleets. This variant had 165 combat ships and cutters to be built from scratch or reconstructed. By 1931 the fleet should then have four battleships, four cruisers, one aircraft carrier, and 162 smaller vessels as well as 40 submarines. On 31 March 1925 Zof and

Blinov presented the variants to the chairman of the *RVS* and the *Narkom* for the Army and Navy M.V. Frunze for their approval. It would include the restoration of the battleship *Frunze* (ex-*Poltava*), badly damaged by a fire in November 1919, and the completion of the battlecruiser *Izmail'*. Besides capital ships they wanted about 100 ocean-going ships for the Red Navy at the beginning of the 1930s. The leaders of the fleet argued that the proposals rather than the postponed measures to replace the ships and submarines up to 1930 should be condemned. In an appendix they also presented the tactical elements of the ships, worked out by the Chief of the Operational Department A.A. Toshakov. But this plan was rejected. Frunze declared: 'We have turned down an aggressive naval policy, so we shall construct only a defensive navy, consisting of small vessels.'²⁵

On 6 April 1925, Zof also sent a plan for the finishing, ordnance and modernization of ships of the *VMS RKKK* and for the supplying of the ships with fuel and other items to the same people. It envisaged the repair and modernization of three battleships, 12 destroyers and 14 submarines, as well as the completion of two cruisers and other ships. On 4 June 1925 Zof's deputy assistant, V.I. Bzhezinskij, presented to the *STO* a new plan for a naval programme covering the years 1925–26 to 1930–31, containing for the Baltic Fleet ten new 4,000t destroyers, 10 1,300t submarines, two minelaying submarines, four small monitors, 36 motor torpedo boats, 18 patrol vessels and 14 minesweepers. For the Black Sea he proposed 11 1,300t submarines, two minelaying submarines, 24 motor torpedo boats, 18 patrol vessels and 14 minesweepers. Finally he requested the completion of the battlecruiser *Izmail'* and the battleship *Frunze* as aircraft carriers, and the cruisers *Admiral Butakov* and *Admiral Lazarev* as minelaying cruisers.²⁶

Both projects were discussed for some time, despite the fact that the government, the Chairman of the *STO* and the Council of the People's Commissars (*Sovet Narodnykh Komissarov SSSR – SNK SSSR*) A.I. Rykov and the *Narkom* for the Army and Navy Frunze accepted in principle the important political and military role of a strong fleet and therefore supported plans for its reinforcement. So on 6 July 1925 Rykov approved the rebuilding of an aircraft carrier, the completion of two cruisers, the repair and modernization of two battleships and of the Amur gunboats.²⁷

But the proposals of the naval leaders to start the building of new ships in early 1926 were strongly opposed by the *RKKK* staff, who proposed retention of the existing ships and the limitation of new building to MTBs and patrol cutters, thus giving priority to the strengthening of the Army.

NOTES

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3. Dmitrii Volkogonov, *Lev Trotskii. Politicheskii portret*, Moscow, 1992, pp. 9–11.
4. *Krasnyi Flot*, No. 8 (1925), p. 5.
5. V.D. Dotsenko, *Morskoi biograficheskij slovar'*, St Petersburg, Logos, 1995. *Voenno-morskoi slovar*,

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 12. Ibid.
 13. Ibid.
 14. Manfred Hildermeier, op. cit., pp. 134–56.
 15. Tobias R. Philbin, *The Lure of Neptune: German–Soviet Naval Collaboration and Ambitions, 1919–1941*, Columbia, SC, University of South Carolina Press, 1994, pp. 6–7. Olaf Groehler, *Selbstmörderische Allianz. Deutsch-russische Militärbeziehungen 1920–1941*, Berlin, Vision, 1992, pp. 34–5.
 16. Rossijskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Voennno-Morskogo Flota (RGA VMF), f. r-1483, op.1, d.65, l.5 – N.Yu. Berezovskii, S.S. Bereznoi and Z.V. Nikolaeva, *Boevaya Letopis Voennno-Morskogo Flota 1917–1941*, Moscow, Voenizdat, 1992, pp. 473, 474, 498, 501–2, 514, 517.
 17. S.S. Bereznoi, op. cit.
 18. Included in the Baltic were the pre-dreadnought-battleships *Respublika* (ex-*Imperator Pavel I*), *Andrej Pervosvannyi*, *Grazhdanin* (ex-*Tesarevich*), *Zarja Svobody* (ex-*Imperator Aleksandr II*), the armoured cruisers *Rjurik*, *Bayan*, *Admiral Makarov*, *Gromoboi*, *Rossiya*, and the protected cruisers *Diana* and *Bogatyr*, as well as the older destroyers and torpedo boats. In the Black Sea most of the older ships were damaged during the occupation of Sevastopol by the Allies and also scrapped the pre-dreadnought battleships *Revolutsiya* (ex-*Svjatoi Eustafii*), *Ioann Slatoust*, *Tri Svjatel'ya*, *Boretsza Svobodu* (ex-*Pantelejmon*), *Rostislav*, and *Sinop*, as well as the smaller destroyers, torpedo boats and so on. See S.S. Bereznoi (ed.), *Korabli i Vspomogatel'nye Suda Sovetskogo Voennno-morskogo (1917–1927gg)*, Moscow, Voenizdat, 1981 – Siegfried Breyer, op. cit.
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22. Siegfried Breyer, op. cit., vol. 1.
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4

The Consolidation Phase, 1925–32

STALIN ON HIS WAY TO DICTATORSHIP

Since Lenin's illness, it was obvious that a power struggle in the leadership had started. After Lenin's death on 24 January 1924, during the XIIIth Party Congress a new Politburo was elected: L.B. Kamenev became the chairman, his deputy was G.E. Zinov'ev, A.I. Rykov became chairman of the *SNK SSSR*, other important leaders were members such as Trotskii as *Narkom* for the Army and Navy, Bukharin and Tomskii, chief of the labour organization. Stalin as Secretary General of the *KP(b)* was also a member, but not in the first place. Yet he had the organizational centre of the Party at his disposal. Step by step he eliminated his rivals for leadership from their positions of power. First he joined with Kamenev and Zinov'ev against his most potent competitor Trotskii, who was forced to retire from his position as *Narkom* for the Army and Navy on 17 January 1925, to be replaced – as mentioned – by Frunze.

At the XIVth Party Conference in March/April 1925 Stalin defended the theory of 'Socialism in one country' against Trotskii's theory of permanent revolution. At the XIVth Party Congress in December 1925 Stalin initiated a major campaign for the industrialization of the country and attacked the 'left opposition' around Zinov'ev and Kamenev, who now tried to join up with Trotskii. But in October 1926 Stalin managed to eject Trotskii from the Politburo, and one year later he and Zinov'ev were ejected from the *Tsentral'nyi Komitet (TsK, Central Committee)*, while during the XVth Party Congress in December 1927 they were expelled from the Party. Trotskii was exiled to Alma Ata. Zinov'ev and Kamenev submitted themselves to Stalin, but he was only waiting to finish with them. At the same congress the 'Socialist Build-Up' was decided, translating itself into forced industrialization and the forced collectivization of agriculture which led to organized purges of the *kulaks*, the peasant farmers. The resistance, especially in the Don and Kuban districts in 1928/29, was broken up by the deportation of the *kulaks*, many of whom had to go to the new industrial areas in the Urals or Siberia, such as the big metallurgic centre of Magnitogorsk. But the repression of the *kulaks* led to a grave famine with a very great number of victims.

Next Stalin started to subdue the 'deviation to the right' by Bukharin and Rykov, who were heavily reprimanded at the XVIth Party Congress in April

1929. From this time on Stalin was the absolute dictator, against whom nobody dared stand in opposition.¹

NEW DISCUSSIONS ABOUT STRATEGY

In spite of the stabilization of the Soviet regime the discussions about military and naval strategy continued and did not become any clearer. In early 1924 the outstanding Chief of Staff of the *RKKA* M.N. Tukhachevskii declared: 'Tsarist Russia followed Germany. Imperialistic dreams caused the excessive development of the Navy. The involvement in the naval armament race was a fatal error for Germany, Austria and Russia.'² He and his Chief of the Operations Department, V.K. Triandafillov, proposed as a defence in case of an attack by the 'bourgeois' powers mass counterattacks by mobile forces striking deep into enemy territory to crush the enemy's forces beyond the borders of Russia.³ Their suggestions were to cut down on naval expenditures and allocate funds only to the build-up of the Army and the Air Forces. Some of the Soviet functionaries accepted these proposals with great enthusiasm, because there were reasons to choose such a course of military policy.

In this period the international situation around the USSR was gradually improving. But the contradictions inherent in the post-war world order, and the ideological incompatibility of the two social systems caused dangerous crises, ending in explosions of hostility on both sides. The situation on the borders with Poland, Romania, Afghanistan and China remained tense. Anti-Soviet organizations operated in those countries. There were military camps and logistic bases of terrorist formations, which from time to time penetrated into the border areas of the Soviet Union. The threat of incursions forced the Soviet leaders to maintain the *RKKA* troops. The tenfold reduction in the strength of the Army after the Civil War and the low combat readiness were evaluated as the principal threats to the regime's stability and the security of the state. Separate measures for partial improvements in the work of the military establishment and in the defence structure of the country did not produce the necessary effect. The situation demanded decisive measures for a complete reorganization.

In January 1924 by a decision of the Bolshevik Party's Central Committee (*Tsentral'nyi Komitet VKP (b) – TsK VKP (b)*) – a special commission inspected the Red Army. The verdict of the commission members was that: 'In the present state the Red Army is not combat ready'.⁴

In May 1924 the XIIIth Party Congress confirmed the general directives for carrying out radical military reforms. On 26 January 1925 the People's Commissar for the Army and Navy, L.D. Trotskii was replaced by the prominent Soviet military leader M.V. Frunze, who had distinguished himself during the Civil War of 1918–20. Whereas Trotskii never gave up his cherished dream of a continuous revolution in Europe, or even world-wide, which would be supported by the Red Army acting as a workers' militia, Frunze looked to conventional military power. He saw a standing army as the only means of waging some kind of limited war. He attempted to develop a unified military and naval doctrine, called the 'proletarian military doctrine'.⁵