

A Russian Way of War?
Westernization of Russian Military
Thought, 1757-1800

by

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

Abstract

The present study constitutes one of the first attempts to establish the extent to which Russian military thought became westernized by the end of the eighteenth century. The task is an important one in light of Soviet and Russian scholarship that maintains that Russia developed a unique, different, and, some argue, superior way of war to the West. This work argues that Russian military thought was greatly influenced by the ‘military enlightenment’ of Europe, and that the ideas proposed by Russia’s foremost military theoreticians were not as novel as previously claimed. Therefore, the final intellectual product was more a continuation of, rather than a break with, Western practices and traditions of warfare. In this respect, the underlying theme of this thesis clashes with traditional Russian national military historical scholarship.

The second major theme of this study is to challenge the pervasive but flawed and often simplified interpretation of the Russian army and its soldiers as undisciplined and uneducated barbarians. Contrary to these misleading views, the writings of Russian theorists bring to light the concerns about discipline and education for the officers, personal hygiene and hospital care for the soldiers and Russian awareness of complex strategic theoretical issues. The humanitarianism and sophistication of early-modern Russian military thought thus becomes abundantly clear.

The scope of this work is inescapably restrictive, and the period that it examines, roughly from 1757 to 1800, has been consciously chosen to reflect the ideas of Russia’s two most important and influential military statesmen: Peter Rumyantsev and Alexander Suvorov.

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Many people have contributed to this project in countless ways, big and small. My supervisor, Dr. Alex Statiev, deserves a special recognition. Through many hours of discussions he challenged my intellect, and fashioned my scattered arguments and ideas into a coherent and authoritative thesis. He provided innumerable insights and suggestions that made this project both stimulating and academically exciting. My project had benefited greatly from his knowledge and guidance. I am also thankful to Drs. Geoffrey Hayes and Whitney Lackenbauer, who kindly agreed to be on my defence committee. Their erudite feedback and enthusiasm for my work was much appreciated.

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This acknowledgement page would not be complete without expressing my gratitude to my mother, Lidia Vidmont. Despite (or because of) her line of work in the world of international maritime industry, Lidia has always shown a keen interest in all of my historical studies. She contributed both financially and intellectually to my thesis, pointing out weak spots in my argument and suggesting ways to improve the text. My work was fortunate to enjoy both her avid support and timely criticisms.

Finally, thanks goes also to the Russian military thought - some fifty years of it. Without its aegis this thesis could not have been composed. Needless to say, opinions expressed here belong to me alone, as do any errors, omissions or typos.

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PROLOGUE

“...a history of ancestors
is always interesting to those
who deserve a motherland.”

Karamzin, 18th century Russian historian

As the French Revolutionary Wars were furiously raging throughout the continent in the last decade of the eighteenth century, the Russian Emperor Paul I patiently watched the political hurricane engulfing the monarchies of Western Europe. In 1799, while Napoleon embarked on a fruitless expedition to Egypt, Europe began preparing for another war on Republican France. Shocked by regicide, disgusted with French atheism, encouraged by his own diplomats¹ and backed by British and Austrian courts, Paul joined the Second Coalition. In the winter of the same year, the Russian emperor sent Russian forces to help the Hapsburgs clear Italy of the godless and marauding French. Furthermore, on special request of the Austrian Emperor Francis, Paul recalled the most eccentric of his Field Marshals, Alexander Suvorov, from exile. Suvorov received his battle baptism in the last years of the Seven Years' War, and fought in four major wars against the Poles and the Turks. He made history by becoming one of the few military commanders to have never retreated, and as it is claimed, participated in “63 battles without suffering a single major defeat.”² Suvorov fell out of favour after the death of Catherine the Great in 1796 and was banished from the court to spend the remainder of his days on one of his estates in

¹ See for instance a very ably written MA thesis by Charles Patrick Crouch, “Russian Foreign Policy and the War of the Second Coalition: A Mad Attempt at Realpolitik?: Count Semen Romanovich Vorontsov and the ‘English Connection’” (MA Thesis, Louisiana State University, 1985), 80.

² Russell Isinger, “Aleksandr Suvorov: Count of Rymniksky and Prince of Italy.” *Military History Magazine* (1996). <<http://www.historynet.com/aleksandr-suvorov-count-of-rymniksky-and-prince-of-italy.htm>> [26 December 2007]. The only time when Suvorov's attack had failed was under the walls of Ochakov in 1788, when he reportedly consumed too many spirits. See Simon Sebag Montefiore, *Prince of Princes: The Life of Potemkin* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2001), 405.

the province of Novgorod. In 1799, a frail and aging Suvorov had celebrated his 69th birthday.

Reinstated and made the supreme commander of the Austro-Russian forces, he was now on the way to catch up with his 50,000 strong army that was approaching Italy. Meanwhile, learning from their previous experience in fighting the Revolutionary *sans-culottes*, the Austrians and the British were making massive preparations for the upcoming war. Plans were devised for several years of campaigning. No one could have predicted that the gnome-like Russian Field Marshal would defeat four French armies in less than six months. Suvorov crushed General Scherer near the river Adda and in April General Moreau suffered the same fate. In June he defeated General Macdonald on the banks of Trebbia and, in the Battle of Novi, General Joubert perished along with his army. Suvorov's name thundered throughout Europe and *The Times* paid homage to the saviour of Europe.³ Suvorov was now sent to Switzerland to replicate what he had so swiftly done in Italy. The old man again made history by becoming the second military commander (after Hannibal) to march his army over the Alps in the teeth of dogged enemy resistance.⁴

Against this background in October 1799, the Russian Imperial Armies, commanded by the brilliant Suvorov (now promoted to the unprecedented rank of

³ See "Marshal Suworow's March From Italy," *The Times*, Friday, Nov 29, 1799; pg. 3. and "Marshal Suworow," *The Times*, Friday, Dec 20, 1799; pg. 4. And when he expired in 1800, *The Times* printed a glorifying arbitrary - a rare honour for someone from Russia. "The world never lost a greater Captain than the late Field-Marshal Suworow," *The Times*, 1 August 1800, 2. Neither the all-powerful Potemkin nor the influential Rumyantsev enjoyed such flattering notice upon their death.

⁴ Napoleon Bonaparte would make a similar journey in 1801, immortalized by Jacques-Louis David in "Napoleon Crossing the Alps." The equivalently propagandistic painting of Suvorov was created by Vasily Surikov, "Russian Troops under Suvorov Crossing the Alps."

Generalissimo),⁵ found themselves scaling the steep Swiss Alps. As the Russians slowly made their way through the high mountain pass of St. Gotthard, the Second Coalition began to fall apart.⁶ Emperor Paul was so dissatisfied with the Austrians that as soon as Suvorov descended from the cloudy mountains on the other side, he was ordered to bring all Russian forces home. Tired and bitter, Suvorov had no choice but to obey. Behind he left the glory of his conquests in Italy, the mountain passes littered with dead French and Russian soldiers, and his hopes for renewed operations against France.

As Suvorov was descending from the snowy peaks with the remnants of his exhausted army, there was something else that the Russians had left behind. Somewhere underneath the deep snow of the Alps, never to be found again, lay buried the “Golden Age” of the Russian art of war that heralded half a century of unprecedented geo-political expansion. In the period of less than fifty years, Russia had acquired a third of Poland, annexed the Crimea, consolidated its rule over the Ukraine and the Northern Caucasus, increased its influence in the Balkans and secured its place on the European international arena. All of the successes enjoyed by the young Romanov Empire were spearheaded as much by its diplomatic efforts as by the shining bayonets of her armies. In 1760 Berlin had capitulated to the invading Russians; Warsaw was captured in 1794; and five years later, the Russians liberated Milan from the French. During that time, a Russian soldier was a common sight to the people of Western Europe, who could see Russian Imperial Standards marching confidently through the European heartland.

⁵ So far, there have been only two people in Russian history to hold the rank of Generalissimo: the first was Suvorov; the last was Stalin.

⁶ For the reasons of the failure of the Second Coalition see: Paul W. Schroeder, “The Collapse of the Second Coalition,” *The Journal of Modern History* 59, no. 2 (June, 1987): 245.

The purpose of this study is to look beneath the surface of the violent sea of battles and campaigns that have dominated the period from the Seven Year's War to the War of the Second Coalition. The aim of this work is to survey, document and quantify the Westernization of Russian military thought in the second half of the eighteenth century and, where possible, to examine its character, trends and its failings and to put its assumptions within the greater contours of the European military landscape. Accordingly, this work posits that Russian military thought was defined by West-European influences and that the perceived variations were a response to necessity and practical demands rather than evidence of distinct and original thought, doctrine, or way of war. This interpretation flies in the face of much of the Russian scholarship that has perpetuated the thesis of 'Russian National Military Doctrine', which maintains that the Russian way of war was both different and superior to the practices of the West.⁷ Even some Western historians, such as William Fuller, maintain that Russian thoughts about and practices of war were different enough to group them in a distinctive style of warfare.⁸

This thesis argues that Russian military thought was not autochthonous by nature. That is not to say that the Russian understanding of war was either inferior or superior to that of France, England or Prussia. Indeed, by the end of the eighteenth century Russian thought reached the same theoretical conclusions as were evident in the West. As it will be shown, in almost all of its principle tenants, Russian military thought was an extension of, and not a break with, Western military traditions. From connecting war-making to politics, to seeking new tactical alternatives to linear battle formations, to examining

⁷ For instance, see A. A. Kersnovsky, *Istoria russkoi armii*, Vol. I (Moskva: Golos, 1992), 164-169. For nationalism in military affairs see Peter Von Wahlde, "Military Thought in Imperial Russia" (Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University, 1966), 95.

⁸ William C. Fuller, *Strategy and Power in Russia, 1600-1914* (New York: The Free Press, 1992), 166.

morale and psychology of soldiers, and to the use of words in their writings, Russian theorists were advancing similar ideas and tracing the same intellectual path as their counterparts in the West. Therefore, a study based on a transitional rather than national model is better posed to assess material critically and to build an intellectual bridge between Russian and Western modes of military thought.

A more tangible goal of this work is to dissipate the image of barbarism in the Russian army purveyed in Western sources, often by the leading soldiers of the day. In the 1750s, Frederick the Great reflected the general European sentiments about the state of Russian military art. “The Muscovites are a heap of barbarians,” he was once heard saying. “Any well-disciplined troops will make short work of them.”⁹ Contemporaries saw the Russian army as undisciplined, unorganized and tactically inferior, and its soldiers as uncontrollable savages with a penchant for rape and destruction. This thesis supplies the modern reader (and the King of Prussia, although posthumously) with an alternative picture of the Russian armies in the early imperial period by revealing and assessing what Russian theorists wrote about discipline, training, medical care and sanitation in the army, and civil-military relations.¹⁰

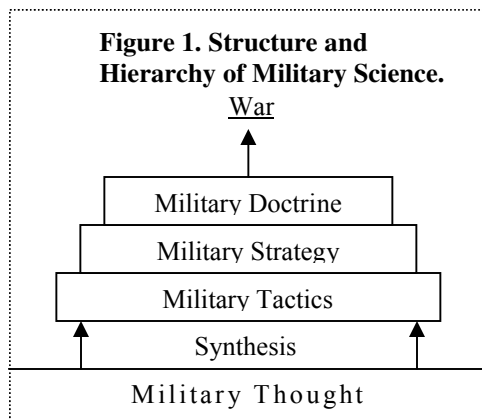
To elucidate the conceptual origins of the notion of military thought, a few definitions are essential. All the branches of military science, on their most theoretical level, are subdivided into three distinct but inter-related categories, which in their genesis are united under the rubric of military thought. For Peter von Wahlde, the term ‘military

⁹ Cited in Christopher Duffy, *Russia's Military Way to the West: Origins and Nature of Russian Military Power, 1700-1800* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), 174.

¹⁰ Despite the tantalizing presence of numerous examples in the realm of thought, this study readily recognizes the sometimes intolerable gap between the theory and practice. In many instances, rudimentary functions that were thoroughly and cogently covered in theory, received most contrite attention in practice and in some instances were neglected altogether.

thought' denotes the emergence of conscious, methodical, scientific and systematic process of approaching and solving problems related to war, peace and national security,¹¹ while Storr defines it as “the conceptual component of fighting power.”¹² This study adopts a broader definition of the term, and interprets military thought as the intellectual response of the military establishment to the phenomenon of war.

Before embarking on a journey into the depths of eighteenth century military minds, it would be useful to crystallize the theory behind the study of war. In the most



simplicistic form, the study of war consists of

tactics, strategy, and doctrine respectively.

According to Carl von Clausewitz, tactics are a theory of employment of armed elements to win a battle, which ranks the lowest in the pyramid of military science (Figure 1). The study of tactics usually preoccupies itself with the mundane

details of combat and weapon systems on a limited scale within a relatively small geographic locality. Strategy, then, is a theory of employment of battles to win a war, or to achieve a specific objective in a conflict.¹³ It involves conducting long-term campaigns, planning theatres of operations, and coordinating all the branches of the armed forces. In its scale, strategy engulfs the study of tactics and is therefore much broader in scope than the latter. Its goal is to execute the objects of national military doctrine, the last step on the ladder to war. Military doctrine serves to guide military strategy and to transform it into a national response to a military conflict, harmonizing

¹¹ The definition has been borrowed from Wahlde’s unpublished dissertation. Wahlde, viii.

¹² J. P. Storr, *The Nature of Military Thought* (Ph.D. Dissertation, Cranfield University, 2002), 3.

¹³ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 128.

the efforts of economy and society with those of the military for the survival of the state. In the context of the above theoretical framework, military thought can be described as the sea of ideas from which multiple and diverse variables of military calculus can be extracted and tested against the rough exterior of wars. History, however, offers ample examples when states chose a doctrine that did not correspond to the thinking of their military leaders. One need only look at the labours of J. F. C. Fuller in England and Charles De Gaulle in the French Third Republic to see that military thought does not always lead to a doctrine. Their innovative and notable ideas about armoured warfare were largely ignored by their militaries and governments. This discrepancy forces some ideas to remain forever submerged and others to float confidently across the centuries. That being said, in the case of eighteenth century Russia, it is remarkable to observe how often the executioners of imperial will could align the military practice of the Russian army with their military thought.¹⁴

Historiography

This project was originally conceived amidst unsuccessful attempts to find sources on early modern Russian military thought for an undergraduate paper. Besides a few scattered references nothing of substance could be located. To the author's knowledge, there is still not a single monograph in the English or Russian language that traces the development of Russian military thought, theory or doctrine through the 18th century. One of the main goals of this work is to begin rectifying this deficiency.

¹⁴ This apparently was also true of the 19th century, as writes Hines in his Ph.D. dissertation. However, his study fails to explore the origins of this congruence, since his work, like the majority of others, focuses exclusively on the 19th century. Kerry Lee Hine, "Russian Military Thought: Its Evolution Through War and Revolution, 1860-1918" (Ph.D. dissertation, The George Washington University, 1998), iii.

Frustratingly, the quest for cotemporary scholarship on Russian Imperial military thought yields few results. Two comprehensive bibliographic collections were consulted for this work. The volume by Philip Clendenning and Roger Bartlett¹⁵ provided good suggestions for some preliminary primary research, but is in need of updating. Harry Nerhood's book helped to look at Russia through the eyes of foreigners.¹⁶ Unfortunately, neither of these works contain a single record, in any language, about Russian military thought of that time. As Peter Paret acutely noted, "Imperial Russian military history in general has received very little attention in modern Western scholarship and not a great deal more in the Soviet Union"¹⁷ (or in modern Russia).

Within the timeframe of ephemeral existence of the Romanov Empire, the eighteenth century had suffered the most neglect, military thought being one of its most overlooked victims. Among a miniscule collection of works dedicated to the study of the Russian Imperial Army, only three works are devoted to the examination of military thinking therein. One is Peter von Wahlde's Ph.D. dissertation, *Military Thought in Imperial Russia*, a pioneering work whose publication has been too long over due. In his informative and thought provoking study, Wahlde mapped out the topology of the Russian military mind from the early Muscovite period until the fall of the Romanov dynasty. In his search for origins of Russian military thought, he linked them to the creation of the Military Academy in St. Petersburg in 1832. It was only then, he argues, that military studies reached the age of maturity in the Russian Empire.¹⁸ The corollary is

¹⁵ Philip Clendenning and Roger P. Bartlett. *Eighteenth Century Russia: A Select Bibliography of Works Published Since 1955* (Newtonville: Oriental Research Partners, 1981).

¹⁶ Harry Nerhood, *To Russia and Return: An Annotated Bibliography of Travelers' English-Language Accounts of Russia from the Ninth century to the Present* (Columbus: Ohio University Press, 1968).

¹⁷ Peter Paret, ed. *Makers of Modern Strategy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 899.

¹⁸ Wahlde, viii-ix.

that the work focuses on the nineteenth century, while the eighteenth century receives only a brief glance and the efforts of eighteenth century Russian theorists are largely ignored. In addition to Wahldé's dissertation, there have recently been two more major studies done about Russian military thought by Carl van Dyke¹⁹ and Kerry Lee Hine. Their work thoroughly reflects the trends in Russian military thought in the nineteenth century, but the eighteenth century still remains uncovered. It appears that they too regard the 1830s as the founding period of Russian theoretical investigations into the nature of war and dismiss the texts from the eighteenth century as irrelevant. None of the above works give a serious analytical weight to the influences of the West on Russian military mind in the eighteenth century. The present thesis rectifies this deficiency and outlines the importance of 18th century Russian military thought by highlighting the influence of Western military thought on Russian military theory.

In the study of Russian Imperial Army, 1914 has always been the traditional point of gravity, attracting to its orbit most of the research. Christopher Duffy still remains the only scholar who published a monograph about the Russian army of the eighteenth century in the English language. He offers a well researched survey of the Russian military establishment in the eighteenth century, but the scope reduces many significant events of the era to a summary. While his work provides new insights into the understanding of institutional reforms and evolution of the Russian armed forces throughout the century, it is preoccupied with the analyses of battles and campaigns, while the development and advancement of military thought and theory remain unexplored.

¹⁹ Carl van Dyke, *Russian Imperial Military Doctrine and Education, 1832-1914*. (New York: Greenwood Press, 1998).

The study of military thought in general has recently benefited from two recent works. Martin van Creveld's *The Art of War: War and Military Thought*²⁰ covers ancient Chinese thought to the war in Yugoslavia in the late 1990s, but its broad scope makes it invariably deficient in substance. Finally, J. P. Storr's unpublished dissertation has a promising title – *The Nature of Military Thought* – but its contents dwell on tactics and combat, and the analysis is centered on the British-American military doctrine.

Azar Gat's brilliant *The Origins of Military Thought* has aided greatly in the formulation of this study. In it, Gat correctly argues that “the major currents of modern military thought emerged out of the cultural frameworks and the historical and philosophical outlooks of the Enlightenment” and the reaction of other schools of thought to this movement.²¹ The monograph covers thoroughly the eighteenth century, but not a single trace of Russian thought is found in the entire book. Military thinkers of the French enlightenment and the British and German theorists are discussed in great detail, while their Russian counterparts and their thoughts still await discovery. As Jeremy Black noted in his thought provoking book *Rethinking Military History*, Gat examined only the European thought “and the challenging question of thought elsewhere was not addressed.”²² Despite this geographical shortcoming, Gat's work remains the only study that provides any interpretive synthesis of early modern European military thought. It is an authoritative volume in its own right and in many ways this project has been modeled, in both style and approach, after Gat's work.

²⁰ Martin van Creveld, *The Art of War: War and Military Thought* (London: Cassell, 2000).

²¹ Azar Gat, *The origins of military thought : from the Enlightenment to Clausewitz* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), ix.

²² Jeremy Black, *Rethinking Military History* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 67.

General, non-specific scholarship on topics of eighteenth century warfare is also remarkably scattered. Jeremy Black has been one of the foremost contributors to the study of military art of that period, though in many of his books²³ he is interested in the elusive military revolution at the expense of other theoretical developments. In other works²⁴ he looks at the eighteenth century conflict from a global perspective and neither Russia nor military theory is central to his discussion. Christopher Duffy's overview of the eighteenth century,²⁵ and a recent monograph by Armstrong Starkey,²⁶ have also helped to rescue the century's wars and their participants from the dustbin of history and to put their efforts back, to use Azar Gat's phrase, on "the intellectual map of Europe."²⁷ Because none of the above mentioned studies have been able to adequately document and explain early Russian military thought, one must turn to the Russian works, in many cases in their original, eighteenth century form.

Surprisingly, both pre-revolutionary and Soviet scholarship has little to show when it comes to the study of its military imperial past. Books published before the Russian Revolution, even when they are accessible, are fragmented and incomplete. Their credibility is often questionable since it was a pre-revolutionary standard to overstate the successes of the imperial army. The problem is further complicated by the Soviet interlude when historical scholarship was biased for political and ideological reasons. The only significant and in-depth study of the Russian army is an excellent but rare four volume work by A. A. Kersnovsky published in 1933. His treatment of the epoch of Catherine the Great is particularly illuminating. L. G. Beskrovnyi was another historian

²³ Jeremy Black, *European Warfare 1660-1815* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994).

²⁴ Jeremy Black, *Warfare in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Cassell, 1999).

²⁵ Christopher Duffy, *The Military Experience in the Age of Reason* (New York: Atheneum, 1988).

²⁶ Armstrong Starkey, *War in the Age of the Enlightenment, 1700-1789* (Westport: Praeger, 2003).

²⁷ Gat, 3.

of the Soviet era who substantially contributed to the research of the Imperial Army in the eighteenth century.²⁸ Beskrovnyi's overview of the dilemmas of Russian military history²⁹ is also highly informative. His works on historiography³⁰ and sources³¹ of the Russian Imperial army have yet to be surpassed.

In post-Soviet Russia, publishers have a habit of reprinting earlier works, albeit with different covers. Indeed, very few new and original monographs about the Imperial army have come out since 1991. Instead, the bookshelves of Moscow are creaking under the weight of literature about Stalin, Hitler and the Second World War. If a book about the 18th century army emerges, it usually does so in the form of a biography³², injected with a generous dose of Russian nationalism. "Patriot" has become a fashionable name for a publishing house in Russia.³³ Sometimes there is confusion in titles. A curious reader walking around a major Russian book store in Moscow or St. Petersburg might pick up one of the recently published, hefty titles such as *History of the Russian Army*³⁴ only to discover that the volume actually covers only the nineteenth century.

The prospect of research would have been undoubtedly bleak, if not for the Russian custom to occasionally reprint collections of rare original documents. This study is based, as much as possible, on this primary material. A three-volume collection under

²⁸ L. G. Beskrovnyi, *Russkaia armii i flot v vosemnadtsatom veke* (Moskva: Voennoe Izdatelstvo, 1958).

²⁹ L. G. Beskrovnyi and V. I. Shunkov, *Voprosy voennoi istorii Rossii* (Moskva: Institut istorii, Akademiia nauk SSSR, 1969).

³⁰ L. G. Beskrovnyi, *Ocherki voennoi istoriografii Rossii* (Moskva: Izdatelstvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1962).

³¹ L. G. Beskrovnyi, *Ocherki po istochnikovedeniu voennoi istorii Rossii* (Moskva: Izdatelstvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1957).

³² A recent example of a highly positive and romanticism account of Potemkin can be found in N. Y. Bolotina, *Knaz' Potemkin: geroi epokhi Ekaterini Velikoi* (Moscow: Vechi, 2006).

³³ A.V. Baganov and V. I. Baganov, *Polkovodzi XVIII veka* (Moscow: Patriot, 1992).

³⁴ N. Volkonskii, *Istoriia Russkoi Armii* (Moskva: AST, 2004).

the editorship of Fortunatov³⁵ and a colossal four volume-anthology put together by Mesheryakov,³⁶ both published by the Ministry of Defence of the USSR shortly after World War II, constitute the cornerstone of this work. Combined, they yield over two thousand letters, articles of correspondence, military orders, and raw statistical data. Recent archival publications that provide commentary on military works of the Russian enlightenment or publish them in their entirety have also been consulted. Goncharov's volume proved indispensable for this work.³⁷ The wide availability and relative ease of access to this amorphous body of literature makes the current state of research into the Russian eighteenth century military experience all the more perplexing and unexplainable. In the words of William Odom, "this is a case where the dialogue between the past and the present cries out from neglect."³⁸

Methodology

The period between 1757 and 1800 signifies Russian involvement in the Seven Years' War against the Prussia of Frederick the Great and the Russian withdrawal from the War of the Second Coalition during the French Revolutionary Wars. In this relatively short period of time, the foundations for Russian military thought were laid down and solidified. This period was chosen because it presents an especially fertile soil to examine the transfer of Western ideas and practices to the east. Additionally, in Russia, the absence of significant political and military consequences from the French Revolution and the turmoil in Europe allows for an almost unbroken historical narrative.

³⁵ P. K. Fortunatov, ed., *P. A. Rumyantsev*, 3 vols. (Moskva: Voennoye Ministerstvo SSSR, 1953).

³⁶ G. P. Mesheryakov, ed., *A. V. Suvorov*, 4 vols. (Moskva: Voennoye Ministerstvo SSSR, 1949-53).

³⁷ V. Goncharov, *Russkaya voennaya mysl': VIII vek* (St. Petersburg: Terra Fantastica, 2003).

³⁸ William E. Odom, "Russian Military History and the Present," in Bruce Menning and David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, eds. *Reforming the Tsar's Army: Military Innovation in Imperial Russia from Peter the Great to the Revolution* (Washington: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2004), 337.

As far as methodology is concerned, it is important to discern what this study is and is not. This study is a history of ideas and thoughts which, in the words of Arthur Lovejoy, is “something at once more specific and less restricted than the history of philosophy.”³⁹ Those seeking a deep knowledge of eighteenth century military texture of the battlefield or Russian tactics will be disappointed. “A history which aspires to traverse long periods of time, or to be universal...,” adds Hegel, “...must foreshorten its pictures by abstractions; and this includes not merely the omission of events and deeds, but whatever is involved in the fact that Thought [*sic*] is, after all, the most trenchant epitomist.” From this follows that “a battle, a great victory, a siege, no longer maintains its original proportions, but is put off with a bare mention.”⁴⁰ Accordingly, in this study, great military engagements will be treated only as a subordinate subject to the theory behind them to illustrate how ideas were manifested in reality. Nor is this a work of philosophy.⁴¹ The analytical scope of the essay stops short of the philosophical discussions and prefers to engage the material in a more concrete manner. As such, it follows in the footsteps of von Wahlde and Gat.

The present work will be based on close textual analysis of 18th century documents. The study approaches the subject of its inquiry through personalities in an attempt to gain a better understanding of the web of abstract thoughts and nebulous notions penned by their promulgators. The discussion below concentrates on two

³⁹ A. O. Lovejoy, “The Study of the History of Ideas,” in *The History of Ideas*, ed. Preston King (Totowa: Barnes and Noble Books, 1983), 179.

⁴⁰ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Philosophy of History* (New York: Dover Publications, 1956), 5.

⁴¹ For an introduction to philosophy of war see Alexander Moseley’s nine page article, “The Philosophy of War,” *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2006) <<http://www.iep.utm.edu/w/war.htm>> [1 April 2007]. For a more complex discussion about the philosophy of war, see the introduction to *On War* edited by Anatol Rapoport. Here he describes three competing strands of philosophical thought on the art of war: eschatological, cataclysmic, and political. Anatol Rapoport, “Introduction by Anatol Rapoport,” in *On War* (London: Penguin Books, 1982), 15-16.

individuals who have contributed the most to the formulation of theoretical edifice upon which successful understanding of war could be built, and who in turn established a framework for subsequent development of Russian military theory. As such, the author hopes, as much as possible and despite focusing on two men, to avoid the traditional philosophical frameworks that surround the analysis of military history (namely the Whig Interpretation of History, the Great Man approach, and Technological Determinism theories).⁴²

To establish fertile grounds for further analysis and to situate Russian military thought in the eighteenth century, one must look briefly at the trends in military theory in the rest of Europe. This is done in the first chapter, which serves three purposes. First, it surveys the military thought in the climate of the enlightenment, and samples the works of French, Prussian and English theorists, especially in the second half of the eighteenth century. The chapter then turns to the practice of war during the age of reason, and concludes with a sketch of the Russian Army in the eighteenth century. The second chapter shifts to Russia and to the works of Count Peter Rumyantsev, the father of military thought in the Russian Empire. Next, the discussion turns to the monumental efforts of Generalissimo Alexander Suvorov, who contributed the most to early Russian tactical theory and troop management. The epilogue of this work sheds some light on the general trends of early Russian military thought, assesses its Westernization, and examines its relevance to the present.

The principal omissions of this work are German, French, Italian and Turkish materials, which have been consulted only by proxy due to their relative scarcity and

⁴² For a discussion on the philosophy of military history see Stephen Morillo and Michael Frederick Pavkovic, *What is Military History?* (Cambridge: Polity, 2006), 45-61.

language barriers. The dates have been converted to Western European New Style (Georgian), which was eleven days ahead of the Old Russian (Julian) calendar (today the difference is thirteen days due to the accumulation of extra leap years). The Library of Congress translation system will be used to render Russian words into English. Where Russian words are used in plural, a “y” instead of an “s” will be added (e.g. *soldaty* in place of *soldats*). All translations from Russian and all diagrams are the author’s, unless specified otherwise. Old Russian orthography in this essay has been given a more modern rendition, but the stylistic peculiarities and contemporary idioms of the Russian text have been, as much as possible, preserved to add authenticity and style to the text.

I

SINS OF ENLIGHTENMENT: THOUGHT, WAR AND ARMIES

“I therefore shut the door and read it through,
Intent to gain by heart, with instant labour
The Art, my friends, the art –
to kill my neighbour.”
Voltaire, La Tactique (1774)

This chapter surveys the military thought of Western thinkers of eighteenth century, briefly discusses the character of war in the age of reason, and concludes with a sketch of the Russian military. To appreciate the work of Russian military intellect in the second half of eighteenth century it is necessary to place the efforts of its theorists in the complex matrix of synergy of western thought and general trends in warfare. This creates a basis for contrast and comparison that facilitates a retrospective view of the developments in Russia. A practical rendition of warfare in the eighteenth century is necessary to place these developments in broader context. Finally, it is essential to take into account the material and social qualities of the Russian Imperial Army to gauge the condition in which Rumyantsev’s and Suvorov’s ideas found their application.

From Folard to von Bülow: Theorists of Western Europe

The greatest sin of the rational mind, carefully cultivated by the scientific, progressive and secular spirit of the Enlightenment, was the new intellectual vigour that it gave to the study of war. France was the cultural and intellectual center for much of the eighteenth century and it was here that theorists penned some of the most interesting and articulate ideas about war, its conduct, and its theory. The intellectual journey of eighteenth century

military thought in France began with Jean-Charles de Folard (1669-1752). As a young man he joined Charles XII on his campaigns of the Great Northern War against Russia. By observing the conduct of the Swedish king's forces, Folard became a great advocate of shock tactics which, he believed, could "overcome the apparent stalemate produced by the linear fire tactics of that time."⁴³ He was sceptical of firepower, and believed that firearms reduced the offensive capacity of French armies. His ideas became important in the Russian context, especially with the rise of Alexander Suvorov. As the chapter will show, the foremost military thinkers in Europe rejected Folard's devotion to the bayonet, while in Russia it found a dedicated following.⁴⁴ Folard's lengthy study of Polybius, which he published between 1727 and 1730 (*Histoire de Polybe*), convinced him that ancient armies gained victory through hand-to-hand combat rather than relying on archery or catapults to decide the outcome of the battle. This led him to propose the use of phalanx, or columns, which he argued were more agile and flexible than lines. In his works he outlined in great depth the tactical transformation of battalions into files. Bordering on mathematical precision, Folard guaranteed that "the Column is to be formed in forty Seconds of a Minute by this Tactic."⁴⁵ In 1724, three years after the conclusion of the Great Northern War, Folard published his major treatise *Nouvelles découvertes sur la guerre*, which is still hard to come by in the English language.

⁴³ Starkey, 34.

⁴⁴ The author so far has not been able to establish whether Suvorov's ideas originated from Folard or if he had developed them independently. What is for certain is that Suvorov knew the French language and was an avid reader of both classic and contemporary military texts. It is very probable that he came across Folard, and his work influenced the formulation of Suvorov's ideas.

⁴⁵ Folard's major ideas on tactics were translated into English by Rochfort McNeale. His translation still remains the most accessible volume of Folard's work in English today. Rochfort McNeale, ed. *A Sketch of a Tactick for the Column: And for the Battalion of Monsieur De Folard* (Dublin: Printed by S. Hyde, 1731), 25. This is the most popular translation of Folard's tactical work.

His work was one of the main precursors to what Armstrong Starkey calls ‘enlightened military thought’. The intellectual model of this early French writer possessed the three pillars that reflected the spirit of the time. First, Folard’s thought reflected a keen fascination with classical Rome and Greece. It was believed that the military systems of the ancients could serve as an ideal for the present. Second, Folard attempted to examine war from a scientific perspective to discover universal principles guarding its conduct. Finally, and most vitally, by examining the role of close combat in achieving victory, he addressed the psychological dimensions of war, something examined even deeper by his followers.⁴⁶ Folard’s thoughts influenced the next generation of military theorists, among which were such celebrated figures as Maurice de Saxe, Frederick the Great and even Napoleon.

The life and career of Herman Maurice, Comte de Saxe (1696-1750), was typical of a member of eighteenth century metropolitan elite. A bastard son of the Polish king, he served against the French at the age of twelve, joined Eugene of Savoy on his campaigns against the Turks, and could have even shared the throne with the Russian Empress Anne, if not for an untimely intrigue with one of the ladies of the court at St. Petersburg.⁴⁷ Banned by Catherine the Great, he went to France in search of fortune. His brilliant victory at the Battle of Fontenoy in 1745 against the British, Dutch and Hanoverian armies earned him the Marshal’s baton and instant fame throughout Europe.

Besides being one of the most capable commanders of Louis XV, de Saxe also left a literary legacy. Written in 1732 and published in 1757, his famous *My Reveries Upon the Art of War* (*Mes reveries sur l’art de la guerre*) became one of the most

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ W. F. Reddaway, *A History of Europe from 1715 to 1814* (London: Methuen and Co., 1964), 534.

influential military essays of the century. Conceived in thirteen nights of fever (and some say under the influence of opium), *Mes Rêveries* did not offer a new system of war, like the writings of Folard.⁴⁸ Instead, de Saxe was one of the first writers to view the study of war within the emerging competition of artistic and scientific interpretations. The opening pages of his work attest to his philosophical deliberation. “War is a science covered with shadows in whose obscurity one cannot move with assured step,” he wrote. “Routine and prejudice, the natural result of ignorance, are its foundations and support,” began the *Rêveries*.⁴⁹ His verdict mimicked Folard’s – “War is a trade for the ignorant and a science of the expert.”⁵⁰ He approved of Folard’s attempts to establish universal customs and principles and “pass the bounds of prejudices,” but Folard went too far for de Saxe. For the victor of Fontenoy there was no universal theory of war, since the outcome of a military conflict “depends upon an infinite number of circumstances”⁵¹ for which no system can fully account.

Thus there emerged early but clear voices in the debate surrounding the foundations of the military craft which were absent from the Russian military discourse. This debate became especially heated in Europe in the 19th century and continued to dominate the minds of foremost military writers ever since. The positivism of the scientific age and the reliance on methodology to produce general rules defining the conduct of war clashed with Clausewitzian pre-cursors who leaned towards the irrational nature of human behaviour, which irrevocably defined the nature of armed struggle. To understand the nature of war, de Saxe argued a hundred years before von Clausewitz, one

⁴⁸ Starkey, 50.

⁴⁹ Marshal Maurice de Saxe, “My Reveries Upon the Art of War,” in *The Roots of Strategy*, Thomas R. Phillips, ed. (Harrisburg: Stackpole Books, 1985), 189.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 202.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 190.

must study the nature of the human heart. “Without a knowledge of the human heart, one is dependent upon the favour of fortune, which sometimes is very inconsistent.” Avoiding scientific rhetoric, de Saxe relied on the elements of human character: courage, intelligence and health were the three qualities of a successful general.⁵² In other words, he proposed a serious inquiry into the psychological dimension of warfare, independent of schematic systems, rules, principles and models that dominated so many contemporary titles. De Saxe wanted to go beyond the traditional subjects of tactics, weapons and logistics and look at factors that influenced the morale and motivation of his troops, as well as what kind of people should be recruited to serve in the armed forces.⁵³ Consistent with his time, de Saxe looked to the ancients for inspiration, but here too he disagreed with his contemporaries. Unlike his mentor Folard, who saw the phalanx as the epitome of military organization, de Saxe favoured the Roman legion.⁵⁴ Moreover, he envisioned this unit to be self contained; to consist of cavalry, infantry and artillery; to be mobile; and to be able to operate independently of the main army while still remaining an integral part of the national military force. What de Saxe envisaged was the structural unit known today as a division. By dwelling deeper into the human element of combat and by looking beyond the regimental organization of the army, Maurice de Saxe made a giant leap over contemporary French thought, and his words captivated European military intellectuals for the next century.

French military enlightenment thought found its most powerful evocation in the writings of Jacques Antoine Hippolyte, Comte de Guibert (1743-1790), who brought principles and ideas of his predecessors to their logical, theoretical outcome. In 1772,

⁵² Ibid., 294.

⁵³ Ibid., 193.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 210.

when Guibert was only twenty-nine, he published his two volume *Essai général de Tactique* and became a salon celebrity. Voltaire's poem *La Tactique* was written in praise of Guibert's work, and several French Revolutionary ordinances were based on ideas developed in his essay.⁵⁵

Guibert looked at war as a science and, reminiscent of de Saxe, wrote in his usual prolix style:

Almost all sciences have certain or fixed elements, which succeeding ages have only extended and developed, but the tactics, till now wavering and uncertain, confined to time, arms, customs, all the physical and moral qualities of a people have of course been obliged to vary without end....⁵⁶

Hastily dismissing all the previous attempts as insufficient, Guibert sought to construct general and universal principles for military tactics that would account for the endless variations in military theory.

His work is detailed, technical, and innovative. He was the first of the eighteenth century theorists to think about grand tactics.⁵⁷ His book was among the first attempts to differentiate between tactics and strategy.⁵⁸ He sought to apply mathematical analysis to the study of war and continued to advocate the use of columns. What endeared his work to the salons of Paris and subsequently to the French army, however, was his ability to make purely military subjects concomitant with political discourse. Through his analysis of the dismal French performance during the Seven Years' War, Guibert insisted that the

⁵⁵ Creveld, 97.

⁵⁶ Cited in Gat, 47.

⁵⁷ In his *Essai* Guibert wrote that "Tactics must be divided into two parts: one, elementary and limited, the other, compound and sublime." In the latter part of this sentence there can be seen a spark of conscious recognition that the military art goes beyond the quantifiable elements and that there is something lurking beyond the mere mastery of arms and positioning of troops. Jacques Antoine Hippolyte de Guibert, "General Essay on Tactics," in *The Sword and the Pen: Selections from the World's Greatest Military Writings*, Adrian L. Hart, ed. (New York: T.Y. Crowell, 1976), 134.

⁵⁸ Creveld, 98.

military power of a state should be based upon the resources drawn from the entire nation and not just a standing army. National participation would be achieved through general conscription. The question was how to resolve the apparent dilemma of sustainability. The Leviathan that Guibert was proposing to create would feed off the enemy land during wartime and thus make war pay for itself. This method, he argued, would save the national treasury from certain bankruptcy. Finally, the new force required a new organizational palette for its control and movement. Picking up where de Saxe had left off, Guibert thought it sensible that the colossal national armies be atomized into numerous, smaller independent formations that would come together at the moment of battle.⁵⁹

The manner of Guibert's thought and the model that he developed in the 1770s is of special interest to this study because General Alexander Suvorov was simultaneously devising a similar model in Russia. As this thesis demonstrates, Russian thought stumbled upon similar conclusions as the theoreticians in the West. In the process, however, it avoided the politically explosive ideas of the Enlightenment inherent in the thought of the French military theorists.

As Azar Gat rightly points out, Britain could boast only one military thinker who substantially contributed to the Enlightenment discourse about war in the eighteenth century, the rest of them having been silenced by the dominant tactical ideas of the Duke of Marlborough.⁶⁰ This solitary exception was Henry Lloyd (1720-1783), who served in numerous armies and had a prosperous career in espionage. In the 1740s, he spied for

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Gat, 67. John Churchill (1650–1722), the Duke of Marlborough, has been one of the most outstanding military leaders of England before the Duke of Wellington. Marlborough's victories at Blenheim (1704) and Ramillies (1706) against the armies of Louis XIV in the War of Spanish Succession made him a legend.

Marshal de Saxe and drew up plans for the French invasion of Britain.⁶¹ In 1773 he joined the Russian forces as divisional commander against the Turks. His major works, now diligently collected by Patrick J. Speelman in a single volume, reflect an intermingling of both French and Prussian lines of thought. Lloyd was the earliest of the proponents of the scientific approach to the study of war. He compared the army to a mechanical device which, “like all other machines ... is composed of various parts, and its perfection will depend, first on that of its several parts; and second, on the manner in which they are arranged....”⁶² Through his histories of the Seven Years’ War and by applying “mechanistic-materialistic interpretation of the world” to the study of war, he began to change the focal point of European military thought from the “organization of armies to the conduct of operation.”⁶³ At the same time, he borrowed de Saxe’s terminology and his concerns about the ‘human heart.’ Lloyd gave much attention to the factors behind the motivation of the troops and to moral forces present in the conduct of war. Furthermore, by looking at liberties and passions that motivated the troops in the ranks he put a human face on a common soldier and established that there is a reciprocal relationship between soldiers and their commanders.⁶⁴ By comparison, no Russian thinker achieved a comparable scientific and moralistic synthesis of warfare. Neither did it exist in the Prussia of Frederick the Great, where the lot of the common soldier – simple cannon fodder – was considered inconsequential in the grand scheme of war.

⁶¹ Hart, ed., 3.

⁶² Patrick J. Speelman, ed. *War, Society and Enlightenment: The Works of General Lloyd* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 385.

⁶³ Gat, 73.

⁶⁴ Patrick J. Speelman, *Henry Lloyd and the military enlightenment of eighteenth-century Europe* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2002), 96.

Frederick II (1712 –1786) occupies a special place in the study of military thought in the eighteenth century, if only because of his political position. While the theoreticians and generals were scribbling away their voluminous treatises, Frederick had an opportunity to test the validity of their ideas in practice. He could not be considered a founder of a new system, like Folard or Guibert, but his oblique order, which he no doubt borrowed from the writings of Vegetius,⁶⁵ made a great impression on his contemporaries. One observer writes:

The favourite manoeuvres of the King of Prussia, are the change of front, (of which the oblique order is always the basis) and the forming it into columns on the right and left, by means of which he directs his greatest strength to the particular point he has in view, and at the same time secures the weaker part of his army from the enemy attack.⁶⁶

Frederick was also one of the few military men who began to consider strategy⁶⁷ in war within the political environment. “Strategy is based on the forces you have, on the strength of the enemy, on the situation of the country where you want to carry the war, and on the actual political condition of Europe,” he observed.⁶⁸ Despite many of such sagacious statements, Frederick never significantly departed from the styles of eighteenth century warfare, nor from their tactics or battle formations. On the purely tactical level, however, he showed Europe the limits of what could be achieved by methods and

⁶⁵ Writing around 450 BC, Vegetius stated: “as the armies are marching up to the attack, your left wing must be kept back at such a distance from the enemy’s right as to be out of reach of their darts and arrows. Your right wing must advance obliquely upon the enemy’s left, and begin the engagement,” Flavius Vegetius Rhenanus, “The Military Institutions of the Romans (*De re militari*),” in Thomas R. Phillips, ed., 160-161.

⁶⁶ Jacques Antoine Hippolyte Guibert, *Observations on the military establishment and discipline of His Majesty the King of Prussia* (London: printed for Fielding and Walker, 1780), 97.

⁶⁷ It is important to note that the word ‘strategy’ was not part of the 18th century vocabulary. Even though the concepts of what today is meant by this word had existed in the 18th century, the term used in most military works was ‘campaign plans’ or ‘projets de campagne’. Jay Luvaas, ed. *Frederick the Great on the Art of War* (New York: Free Press, 1966), 306. There was also a confusion about the word tactics. De Saxe wrote, “No one knows what the ancients meant by the words *tactics*.” De Saxe in Thomas R. Phillips, 202.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 307-8.

standards of the time. Paradoxically he could not overstep the boundaries that he himself so clearly identified. To do that, Frederick would have had to change the socio-economic relationship within the army and base it on the national system of Guibert. It would have revolutionized his kingdom in the same way *levée en masse* revolutionized France, and his Prussian mind was not prepared for such innovation.⁶⁹

Frederick's military thought went through a two-phased evolution. In his famed 1747 *Instructions to the Generals*, the young soldier-king wrote that "war is decided only by battles, and it is not finished except by them."⁷⁰ He regarded war as an art, commenting that "there is no finer and more useful art than the art of war...."⁷¹ After participating in some of the bloodiest battles of the century, however, he began to re-examine his previous attitudes toward the conduct of war and his mind began to recoil at the idea of pitched engagements. In later stages of his life, as many historians have observed, Frederick resorted to the strategy of attrition, especially during the Seven Years' War.⁷² After 1763, he advocated caution and manoeuvre and the search for a decisive battle was to be avoided. By the end of his life, the military thought of Frederick the Great became reactionary.

The degree in humanitarianism in Prussian thought is important to juxtapose with the humanistic tendencies of the Russian military later on. Beneath the tacit wit of

⁶⁹ R. R. Palmer, "Frederick the Great, Guibert, Bülow: From Dynastic to National War," in *Makers of Modern Strategy from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age*, Paret, Peter, ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 98.

⁷⁰ Frederick II, "The Instruction of Frederick the Great for His Generals, 1747," in Thomas R. Phillips, ed., 391.

⁷¹ Cited in Starkey, 47.

⁷² Robert A. Kann, "Reflections on the Causes of Eighteenth-Century Warfare in Europe," in *East Central European Society and War in the Pre-Revolutionary Eighteenth Century*, Gunther Erich Rothenberg, Bela K. Kiraly and Peter F. Sugar, eds. (Boulder : Social Science Monographs, 1982), 33. This monograph also contains some interesting discussions on the development of military doctrine and thought in Austria and about Marshal Daun, one the most successful Austrian commanders of the 18th century.

Frederick's pen often lurked a mind of a cold blooded soldier that surfaced in his military writings. His army was known for its martinet character, and the philosopher-king maintained that the soldiers should fear their officers more than the enemy. Advising his generals on the manners of espionage, Frederick wrote:

If greed for silver does not work, it is necessary to employ fear. Seize some burgomaster of a city where you have a garrison, or some mayor of a village where you camp, and force him to take a disguised man, who speaks the language of the country, and under some pretext to conduct him as his servant in the enemy army. Threaten him that if he does not bring your man back, you will cut the throat of his wife and children whom you hold under guard....⁷³

Voltaire had a good reason to abhor the militarism of his friend, and it soon became clear that Frederick the Great was a humanist, not a humanitarian. Such constructive outbursts of predetermined cruelty, especially against civilians, could not be located in the official Russian texts that guided the development of Russian military theory.

Dietrich Heinrich Freiherr von Bülow (1757-1807), whose *Geist des neuern Kriegssystems* was published in 1799 and translated into English in 1806 as *The Spirit of the Modern System of War*, furthered the scientific approach established by Henry Lloyd. As such, Von Bülow's thought also serves as a point of contrast to the Russian thought of the same period. Von Bülow's ideas present an intellectual extreme of the enlightenment thought, and his writings denote what Azar Gat calls "a geometric science of strategy." Indeed, in the twentieth century von Bülow would be regarded as one of the founding fathers and advocates of geopolitical science.⁷⁴ He was a critic of the Frederickian system and the Prussian model and a supporter of the revolutionary warfare practiced by

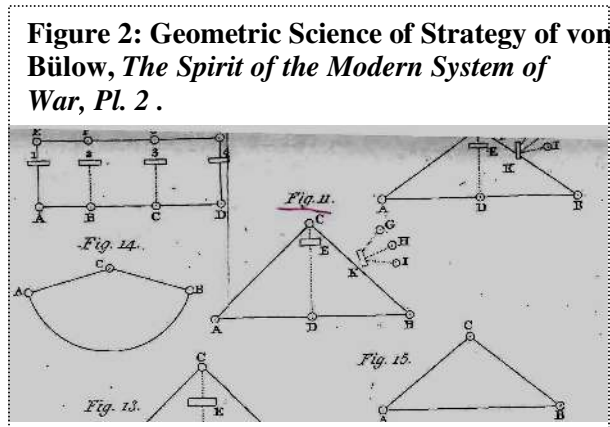
⁷³ Frederick II, in Thomas R. Phillips, 355.

⁷⁴ Gat, 83.

Republican France. For his unorthodox military views and his criticism of the Prussian army, von Bülow was sentenced to prison where he subsequently died.

By subordinating war to the empirical analysis of mathematics, von Bülow sought to mould it from art into science. At the end of his book he exclaimed: “War will no longer be called an art, but a science; for art is the application of science. Science is in the mind only; art descends from the mind into the sphere of activity.”⁷⁵ His attempt at severe conceptualization of military theory left von Bülow with abstractions far removed and isolated from the confusion of combat and unpredictability of battle, as the following example suggests:

The army E, (*fig 11.*) acting from the base A D B of the right-angled triangle A C B, towards the object C, has no occasion to fear being cut off, or that its convoys will be intercepted; for, though the enemy may, indeed, cut off the lines of operation B C, or A C, according to the side from which he comes, he cannot possibly cut off the line C D, or any other, either between B and D, or A and D.⁷⁶ (Figure 2)



Some fifty-nine illustrations, resembling carefully drawn mathematical shapes, are appended at the end of his book. The human face of an individual soldier remains absent in his thought. Even though von Bülow’s ideas aroused the

curiosity of late eighteenth century minds and agitated the thinkers of the later years, many of his pronouncements were deemed impractical and many of his conclusions erroneous. For example, the insistence “that the number, and not the excellence of troops

⁷⁵ Dietrich Heinrich Freiherr von Bülow, *The Spirit of the Modern System of War* (London: Sold by T. Egerton, 1806), 228.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 59.

gives success in modern system of war,”⁷⁷ was challenged systematically even during his lifetime. Thus there emerge three threads in the military thought of the European Enlightenment: tacit appreciation of the political side of war, especially in Prussia; development of psychological factors in combat; and finally the unprecedented application of pseudo-scientific principles to the study of warfare.

“The Sport of Kings”: Some Remarks on 18th Century Warfare

It is important to appreciate the scope of armed conflict of Europe during the height of the *ancien régime* because it represented one of the major modes of human experience during the eighteenth century. Almost two-thirds of the years between 1700 and 1800 were consumed by the ravages and fires of war which, as the years progressed, became more bloody and global in scope. The casualties grew in consecutive progression during the period: 64,000 in the Great Northern War, which began in 1700 and lasted for twenty-one years; the War of Austrian Succession produced 359,000 casualties in eight years; and during the Seven Years’ War the total bill for the dead and wounded reached 992,000. The climax was reached during the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars, which resulted in a total loss of 2.5 million lives by 1815.⁷⁸ It is not surprising that, according to some historians, the Age of Enlightenment “began with Marlborough and Eugene and ended with Suvorov and Bonaparte.”⁷⁹

To understand the outlines of broad trends and evolutions in the practice of European warfare, a brief and general sketch of eighteenth century battlefields is necessary. After all, the battlefield was the inescapable product of intellectual constructs

⁷⁷ Ibid., 230.

⁷⁸ John A. Lynn. “International rivalry and warfare,” in *The Eighteenth Century*, T.C.W. Blanning, ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 180-82

⁷⁹ Reddaway, 532.

– the arena where armies of Europe manifested their ideas in practice and exhibited their understanding of theories of war. Did the theoretical ponderings of military writers find their way to the battlefield and, if so, how were their ideas applied in war? First, in the age of Enlightenment, diplomacy was often subordinated to the act of war, and not *vice versa*. Little credence was given to political discourse. For instance, to Denis Diderot, the father of *Encyclopédie*, diplomacy was an “obscene art that hides itself in the folds of deceit.”⁸⁰ Second, there was a salient distinction between wars of annihilation and wars of attrition. Carl von Clausewitz, the 19th century military philosopher, first examined this after the French Revolutionary Wars. According to him, eighteenth century strategy focused on attrition rather than annihilation of the enemy. The latter plays an increasingly omnipresent role in struggles that are fuelled by ideological and religious reasons. Since war in the eighteenth century was primarily driven by reasons of state and took the form of large and often shifting coalitions, annihilation was a “hopeless venture.”⁸¹ The exception to this rule was the wars fought against the Turks in the east, where the Russian and Ottoman armies (under the religious banners of their respective empires) adopted doctrines that went beyond the framework of limited war carefully observed in Western Europe. The development of the tactical and strategic principles of annihilation are discerned in the thought of Russian Field Marshals Peter Rumyantsev and Alexander Suvorov in subsequent chapters.

As far as forces were concerned, several tendencies are apparent, many of which continued from the previous century. As M. S. Anderson correctly observed, “the

⁸⁰ Cited in Robert A. Kann, in Rothenberg et. all., 34.

⁸¹ Ibid., 33.

eighteenth century was not an age of rapid development of military techniques,⁸² in contrast to the preceding two centuries. Rather it was a century of a slow but powerful process, a menacing dreadnought that accumulated inertia with each passing year and reached its crescendo in Napoleonic Era. The armies did not see a substantial increase since the time of Marlborough and Eugene, and, as Duffy writes, “sixty thousand troops were about the maximum that could be managed by the command and control machinery of the time.”⁸³ As the century dragged on, pikemen from the era of Louis XIV were phased out, as were the “heavy and often unreliable matchlock guns.” In their place were introduced lighter and more rapid-firing flintlock muskets, armed with bayonets.⁸⁴ New forces also made their debut on European battlefields. Light infantry in Europe was first used by the Russians in the Seven Years’ War⁸⁵ and significant improvements were made in mobile artillery by the French. Throughout the eighteenth century, mercenaries gave way to standardized uniform, drill, and equipment. That is not to say that the soldiers of fortune faced chronic unemployment. On the eve of the revolution, France still had 40,000 mercenaries serving under its colors.⁸⁶

Socio-cultural character, administration and punishments for crimes and insubordination varied greatly in European armies. They went from flogging and cutting noses for desertion to gory whippings for theft. When James Boswell, an English nobleman, observed a regimental exercise on his grand tour to Prussia in 1764, he wrote that “the soldiers seemed in terror. For the least fault they were beaten like dogs...I also saw a deserter pass the *baguette* [flogged] twelve times. He was much cut. It made me

⁸² M. S. Anderson, *Europe in the Eighteenth Century, 1713-1783*, 187.

⁸³ Christopher Duffy, *Frederick the Great: A Military Life* (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1985), 304.

⁸⁴ Jeremy Black, *Eighteenth-Century Europe* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999), 354.

⁸⁵ M. S. Anderson, *Europe in the Eighteenth Century, 1713-1783*, 187.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 182.

sick to see it.”⁸⁷ Officers, on the other hand, could not have been dealt with in the similar manner by their superiors. Christopher Duffy explains that:

Major infractions of duty or subordination were properly the affairs of the court martial, but Frederick and the Russian field-marshal Suvorov were both aware that it would have been subversive of discipline to drag a senior officer before such a tribunal...They preferred to wait until the wretched man had committed some minor mistake on the parade or on manoeuvres, and then break him on the spot. They thereby avoided a public scandal, while astonishing the army by a spectacular display of tyrannical power.⁸⁸

Most of the time abuses by senior military administrators were so numerous and widespread that most officers went unpunished, and in many cases their abuses were never discovered.

The conduct of war was governed by laws and formalities that were duly observed by all armies of Europe. Alexander Suvorov supplies the most illustrative example. In early December 1790, he was put in charge of the siege of Ismail fortress on the river Danube, in modern day Ukraine. On December 18th, Suvorov sent a short note to Mehmet Pasha, the commander of the Ismail garrison: “I have arrived here with the army. 24 hours for deliberation – your will; my first shot – no will; storm – death. This I leave at your consideration.”⁸⁹ What Suvorov meant here is that within 24 hours the Turks could surrender on their own terms. That privilege would be forfeited after a day, when Russian cannons would open fire. If the enemy would surrender at that time, the Russians would set the terms. If the Turks still would not surrender and waited for the Russians to storm the fortress, they could expect the most savage fighting. In the case of Ismail, the

⁸⁷ The sight made such an impression on Boswell that he gave four groschen to the flogged soldier. James Boswell, *Boswell on the Grand Tour: Germany and Switzerland, 1764* (London: Heinemann, 1953), 80.

⁸⁸ Duffy, *The Military Experience in the Age of Reason*, 82.

⁸⁹ Suvorov to the Serasker of Izmail fortress, 7 December 1790, Kiril Pigarev, *Soldat polkovodez* (Moscow: ORIZ, 1944), 134.

Turks, confident of their unapproachable and impregnable position, chose to try to withstand the Russian assault. As a result, by the end of the day there were just 9,000 people left in Ismail out of a population of 35,000.⁹⁰ Suvorov had 30,000 troops and at least a third had perished trying to take the citadel.⁹¹ “It is no exaggeration when I say that the gutters of the town were dyed with blood,”⁹² recalled the Comte de Damas in his memoirs.

Even though the case of Ismail was extreme even by the standards of the day, it accorded with the military custom of eighteenth century warfare. As Martin Van Creveld summarizes, it was “a regular procedure developed for surrendering fortresses with honour by means of the so called *belle capitulations*.”⁹³ If a fortress surrendered the day agreed on by both parties, the defenders would be spared. If, however, they decided to stubbornly hold out, rape and total pillage was a matter of course to compensate the soldiers for their losses and frustrations.

The same fundamental architecture of laws and reciprocal behaviour that was exhibited in siege warfare was also seen in regular battles. Bruce Menning eloquently wrote that, in the eighteenth century, “operations and tactics resembled a well-choreographed minuet in which lines of forces, movement, and mass all corresponded

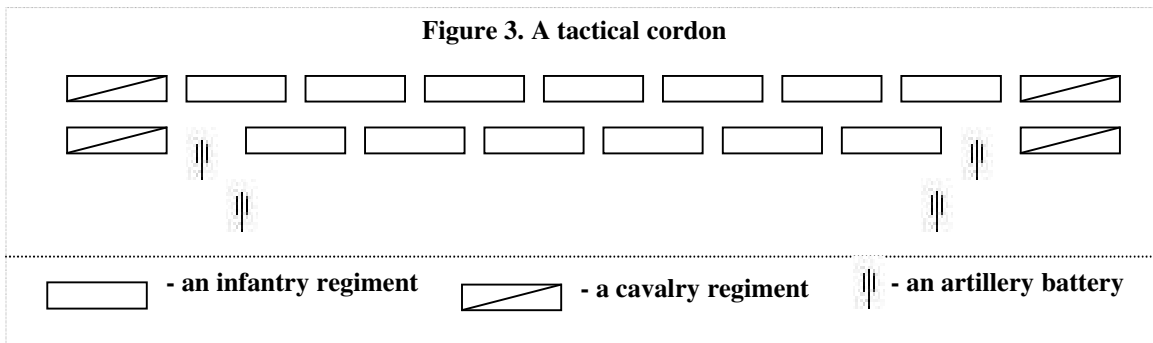
⁹⁰ According to Kersnovsky, out of the garrison of 40,000 only 6,000 were taken prisoner. Kersnovsky, Vol. I, 154. Beskrovnyi writes that “out of 35-thousand garrison 26 thousand were killed and 9 were taken prisoner.” Beskrovnyi, *Russkaia armia i flot v vosemnaatsatom veke*, 563.

⁹¹ Suvorov liked to minimize his own casualties in his reports, and so in his official letter to Potemkin he wrote that altogether Russian forces suffered two thousand dead, and even more wounded. As modern analysis asserts, it was probably significantly more. Suvorov to Potemkin, 13 December 1790, Mesheryakov, Vol. II, 540.

⁹² Damas, 141.

⁹³ Martin Van Creveld, “Technology and War I: to 1945,” in *The Oxford History of Modern War*, ed. Charles Townshend (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 212.

with prevailing conceptions of order, clarity, and logic.”⁹⁴ This was vividly manifested in the so-called cordon system that characterized European warfare from the 1680s to about the 1820s and was enthusiastically and universally applied by all armies of Europe (Figure 3).



Frederick II was one of the greatest practitioners of the cordon system, and wrote in his *Instructions* that what is most advantageous is “to occupy such positions yourself as enable you to cover a great deal of the country by small movements and so located that you will never be cut off from your own supplies nor from places which you should protect.”⁹⁵ Carl von Clausewitz supplied one of the best critical explanations of this disposition. “By a cordon we mean any system of defence in which a series of interconnected posts is intended to give direct protection to an area,” he wrote in *Vom Krieg*. At its heart, the cordon involved the even spreading of one’s armed elements across the battlefields and theaters of war. The goal of such disposition was to cover lines of communications and be everywhere at the same time. According to von Clausewitz, the function of the cordon was to withstand a “slight attack” and not “the main force of the enemy.” The philosophy of the cordon system was defensive and this was the nature “of all the lines and frontier defences of the European states bordering on Asia and

⁹⁴ Bruce W. Menning, “Russia and the West: The problem of Eighteenth-Century Military Models”, in A. G. Cross, ed., 284.

⁹⁵ Frederick II, in Thomas R. Phillips, 391-2.

Turkey.”⁹⁶ It did not intend to destroy the enemy on the field of battle, and the application of this system to the military topography of combat meant that engagements were indecisive and a crushing victory less feasible. Indeed, sieges and the defence of strategic fortifications “was a much more common military experience than battle”⁹⁷ in the eighteenth century.

The cordon system manifested itself two ways. First, it could be seen at the strategic level in the construction of fortresses and citadels across the borders of former European empires (especially France) fearful of invasions by the Hapsburgs and Russia. Its application could also be observed at the tactical level. When opposing armies met in combat, the three fighting elements (humans, horses, and guns) were arranged in a recognizable linear fashion across the battlefield. This milieu of flesh and metal was usually distributed in two lines stretching for up to seven kilometres, comprising three rows each. The infantry was located in the middle, the cavalry was on the flanks to ensure its freedom of movement, and the artillery was placed in the intervals among the infantry battalions.⁹⁸ From a bird’s eye, this setup resembled a game of chess with each regiment corresponding to a piece on the chessboard.

Naturally, the cordon put a heavy emphasis on drill and discipline of the soldiers. Eighteenth century armies were composed of highly trained professionals, who when killed, could not be easily replaced, since a lot of time and effort went into training, feeding and clothing the recruits. Cannons were expensive, and cavalry needed constant upkeep. Indeed, “the eighteenth century army was an expensive tool.” Understandably, sovereigns were hesitant to risk pitched battles and generals “had little to gain, and much

⁹⁶ Clausewitz (1984), 453.

⁹⁷ Starkey, 37.

⁹⁸ Oleg Mikhailov, *Nauka pobezhdat’* (Moscow: Molodaia Gvardia, 1984), 472-3.

to lose, from serious fighting.”⁹⁹ This meant that, at least in Western Europe, “strategy and military thinking generally were still based mainly on ideas of limited war, of caution and avoidance of the uncertainties of great pitched battles.”¹⁰⁰ The corollary to this thinking was that, by the mid 1700s, manoeuvre had acquired a new purpose. Since the mentality of a general officer dictated him that “it is better to preserve your own troops than to destroy the troops of the enemy,” armies often embarked on elaborate manoeuvres to deliberately avoid the enemy and to achieve a strategic victory by cutting his lines of communications and compelling the foe to retreat.¹⁰¹ When approached from this perspective, defensive disposition and strategy seemed more productive than aggressive offensive.

The disadvantages of the cordon system are immediately apparent to a modern reader but they were not so to its practitioners. The linear disposition of forces constrained operational maneuverability of the army or any one of its elements. In addition, the flanks and especially the rear were always vulnerable because they were inherently exposed. Furthermore, movement was restricted. When an advance was made, it had to be done slowly to retain the proper step and formations. The main deficiency of the cordon battlefield system, however, was the dispersion of striking power. The concentration of forces in one particular spot on the battlefield under the cordon system was almost unattainable.

In retrospect, the cordon system reveals a crisis of military thought. There was a need for development of new strategies and tactics which would be able to overthrow the

⁹⁹ Anatol Rapoport, “Introduction”, in *On War*, 19.

¹⁰⁰ M. S. Anderson, *War and Society in Europe of the Old Regime 1618-1789* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1988), 196.

¹⁰¹ Leonard W. Cowie, *Eighteenth-Century Europe* (London: G. Bell and Sons, Ltd., 1964), 129.

existing method of conducting warfare and break the chains restraining soldiers, officers and armies.¹⁰² One of the first armies that recognized this crisis, and offered a practical substitute that would prove to be very successful against the established norms, was the army of the Romanovs.

An Army of Best and Worst Qualities: the Russian Army in the 18th Century

At this point it is important to shift the attention of the narrative from intellectual and practical topologies of the Western warfare to looking due East to briefly survey the army of Imperial Russia. In the eighteenth century, Russia faced almost an uninterrupted continuum of warfare that stretched from the Baltic Sea to the Mediterranean. The century began with a Great Northern War that persisted for over twenty years (1700-21), when Russia challenged the hegemony of Sweden in the Baltic. A year later, Russia launched military offensives against Persia (1722-32) that lasted for a decade. After that came the War of Polish Succession (1733-35), the war with the Turks (1736-39) and four campaigns against the Crimean Tatars (1735-38). This was followed by a Swedish War of 1741-43 and the devastating Seven Years' War (1757-62) where Russia shed much blood and money for meagre gains. The reign of Catherine the Great brought with it another four major wars: the First Polish War (1768-72), the First Russo-Turkish War (1768-74), the Second Turkish War (1787-91), another war with Sweden (1788-90), and a Polish Civil War (1794-95). In 1799-1800 the Russians found themselves on the offensive against the French in Holland, Italy and Switzerland.¹⁰³ With the unprecedented expansion and militarism of the Russian state after 1721 “the military center of gravity of

¹⁰² Mikhailov, 473.

¹⁰³ Elise Kimerling Wirtschafter, “Military Service and Social Hierarchy,” in Eric Lohr and Marshall Poe, eds. *The Military and Society in Russia 1450-1917* (Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 2002), 232.

the continent had...moved markedly to the east.”¹⁰⁴ No longer could France, England or Prussia ignore ‘Europe east of the Elbe’ when settling their military or diplomatic quarrels. If in 1731 the approximate strength of the Russian army was 132,000, by the end of the century it soared to 458,000.¹⁰⁵ It was owing to the ruthless and calculated determination of the Russian sovereigns, especially of Catherine II, “that Russia was finally accepted as a European Power of vital importance.”¹⁰⁶ By the mid-eighteenth century, the timid child of Petrine westernization had evolved into an impressive enforcer of the imperial authority in much of eastern and northern Europe.

This power was projected, above all, by the Imperial Army. Efforts to Europeanize Russian military thought began early on.¹⁰⁷ The Westernization of Russian began in earnest at the twilight of the seventeenth century, when the Peter I’s hurricane of energy descended upon Russia. In 1694, Peter the Great, the first Russian emperor, enacted a decree that drafted all of the nobility into the service of the state, for life. Two-thirds were designated for the army and the navy, and the remaining one third was destined for the civil service. The ‘noble draft’ produced a strange mix of old and new nobility for the embryonic officer corps. The gradual Europeanization of the Russian elite that began in the mid-17th century, and encouraged by Peter at the beginning of the 18th, meant that by the 1720s “Russian officers universally discussed military science using European (usually German) terms.” The manners and conduct of Russian officers also “took on the shape of [European] professionalism.”¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁴ M.S. Anderson, *War and Society in Europe of the Old Regime, 1618-1789*, 160.

¹⁰⁵ This number probably includes militia and the Cossack units. M.S. Anderson, *Europe in the Eighteenth Century, 1713-1783* (London: Longman, 1976), 178.

¹⁰⁶ Goldsmith, 105.

¹⁰⁷ See for instance Michael C. Paul, “The Military Revolution in Russia, 1550-1682,” *Journal of Military History*, 68, no. 1 (2004), 9-45.

¹⁰⁸ Carol B. Stevens, *Russia’s Wars of Emergence, 1460-1730* (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2007), 303.

Peter III, the grandson of Peter the Great, revoked the much hated edict that required nobles to serve in the armed forces and in civil service. The first point of Peter III's 1762 Manifesto Emancipating the Russian Nobility read: "All nobles currently in Our [sic] various services may continue therein as long as they wish and their condition permits them...."¹⁰⁹ In effect, this manifesto terminated the delicate link, so carefully nurtured by Peter the Great, between the powerful Russian nobility and their active, as well as intellectual, contribution to the security of the imperial state. When Catherine the Great came to the throne in July 1762, more concessions came to the nobles and the martial vigour of the 1720s was lost forever.

The lack of expertise and interest of Russian nobility in martial matters meant that, after Peter the Great's death, military knowledge had to be harnessed increasingly from the West. A large number of foreign experts and commanders, especially of German and later French extraction, flocked to Russia, lured by promises of money, adventure, and fame.¹¹⁰ Even though Russian aristocrats formed the bulk of the officer corps, Lindsey Hughes observed that "foreigners predominated at the very top ranks until quite late"¹¹¹ in the century. While the French and German languages were second nature to the Russian nobles, western officers possessed little understanding of the native tongues. Accordingly, how they managed to communicate with their Russian illiterate troops is a curious mystery. As the Russian empire drifted into the nineteenth century, the western minds left a considerable imprint on the Russian military machine. Austrian, German,

¹⁰⁹ "Peter III's Manifesto Emancipating the Russian nobility, 1762," James Cracraft, ed. *Major Problems in the History of Imperial Russia* (Lexington: D.C. Heath and Company, 1994), 152.

¹¹⁰ This trend actually began much earlier in the 17th century under the rule of Czar Alexis, Peter the Great's father. However in the 18th century the influx of foreigners increased even more.

¹¹¹ Lindsey Hughes, *Russia in the age of Peter the Great* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 66.

English, French, and even Swedish officers helped to import new ideas and practices into the Russian army. It benefited from this knowledge, especially in the technical realms.

Even though the Russian army of the eighteenth century was outwardly almost indistinguishable from the armies of the West, it was nevertheless a different military animal. The backbone of the Russian military behemoth was the serf.¹¹² Illiterate, religious and with strong ties to the land, he was the perfect subject for the Russian army. The length of service during the first half of the century was for life; in the second half it was reduced to twenty-five years, which changed little for most of the conscripts. During the long and often unbroken service to the empire, the recruits were subjected to a healthy dose of discipline, religious patriotism and “militaristic manliness.” The sum product of this process was a “wholly militarized creature”¹¹³ ready to shoulder the burden of long marches and hardships of camp life in the name of Orthodox religion and the Tsar *batyushka* (“little-father”). In addition to the serf, another peculiarity that set the Russian army apart internally from its western counterparts was the separate warrior caste of the Cossacks, who were generally employed as light cavalry and were especially useful for reconnaissance missions and harassment and pursuit of retreating foes. As Philip Longworth writes “[t]hey were the eyes and ears of the army, the screen which fanned out before the advancing regulars, the rearguard which covered their withdrawals, the pursuers and devastators of a retreating enemy.”¹¹⁴ The Cossack is the general designation for the people of the Don, Kuban, and Zaparozhye regions of modern day

¹¹² To some degree there were enough similarities between the socio-economic make up of the three East-European Empires: Russia, Prussia and Austria. The latter two had their equivalents of serf and Cossack units too. But their conditions, and the degree of their servitude were not as pronounced as in the Russian empire. For the convenient description of Prussian and Austrian armies in the 18th century, see Geoffrey Best, *War and Society in Revolutionary Europe, 1770-1870* (Leicester: Leicester University Press in association with Fontana Paperbacks, 1982), 36-38 and 45-46.

¹¹³ Best, 44.

¹¹⁴ Philip Longworth, *The Cossacks* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970), 225.

Ukraine, and “their lands and liberties were granted them on condition of military service.”¹¹⁵

The conscription and the use of Cossacks that produced the quasi-national character of the eighteenth century Russian army solved two significant problems that plagued the armies of Western Europe. Unlike the small kingdom of Prussia or the island of Britain, Russia had no need for mercenary troops. This allowed it to save money and retain direct control over its military force. The second distinction, connected to the employment of mercenary troops, addressed the issue of desertion. As Walter Pintner concluded, “it seems reasonable to suppose that Russian soldiers were far less likely to desert than Western mercenaries. They were culturally isolated from their opponents, [and] they were accustomed to coercion whether they were serfs or soldiers.”¹¹⁶

The recruiting mechanism that brought all strands of military fabric into a solid whole was simple but often crude and inefficient. The delivery of raw recruits to the army was facilitated through numerous levies. According to Menning, there were 31 levies between 1762 and 1799. The total enlistment ratios fluctuated between one in five hundred to one in a hundred souls, depending on the years of war.¹¹⁷ The drawback of

¹¹⁵ Best, 45. For a general history of the Cossacks see Philip Longworth’s good but outdated *The Cossacks* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970). For more modern scholarship see Shane O’Rourke’s books *The Cossacks* (New York: Palgrave, 2007) and *Warriors and Peasants: the Don Cossacks in Late Imperial Russia* (New York: St. Martin’s Press in association with St. Antony’s College, Oxford, 2000). The latter book is a welcomed addition to the study of military history of Imperial Russia, but as often is the case, it deals with the 19th century, and the 18th century, the time when the Cossack tribes were brought under Russian Imperial control and began to play an increasingly important part in the security of the empire still waits for its treatment.

¹¹⁶ Walter M. Pintner, “Russia’s Military Style, Russian Society, and Russian Power in the Eighteenth Century,” in A. G. Cross, ed. *Russia and the West in the Eighteenth Century* (Newtonville: Oriental Research Partners, 1983), 264. For the most recent research and treatment of conscription in Imperial Russia, see the book by Janet M. Hartley, *Russia, 1762-1825: Military Power, the State, and the People* (Westport: Praeger, 2008), 25-47.

¹¹⁷ As Menning notes, “interestingly enough, despite the increased manpower needs of the army, the portion of the male population actually inducted decline.” In 1790s only 3.1 percent of the Russian males

this system was the quality of human resources into which it was able to tap. The village idiot, the sloth, the drunk and the womanizer would usually be sent off to the conscription centers. The most intelligent and hardworking serfs would usually be retained by country gentry to run their estates. Despite this obvious flaw, however, the levies were more than able to satisfy the increasing appetite of the young empire for cannon fodder. At the start of the Seven Years' War this system had yielded over three hundred thousand troops, with field garrison forces numbering 172,440 men alone. By contrast, the whole French army amounted to slightly over two hundred thousand soldiers and the Prussia of Frederick the Great possessed armed forces of less than 150,000.¹¹⁸

Outwardly European-looking, the Russian army had retained much of its socio-cultural character that set it apart from the French *sans-culottes*, the Prussian automatons, or the British redcoats. Comte Roger de Damas was one of the French aristocrats in the service of Catherine the Great in the late 1780s, and left an illuminating, if sometimes stereotypical, description of the Russians fighting the Ottomans. "The Russian army was greatly inferior in tactics to the armies of the other first-rate Powers," wrote Damas. "This was especially true of the cavalry, which was positively ignorant; but the steadiness of the men in the ranks, their handling of arms, their deportment and discipline, were perfect to the last degree." He concluded that "the inferiority of the Russian army in the matter of training is counterbalanced by its discipline and steadiness..."¹¹⁹ A modern historian supplements this view with a casual remark that despite a certain tactical awkwardness on

were actually in military service. Bruce Menning, "The Military History of Tsarist Russia," in Frederick W. Kagan, and Robin Higham, eds., *Military History of Tsarist Russia* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 79.

¹¹⁸ The full breakdown of the Russian military strength at the start of the Seven Years' War can be found in Herbert Kaplan *Russia and the Outbreak of the Seven Years' War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 57.

¹¹⁹ Comte Roger De Damas, *Memoirs of the Comte de Damas* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1913), 47-48.

the battlefield, the Russian infantry possessed the enviable quality to “repel heavy attacks with great bravery and resolution.”¹²⁰ Scotsman Paul Jones, the naval hero of the American Revolution who found himself unemployed after the war and who joined the Russian Black Sea Fleet in late 1788, revealed another side of the Russian Imperial Armed Forces. His memoirs are dotted with frustrated lamentations about cruelties¹²¹ and endless intrigues¹²² that governed the activities of the Russian army and navy.

Another interesting account was provided by Barnes Steveni, a British observer.

He left the following description of the Russian soldiers:

As a rule the Russian conscript carries with him into the Army many of the best as well as the worst qualities; he remains careless, procrastinating, happy-go-lucky, slavish, superstitious and generally exceedingly ignorant. In fact, the majority of the recruits – about 70 per cent – cannot read or write when they enter the Tsar’s service.

He then went on to clarify that

Physically and mentally the soldiers and officers are equal, if not superior, to the Germans, and are brave to foolhardiness. But their want of training and education will be found, time after time, to place them at a great disadvantage with their more instructed Teutonic opponents...¹²³

It was not the soldiers of Catherine the Great that the Englishman was writing about, but the Russian army on the eve of the First World War. Ostensibly, the fundamental traits that set the Russian military apart from those of the West persisted to the end of its establishment. Steveni might as well have been describing its eighteenth century predecessor.

¹²⁰ John Childs, *Armies and Warfare in Europe, 1648-1789* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1982), 129.

¹²¹ Paul Jones, *Memoirs of Rear-Admiral Paul Jones; compiled from his original journals and correspondence*, Vol. II (New York: Da Capo Press, 1972), 35

¹²² *Ibid.*, 188.

¹²³ W. Barnes Steveni, *The Russian Army from Within* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1914), 34-35.

Despotic benevolence of Russian officers, agile and cunning Cossack horsemanship, combined with unrelenting determination of the serfs, proved an insoluble mixture to its European and Ottoman opponents. The battle-hardened experience of the Prussians, the fanatical zeal of the Turkish janissaries¹²⁴, and even the inextinguishable spirit of the French *élan* had all succumbed to the devouring of the Russian military machine. A strange creature by all accounts, harbouring many curious contradictions in its bosom to its very end, the Russian Imperial Army of the eighteenth century, according to some scholars, was “the most powerful ground force in Europe.”¹²⁵

¹²⁴ The Janissaries were conscripted at a young age as slaves from the Christian population of the conquered European territories, mostly the Balkans, by the Turkish armies. This practice began in the 14th century. They were infantry guard units of the Ottoman Sultans, and were the first units to adopt European-style firearms. As their influence increased in the 17th and 18th centuries, the Ottoman government became weary of their power. Janissary Corps were disbanded after revolts in the mid-19th century. As Godfrey Goodwin, the author of many books on the Ottoman Empire writes, “The list of their crimes, both petty and great, stretched back before living memory and was only exceeded by that of their defeats.” Godfrey Goodwin, *The Janissaries* (London: Saqi Book Depot, 1997), 230.

¹²⁵ Bruce Menning, in Frederick W. Kagan, and Robin Higham, eds., 75.

II

THE FATHER OF RUSSIAN MILITARY THOUGHT

“No one better than Rumyantsev knows
the inner workings of the military craft....”
Comte Alexandre Langeron, 1796

Peter Aleksandrovich Rumyantsev (1725-1796)¹²⁶ was the first Russian military intellectual who attempted to grapple with the insurmountable challenges associated with developing a military theory suitable for the young and turbulent Russian Empire. A humanist, a scholar, and a soldier, Rumyantsev grew up under the strict eye of his father, a military man who was a benefactor of Peter I. Indeed, some legends maintain that the young Rumyantsev was actually an illegitimate child of that great monarch. The family was elevated to hereditary nobility in 1743, and the coat of arms of the House of Rumyantsevs reads in Latin *Non Solum Armis* or ‘Not by Arms Only.’¹²⁷

The young Rumyantsev received his baptism of fire in the Seven Years’ War where he showed himself to be a capable and aggressive commander. As several Russian

¹²⁶ A comprehensive English biography of this fascinating man and his life has yet to be written. To this author’s knowledge, not a single academic biographical monograph of Rumyantsev and his work is available in English. In Russian see Dm. Batishin-Kamenski, *Biografi Rossiiskih Generalissimov i General-Feldmarshalov*. 4 Vols. (1854) (Moscow: Kultura, 1990), Volume 2, 25-40; A.V. Buganov and V. I. Buganov, 299-338; For more recent publications see I.O. Lubchenko, *Samie Znamenitei Polkovodtsi Rossii*. (Moscow: Veche, 2002), 195-224; and A. V. Shishov, *Feldmarshili Rossii* (Moskva: Vecvhe, 2007), 172-182. A short military biography was written by Colonel Vasilii Vasil'evich Pruntsov, *Polkovodets P.A. Rumiantsev* (Moskva: Voen. izd-vo Ministerstva vooruzhennykh sil Soiuzs SSR, 1946). Fictionalized biography based on primary sources, a popular Soviet genre, can be found in Victor Petelin, *Fieldmarshal Rumyantsev* (Moskva: Voennoie Izdatel'stvo, 1989).

¹²⁷ Shishov, *Feldmarshili Rossii*, 172-3.

historians have noted,¹²⁸ despite Rumyantsev's demonstrated military abilities and political experience there was personal animosity between him and Catherine II which complicated his military projects. Nonetheless, the empress fully understood Rumyantsev's military talent and never underestimated his authority in the army. Catherine later appointed him the governor of modern-day Ukraine, where he significantly improved the economy and administration of the region¹²⁹ before being recalled for another campaign against the Ottoman Empire. During the Russo-Turkish War of 1768-1774, nicknamed Rumyantsev's War, he won some of the most spectacular battles of the century, accelerating the geopolitical development and expansion of the Russian state in the south. In July of 1770 Rumyantsev crushed a hundred-and-fifty thousand¹³⁰ strong Ottoman army with twenty-seven thousand Russian troops near the river of Kaluga, which earned him a Marshal's baton. The following year he crossed the mighty Danube. In her correspondence with Voltaire, Catherine acknowledged the significance of the event. "Rejoice with me, monsieur Voltaire, on this occasion of the crossing of the Danube," she wrote. "The feat is as striking as the crossing of the Rhine by Louis XIV, and even more impressive. According to the chronicles, for eight hundred

¹²⁸ Pruntsov, , 5 and N. M. Korobkov, ed. *Feldmarshal Rumyantsev: Sbornik dokumentov i materialov* (Moscow: OGIZ, 1947), 14.

¹²⁹ As a general-governor of *Malorossii* (Ukraine), he established schools and academies, introduced the rouble, developed the post system and performed several censuses. A rare but detailed account of the governing activities in Ukraine under Rumyantsev could be found in G. A. Maksimovich, *Deyatel'nost Rumyantseva-Zadunaiskago po upravleniyu Malorossii*, Vol. I (Nezhin: Tipolitografiya nask. V. K. Melenevskago, 1913), for the introduction of universal post and the problems associated with this project, see 66-87, for monetary changes see 88-119, for education see 120-145, for the purpose of censuses see 199-217.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 178. Shirokorad puts the number of troops opposing the Russians at 200,000, but he probably included in that figure the Crimean Tatars, the traditional allies of the Turks, who could generally contribute up to 50,000 cavalry. A. Shirokorad, *Russko-turetskie voiny* (Minsk: Harvest, 2000), 152. Bruce Menning puts the number of Russian troops at 35,000. Bruce W. Menning, "Paul I and Catherine II's Military Legacy," in *The Military History of Tsarist Russia*, Kagan and Higham eds., 91.

years the Russian army could not set foot on the other side of the Danube.”¹³¹

Rumyantsev’s campaign threatened the northern possessions of the Ottoman Empire, forcing the Turks to the negotiating table. Rumyantsev’s unprecedented victories, coupled with his political shrewdness, gained him the title of *Zadunaisky* or ‘beyond the Danube.’ In 1774, he presided over the Kuchuk-Kainarji peace treaty¹³² with the Porte, which had to cede numerous fortresses in the region, pay a tribute of 4.5 million roubles in reparations, and acknowledge Russia as a protectorate of the Crimea, Walachia, and Moldavia, while simultaneously granting Russian ships the right of passage through the Black Sea and the Straits.¹³³

Rumyantsev’s greatest contribution to posterity, however, was his military thought. Early in his career Rumyantsev turned his sharp mind to the questions of military theory. As his secretary N. Lesnizkii recounted in 1787, Rumyantsev could write as fast as he could speak and “everything that touched the basis of any rules or regulations, especially military, was written by the hand of the commander.”¹³⁴

Rumyantsev was a member of the nobility and his writing style reflected his place in Russian society. Complex and lengthy sentences, sprinkled with Russian renditions of foreign words, would be incomprehensible to anyone who did not belong to his socio-economic class. This is important because the major function of his writing was to instruct the highest echelons of the military-political elite of his country. Indeed, some of

¹³¹ Y. N. Lyubchenkova and V. I. Romanova, eds. *Anekdoti o general-feldmarshalah P. A. Rumyantseve I A. V. Suvorove* (Moskva: Mezhdunarodni Bizness centre, 1990), 21.

¹³² An able re-examination of the treaty that “marked one of the history’s great shifts in power” is provided by Roderic H. Davison, “‘Russian Skill and Turkish Imbecility’: The Treaty of Kuchuk-Kainardji Reconsidered,” *Slavic Review*, 35, no. 3. (September 1976): 463-483.

¹³³ Lubchenko, 233.

¹³⁴ N. Lesnizkii, “General-feldmarshal Graf Pyotr Aleksandrovich Rumyantsev-Zadunaisky pred posledneyu Turezkoyu vionoyu. Nachertanie blagorodnogo ochividza N. Lesnizkogo,” in *Feldmarshal Rumyantsev: dokumenti, pis’ma, vospominaniya*, A. P. Kapitanov, ed. (Moskva: Vostochnaia Literatura, 2001), 244.

his tracts were even addressed to the Empress' herself. He wrote militarily with significant nomenclature in his text, which serves as a primary example of Western influences. For instance, *retirovat'sya* meant "to retreat", *konfermatsia* became "a confirmation", and *bataliia* was "a battle" (which in modern Russian orthography is simply *bitva*).

Military Theory and Strategic Thought

Rumyantsev's all-encompassing, rational mind served as an indispensable "channel, by which some of the most advanced military thinking of the West reached Russia," and which in turn made him "the founder of a new military tradition which was to be developed in full by Potemkin and Suvorov."¹³⁵ A deep thinker, Rumyantsev always looked at the root of the problem and his holistic approach is evident in his thought. "Without Shuvalov's¹³⁶ dilettantism or Münnich's¹³⁷ despotism, [Rumyantsev] was able to solve all the different problems associated with development of the Russian armed forces," wrote Kersnovsky.¹³⁸ Rumyantsev's influence and his status both within the military estate and the governing circles meant that his ideas had influential currency,

¹³⁵ Ibid., 168.

¹³⁶ Field Marshal Pyotr Ivanoch Shuvalov (1711-1762) could be considered as one of the most important influences on the development of the Russian artillery. During the Seven Years' War he was the head of the Armoury and Artillery. However, many of his projects were deemed impractical and a waste of the state's resources. The infamous *edinorogi* or 'unicorns' and two-barrel cannons along with 'secret' howitzers were the most original but ultimately the most useless of his creations. In English see Duffy's *Russia's Military Way to the West*, 67-72. In Russian, for Shuvalov's role in the development of the Russian artillery see I. S. Prochko, *Istoriya Razvitiya Artillerii* (St. Petersburg: Polegon, 1994), 103-107. A general biographical sketch is provided in Shivhov's *Feldmarshili Rossii*, 145-149.

¹³⁷ Field Marshal Count Burkhard Christoph von Münnich (1683-1767) was one of the most prominent foreigners in the Russian service in the 18th century. He achieved a surprising influence under Empress Anna, the niece of Peter the Great, before he was exiled to Siberia. He warred successfully against the Poles and the Turks and was remembered as great disciplinarian who did not count lives when it came to achieving victory. No English biography exists of this overlooked figure, but Duffy has a short chapter about the man in his *Russia's Military Way to the West*. In Russian, see the Bugdanovs, 240-250; Kersnovsky, Vol. I, 68-87; and Shivhov's *Feldmarshili Rossii*, 92-101.

¹³⁸ Kersnovsky, Vol. I, 117

gradually shaping the Russian theory of war and, by extension, the manner of its execution.

Observations and experience led Rumyantsev to doubt the applicability of principles derived from western models and provoked him to introduce major shifts into Russian military doctrine, which some would see as a departure from the orthodoxy of Europe. First, he attacked the cordon strategy. In 1768, he wrote to the War Council (*Voennaya Kollegia*) in St. Petersburg that “in an attempt to cover vast land with small number of troops, the forces were spread in thin, which in the case of the enemy attack could not present a solid cordon...”¹³⁹ Rumyantsev instead thought that small numbers of troops should be concentrated and never dispersed, and that the cordon system should be abandoned, especially as a defensive measure when fighting in the steppes. He therefore ordered the “regiments not to be fractured into such small parts, but to be maintained, as much as possible, the whole.”¹⁴⁰

By dabbling in the system of disposition and challenging the western norms of military theory, Rumyantsev inevitably had to address the debate surrounding the offensive and defensive modes of warfare. In general, Rumyantsev believed that “attacking forces held a constant moral ascendancy over those that were defending”¹⁴¹ and therefore rejected the cordon system along with its western intellectual baggage, out of principle. In his report to the Empress in 1771 about the expeditionary corps for attack on Constantinople, Rumyantsev summed up his views about offensive and defensive strategies as follows:

¹³⁹ Rumyantsev to the Military Collegiate, 30 December 1768, Fortunatov, Vol. II, 54.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Duffy, *Russia's Military Way to the West*, 169.

A commander conducting himself according to the rules of the former, has a single main objective to which all others are subordinated, and to which they flow with all determination. But in the defensive war, it is impossible to extract an objective of equal weight, for in this scenario all parts require numbers and vigilance which are subordinated to the actions of the foe.¹⁴²

If the conduct of military operation was not to be dictated by the behaviour of the enemy, the Russian commanders had to take the reigns of active attack and tactical aggression. “I have always been of the opinion, and shall always remain of one, that the attacker to the very last is poised to win,” he asserted, “while the defender is always chained by fear, relative to the offensive power rushed at him.”¹⁴³ With these few words, Rumyantsev charted the path and directed Russian military thought for more than a quarter of a century. Offensive operations became the norm for the Russian armies.

In the purely tactical realm, Rumyantsev’s innovations reflected the flexibility of Russian military thought that refused to conform to the conventions of the time and constantly sought improvements. In 1761, Rumyantsev encouraged one of his generals to experiment with the columns as opposed to linear formations. In July 1761 he wrote:

Every regiment (*polk*) can evolve into a column in the following manner: the two middle companies (*divizióny*), the last half from the right flank, and from the left flank the first half, should move forward, with big steps; the rest of the companies from the right flank – move to the left, and the companies from the left flank – move to the right, but facing straight, goose stepping, should move after the first ones, and so one half-company (*odin poludivizion*) moves behind the first, and comes together from both sides forming into a whole.¹⁴⁴

Rumyantsev went on to describe how to build columns out of four regiments and how to create a unified front from divisional columns. He remarked that this complicated tactical manoeuvre would often have to be performed under enemy fire, thus soldiers should

¹⁴² Rumyantsev to Catherine II, 15 March 1771, Fortunatov, Vol. II, 429.

¹⁴³ Cited in Y. R. Klokman, *Feldmarhsal Rumyantsev v period Russko-Tirezkoj vojni, 1768-1774* Moskva: Izdatelstvo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1951), 176.

¹⁴⁴ Rumyantsev to Eropokin, 7 July 1761, Goncharov, 146-7.

learn how to fire standing up, instead of kneeling down. This implied the necessity of drill. Reflective of the high degree of independence Rumyantsev prescribed to his officers, he left the employment of this tactic to the discretion of the Colonel.

In another letter, Rumyantsev contemplated the creation of light battalions during the last years of the Seven Years' War. The recruitment of this kind of troops was a growing trend in the West at the time. As Colonel Andreas Emmerich, a participant of several partisan missions himself, wrote: "In war no army can act without light troops....Such light troops ought properly to be composed of select *chasseurs*¹⁴⁵ with rifles, light infantry with bayonets, and light dragoons...."¹⁴⁶ The Russians recognized this trend and in September 1761 Rumyantsev wrote to Major Miller:

In observing that the enemy's light forces prevent our own from discovering or defeating them, I have found and collected some hunters...for incorporating them into our light forces. It is to you that I delegate to test them in combat, knowing your diligence and loyalty to the imperial service, and to determine what advantage the above could bring to the search and defence operations....¹⁴⁷

As Duffy attests, this "mode of operation was so alien to the mentality of the times that Rumyantsev had to spell out the tactics very specifically."¹⁴⁸ Rumyantsev wrote that their equipment should be lightened – "they shall leave their swords behind, and instead take bayonets," and the heavy grenadier bags should be exchanged for the ones borrowed from the musketeers. These light forces were to be commanded by regular infantry officers and were to be supported by light cannons.

The goal was to enable such battalions to conduct quick, guerrilla-like actions. Ambush, therefore, should be the primary mode of their offensive operations. Soldiers

¹⁴⁵ Chasseur is the French word for 'hunter'. The corresponding word in German is 'Jäger'. In military context it refers to special kind of troops that require rapid action and often surprise.

¹⁴⁶ Andreas Emmerich, *The Partisan in War, or the Use of a Corps of Light Troops to an Army* (London: Printed by H. Reynell, 1789), 5.

¹⁴⁷ Rumyantsev to Miller, 29 August, 1761, Goncharov, 149.

¹⁴⁸ Duffy, *Russia's Military Way to the West*, 121.

should wait for the enemy in forests, small towns and on the roads. “Always imagining a greater force than it is in reality, [the enemy] could easily be turned to flight,” Rumyantsev pointed out.¹⁴⁹ When in villages, these soldiers should never sleep in houses but rather in sheds and barns. To assure the operational flexibility and speed of movement for these tactical units, Rumyantsev was prepared to cut the umbilical cord that tied them to the cumbersome central command. He was an early proponent of the structural decentralization, but he would later realize that it too had limitations. In retrospect, Rumyantsev’s instructions to Major Miller were reminiscent of proto-partisan doctrine that would dominate under the aegis of the famous Colonel Denis Davydov in 1812.¹⁵⁰ However, it would be dangerous and ahistorical to maintain that Rumyantsev’s ideas were unique or ahead of the Western intellectual curve. Many works, including Emmerich’s book show, neither was the case.

Rumyantsev’s evident departure from the strictures of the cordon system caused a chain reaction of adjustments that touched every aspect of conduct of war – theoretical and practical - within the Russian military establishment. With the new aggressive and flexible ideas emerged new theoretical problems that Rumyantsev had to accommodate in practice. Most fundamentally, the strategic objective of battle itself had changed because the offensive spirit of his theory gave military operations a different strategic purpose. As Rumyantsev was distancing himself from the cordon system, he was also departing from the objectives this system was designed to achieve. Instead of capturing and holding

¹⁴⁹ Rumyantsev to Miller, 29 August, 1761, Goncharov, 150.

¹⁵⁰ A fascinating account of the Russian early partisan thought can be observed in the recorded diary of Colonel Denis Vasil’evich Davydov in *In the service of the tsar against Napoleon : the memoirs of Denis Davidov, 1806-1814* (Mechanicsburg: Stackpole Books, 1999) translated by Gregory Troubetzkoy. Even though the ideas of the two men had a pretty remote connection, Rumyantsev’s efforts, and later Suvorov’s, show that there was a tradition in Russia to experiment with partisan and guerrilla operations well before the Napoleonic invasion.

fortresses and towns, his military theory dictated the destruction of human capital of enemy forces as the main goal of military operations.¹⁵¹ As Anatol Rapoport rightly remarks, since so much care and money went into training and equipment of an army, princes and generals were very reluctant to risk zero-sum military engagements.¹⁵² Another study confirms that “[g]enerals were careful of their men, not necessarily out of humane, but at least out of economic motives.”¹⁵³ Rumyantsev’s strategy preyed precisely upon this factor. Thus a major paradigm shift had been affected in Russian military thought in the late 1760s that would be taken up and exploited ruthlessly by Suvorov and subsequent commanders. The complete annihilation of the enemy’s means to resist inexorably led to the occupation of its territory and to the conclusion of the war, Rumyantsev insisted.

This new curve in strategic calculation led to a new concept: *zakreplenie*, or consolidation.¹⁵⁴ Rumyantsev’s thought held it imperative to consolidate first and to conquer second, which becomes a point of contradiction within his theory of war. If an attempt is made to thoroughly consolidate the ground covered, it will inevitably slow down the impetus of the offensive, reduce the concentrated forces to garrison duties, and inevitably dissolve the centralized units into a cordon. Even though Rumyantsev clearly understood the weakness of the linear systems of combat, he nonetheless was unable to get rid of them completely. The line still retained its potency as it could deliver a powerful, concentrated volley of fire across a long front. This worked especially well

¹⁵¹ Klokman, 176.

¹⁵² Rapoport, “Introduction by Anatol Rapoport,” 19.

¹⁵³ Crane Brinton, John B. Christopher and Robert Lee Wolff, *Civilization in the West* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1964), 391.

¹⁵⁴ Klokman utters a curious accusation when he writes that “it was precisely the neglect of combining offensive with consolidation that was one of the weakest facets of Napoleon’s strategy, while in the theory of Clausewitz, this most important point never found its proper place.” Unfortunately he fails to develop his idea further, and goes on to descriptions of active defence. *Ibid*, 177.

with disciplined troops who could reload quickly and aim accurately. Therefore, the Field Marshal strove to combine the two practices in his campaigns. To avoid the inconsistency of his own theoretical principles, Rumyantsev prudently employed new formations, notably divisional squares, while at the same time never rejecting the cordon altogether - he recognized that it still had its use on a tactical level. During the war with the Turks, Rumyantsev would actually unite divisional *kares* with a cordon line reinforced by artillery and cavalry units.¹⁵⁵ Avoiding dogmas, he was thus able to achieve an eclectic assimilation of western practices with Russian military needs.

To achieve his strategic goals under the rubric of the new offensive model, the practice of manoeuvre also had to evolve. Rumyantsev's views about the role and purpose of manoeuvring in the theatre of war were diametrically opposite to the views held in the West. According to Klokman, Western military thought saw manoeuvre as a means to attain goals of war and not as a method of combat.¹⁵⁶ The concept of manoeuvre was traditionally used to threaten the lines of communication to endanger enemy supply networks and other areas of strategic importance, thus forcing the enemy to retreat. Rumyantsev, on the other hand, looked at the theory behind manoeuvre as not an end in itself but rather as one of the ways of putting one's forces in a comparative advantage *vis-à-vis* the enemy. The aim was to restrict freedom of actions available to the opponent, chaining his movement and undermining his will to fight, forcing him to accept battle in the unfavourable to him circumstances, and thus crushing the human infrastructure of his

¹⁵⁵ Duffy, *Russia's Military Way to the West*, 170.

¹⁵⁶ Probably an overstatement. Klokman, 178.

army.¹⁵⁷ This eloquently complemented Rumyantsev's core ideas about the goal of military operations.

When Mathew Anderson wrote that “strategy and military thinking generally were still based mainly on ideas of limited war, of caution and avoidance of the uncertainties of great pitched battles,”¹⁵⁸ he accurately captured the general mood in eighteenth century Europe. Staying true to his theories, Rumyantsev could not accept this line of thought. Rumyantsev tried to reverse this Western trend in the Russian conduct of war, since it could not accommodate his insistence on the tactical destruction and operational annihilation of enemy forces as a principal pre-condition to strategic victory. The only means to bring this about was through exploiting battlefield successes by energetic pursuit of the defeated enemy to obliterate his existence piecemeal. He knew that armies were expensive, training took time, and without soldiers the other contender could not continue military operations. In the last campaign of the second Russo-Turkish war in 1774, Rumyantsev chastised one of the generals for his inability to rout the Turks after the victory at Kaludza and to push forward on their defences. “On the one hand I am happy with the victory over the enemy,” he wrote to General Mikhail Kaminski, “on the other – it is not without regret that I meet the news that you, after completely defeating the enemy, procrastinated...exploiting your victory.” Rumyantsev warned that “while you have stopped, the enemy can regroup and revive his forces, and improve his defences in the fortress; not days, but hours and moments in this situation are lost beyond recovery.”¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ M. S. Anderson, *War and Society in Europe of the Old Regime 1618-1789*, 196.

¹⁵⁹ Rumyantsev to M. F. Kamensky, 13 June 1774, Fortunatov, Vol. II, 752.

Pursuit and rout – quintessential parts of Russian military theory by the end of the century – were also strongly expressed in the West. For instance, the English military theorist, Henry Lloyd, thought that pursuit of the retreating enemy is central to strategic victory. “For my part,” he wrote, “I should...pursue the enemy with my whole army, and attack one or the other of his columns with my principal force, while the remainder should be employed in harassing the others.”¹⁶⁰ Frustrations expressed by Rumyantsev about the waste of valuable time could also be found in the works of Lloyd who warned, “time is everything in war, and nothing makes you lose it so much as delays...”¹⁶¹

Thus all strands of Rumyantsev’s thought come together. The offensive actions of tactical flexibility, supported by consolidation of strategic objectives and aggressive manoeuvring culminating in pursuit and destruction of life resources of the enemy, became inextricably contingent upon a high degree of initiative. This was precisely what Rumyantsev had always sought from his subordinates. The idea of independent thought in lower levels of command had a broader connotation for the development of Russian military theory in general. There was always a struggle to loosen the grip of schematic planning of the ‘armchair strategists’ and transfer the decision-making to the hands that toil the ground of war. Rumyantsev maintained that no plans can be made accurate to the minute, since even the best calculations are prone to breakdown in the heat of battle. In October 1773, he wrote to St. Petersburg, advising his empress about the upcoming Turkish campaign. In his letter he descried what Clausewitz would later term ‘the fog of war’ and ‘friction’:

Plans, usually developed at the beginning of a war or campaign for agreeable direction and cooperation, offered from different and

¹⁶⁰ Cited in Speelman, *Henry Lloyd and the Military Enlightenment of Eighteenth-Century Europe*, 125.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

distant places or generally from allies, often happen to undergo changes; with the approach to the enemy further actions should be invested in the art of the commander who will judge the situation according to time and circumstance.¹⁶²

It is worth emphasising that these notions were paramount in Clausewitz's military philosophy and that the Russian thought articulated them some sixty years before *Vom Krieg* appeared on the bookshelves of Berlin. Unfortunately for Rumyantsev, the sombre political realities of his time could not accommodate this idea. His request to grant more freedom to commanders in the field from the highly centralized Russian bureaucracy and the jealous court in the capital had a hollow resonance in imperial hallways. The control of the armies and the direction of the campaign were in the iron grip of the ruling party at the court.

Even though Rumyantsev had come to his conclusions by patient and calculated observations of his trade, independently of Western influences, it does not necessarily signify that his ideas were different or *avant-garde*, as virtually all Soviet scholars claim. For instance, Henry Lloyd drew similar derivative observations by dwelling on the lessons of the Seven Years' War, and subsequently related his thought about the fog of war. Lloyd wrote: "Whatever is possible, a general should think probable, and take his measures accordingly, that like old women he may not say; who would have thought it?"¹⁶³ The idea that flexibility was natural and improvisation was indispensable to battle was also thoroughly understood by military theoreticians in the West.

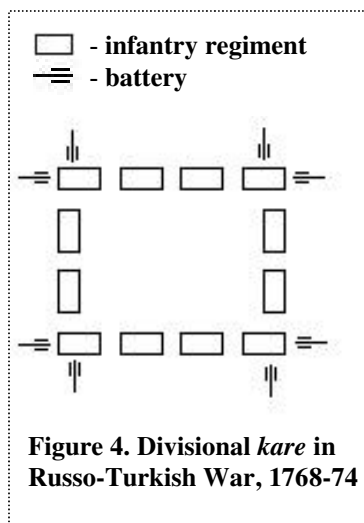
On a more tactical level, Rumyantsev's input into the development of strategic interaction among separate military detachments deserves special attention. To transform the above highly theoretical rhetoric into a practical application, a change had to be

¹⁶² Rumyantsev to Catherine II, 28 October 1773, Fortunatov, Vol. II, 678.

¹⁶³ Cited in Speelman, *Henry Lloyd and the Military Enlightenment of Eighteenth-Century Europe*, 128.

precipitated on the tactical level. The cordon could not accommodate strategic objectives of Rumyantsev's thought, since they required more flexibility on the battlefield than that system could provide. According to the Western thinking behind the cordon, its purpose was to provide safe communications among forces, allies, and supplies. Consequently, upsetting the cordon at any one of its points usually led to the disruption of the whole manoeuvre and movement of an army, forcing the suspension of military operations or a retreat. Russian military theory preferred to dismember the continuous string of the cordon into several parts of divisional size so that if one part became overwhelmed during the attack, the offensive could still proceed. Defeat or destruction of one part of the force would not seal the fate of the entire army.

What tactical solution could have contained such a diverse group of theoretical pre-requisites? Rumyantsev attempted to solve this problem in his first war with the



Turks. He needed to design a new system for the disposition of troops that would allow him to secure his strategic goals and at the same time be resilient to the numerous cavalry of the Crimean Khans, Tatars, and other nomads in the Ottoman service, an enemy very different from the Prussian infantry. His search led him to a simple conclusion: what Folard has labelled the “the hollow Square of the Moderns.”¹⁶⁴ By bending the line

into a self-enclosed square he made it an interchangeable, independent part of an offensive mechanism.¹⁶⁵ Under his guidance, Russian battlefields began to be dotted with

¹⁶⁴ McNeale, 24.

¹⁶⁵ O. Leonov and I. Ul'yanov. *Reguliarnaia pekhota, 1698-1801* (Moscow: AST, 1995), 136.

kare (Figure 4), or hollow squares, as opposed to the familiar lines of the Seven Years' War.

There were practical and psychological benefits offered by the square that a tactical cordon could never provide. Andrew Roberts offers an insightful analysis of this particular formation during the Battle of Waterloo. "Horses will refuse to charge straight at a body of men who are pointing bayonets at them," he writes. "This is equine fact underlying the thinking behind the defensive formation known as the 'square'." ¹⁶⁶ It provided a concentrated fire at a specific point of a cavalry charge from every direction, without exposing the flanks or the rear of the troops. Furthermore, the efficiency of aim was no longer necessary in this kind of combat. All the Russians had to do was aim at the horses in the first wave of the attack, which would collapse and fall, breaking the cohesion and determination of the charge. Finally, on a psychological level, *kare* gave an air of safety to the men inside the squares who knew "that their backs were protected by their comrades."¹⁶⁷ Rumyantsev's *kare* had the same "murderous effect", to use Robert's phrase, as Wellington's squares at the Battle of Waterloo. The only antidote to the stoic character of the *kare* was a well directed and maintained cannon fire. Russian infantry was rarely in danger from artillery, however, as this was not a Turkish *forte*.¹⁶⁸ Thus by resorting to the square, Rumyantsev was able to satisfy all the criteria of his military theory.

¹⁶⁶ Andrew Roberts, *Waterloo* (New York: HarperCollins, 2005), 80.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid*, 78.

¹⁶⁸ According to Klokman, the Ottoman Army possessed a considerable number of artillery but most of it was siege artillery. Most of the siege artillery of the Turks was so outdated, he writes, that some guns still used cannon balls made out of rock. As for the field artillery, it was very small in number, quite immobile and backward in its technical aspects. Klokman, 49-50. For a balanced overview of Ottoman armed forces, albeit of an earlier period, see Chapter 4 in Goodwin. To contrast this picture with Russia, as Menning writes, after the mid-18th century reforms, "Russian field artillery was technically equivalent to the best in Europe," Bruce Menning in Kagan and Higham, eds., 78.

His thought, woven into careful comprehension of the military texture of the war in the East, would ultimately manifest itself on the dusty battlefields of the Southern Ukraine. There, Rumyantsev combined both systems and fused them into an impressive offensive force where he connected several *kares* with the cordon, integrating artillery and cavalry into the movable formation, and making it a mutually supportive structure.¹⁶⁹ “The brilliant examples of Rumyantsev’s active strategic offensive,” writes Klokman, “directed at the destruction of the human capital of the enemy, were his famous victories over numerically superior forces in battles of Ryaboya Mogila, near Larga and Kagul in the campaign of 1770.”¹⁷⁰ Furthermore, by fracturing the line into divisional components Russian forces could march separately but fight together. For instance, the march from Hotina to Ryaboya Mogila and Larga in the campaign of 1770 was conducted by three separated groups of forces that came together before the battle in the pre-arranged place at a set time.¹⁷¹ This practice became widespread in the West at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries during the French Revolutionary Wars.

On a strategic level, the rejection of the cordon system meant a total reorganization of border security in Southern Russia. When Rumyantsev became general-governor of Malorossiya (Ukraine) in 1767, he dismantled the previously used system and replaced it with the one of “strong points” (*opornye punkty*) supported by active, movable forces. The political side-effect of his reform led to increased centralization of the province, which in return made it easy for the imperial center to govern the region.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁹ A relatively accurate representation of Rumyantsev’s battle order at Kagul can be found in Duffy’s *Russia’s Military Way to the West*, 170.

¹⁷⁰ Klokman, 177

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 184.

¹⁷² Goncharov, 361-362.

As a veteran of the Seven Years' War, Rumyantsev was aware of the armature of the theoretical debates that followed in the wake of the Prussian victories. Residing on the intellectual periphery of Europe he did not contribute to them directly, but nonetheless firmly placed his flag in the camp of opposition to the scientific school of warfare. Rumyantsev never felt comfortable with geometric and scientific approaches to war that were being generated by Guibert, Lloyd, and von Bülow. In 1769 he wrote to Count Panin:

Our trade has its rules, but they are in many cases indeterminate, and devoid of concrete substance and precision, for they proceed essentially from the judgement of the commander. What the whole art of war comes down to is this...to hold the main objection of the war constantly in view, to be aware of what proved useful or damaging in similar cases in past times (giving due weight to the lie of the ground and the associated advances and difficulties), and to evaluate the enemy by working out what we might do if we were in his place.¹⁷³

In other words, the most simplistic deduction of his principles states that it is important to: (1) know what the war is being fought over and to avoid war for war's sake; (2) keep precedent in mind and learn from history, broadly interpreted; and (3) finally approach military problems through gaining a deeper understanding of what the enemy desires to achieve in his campaign. Evidently, Rumyantsev saw little science in his profession and his writings appear to illustrate that he gravitated away from the positivist analysis of war. He emphasized human imperative in military conflicts, illustrated foremost by the necessity to cultivate individual initiative in his soldiers.

One of Rumyantsev's most significant contributions to the development of Russian military thought came at the juncture of war and political theory. He was among the first of the eighteenth century military elite to tie warfare closer to the more rational

¹⁷³ Cited in Duffy, *Russia's Military Way to the West*, 169.

demands of geopolitical considerations of the state. In so doing, he interpreted the act of war, as Duffy writes, in an almost Clausewitzian fashion. The embryonic notion that a military conflict was just one piece of the political calculus, and does not constitute an end in itself, was already evident in Russian military thought as early as 1771, when Rumyantsev wrote to Count Panin:

A man who simply looks at what lies immediately before his eyes will be unable to see what advantages may derive from the perception of the less obvious attendant circumstances. I could easily go astray if I left myself in ignorance of the political side of affairs, for this lays down the guidelines for the military aspect.¹⁷⁴

Even though Rumyantsev was a product of his time and his analysis lacked both the sophistication and intellection of later Clausewitzian thought, his views on war and politics, with assignation of the leading role to the former, were still quite impressive. When he was actively campaigning against the Turks three years later, he tried not to lose sight of political developments. He asked Catherine to inform him about:

the intentions of the allies and other monarchies, and the tasks that will be assigned to your other land forces and the navy; for without this knowledge I can not understand the military situation beyond what I see in my own immediate locality; and my actions here, without doubt, should coincide with all the others, and it easier to achieve this when the general picture is known.¹⁷⁵

His understanding of divisional interaction transpired to the strategic plane of cooperation between armies. In the campaign of 1770 he sought combined actions with the army of Peter Panin. The following year he kept up a steady correspondence with General Dolgorukov and his forces and even made himself aware of the plans of the Russian fleet.¹⁷⁶ In 1774, during the heat of operations against the Turks, he ordered General

¹⁷⁴ Cited in Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Cited in Klokman, 180.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 181.

Saltykov to establish communications with the corps of General Kaminski for cooperative actions in the future.¹⁷⁷

The need for a broad comprehension of the military situation and the necessity to subordinate war to the political will was clear enough to Rumyantsev. Looking outside the immediate military situation and considering the demands of the whole theatre of operations was the cornerstone for any strategic success. Rumyantsev therefore should be credited with the efforts to articulate and integrate political consideration into Russian military thought and to show the importance of this assimilation. That is not to say that the similar realizations were absent from the minds of Lloyd or the Old Fritz, both of whom realized the importance of this aspect in conduct of successful coalition-based warfare.

His scepticism of Western military practices, his rejection of the cordon strategy, and the broad scope of his theory would give birth to the undying thesis in the Russian and Soviet historiography, which postulated Rumyantsev as the founder of uniquely Russian, national, military art. The Russian insistence that he had developed a mode of warfare distinctly different from the West (and as some would argue, superior to the West) is an attractive oversimplification. An appraisal of the major cabal of his writings would indicate that the hyperbolic assumptions of the Russian scholarship do not withstand the scrutiny of closer examination. As Marc Raeff points out, “men whose entire existential framework was determined by state service and whose home and school experiences fostered rootlessness and insecurity were bound to perceive and adapt

¹⁷⁷ Rumyantsev to Saltykov, 21 June 1774, Fortunatov, Vol. II, 755.

Western culture and ideas in a particular, idiosyncratic way.”¹⁷⁸ This does not mean, however, that through the process of trans-cultural assimilation Western ideas had somehow become ‘Russian.’

On the contrary, at the fundamental level, these ideas still remained the brain-child of the West, as did their Russian authors. For instance, Rumyantsev was a great admirer of the Old Fritz and the ‘Prussian model’. He was educated in the “Germanizing period of [Empress] Anna”¹⁷⁹ and as a young man did a stint of service in the Prussian army before he was extradited back to Russia by his father. According to contemporaries, Rumyantsev always felt an attachment to the Prussian nation.¹⁸⁰ His tactical innovations during the Seven Years’ War were inspired as much by his own talents as by the enemy. His light battalions came as a response to the Prussian flexibility. Even the *kare* formation was not the result of some intellectual concoction on Rumyantsev’s part, or any other Russian commander for that matter. It was a rational response to the conditions of war that were very different from the West. The experimentation with new orders of battle originated from the nature of the enemy the Russians found in the Ottoman armies, not from the inherent uniqueness of their thought. Unlike in Western Europe, where infantry was the primary mode of conducting an attack, the Turks relied on horsepower. Possessing numerous cavalry forces, the Turkish hordes broke through extended European-style cordons and rendered them useless. Austrians who spread their forces and their striking power, “found that the enemy wiped them out piecemeal.”¹⁸¹ Thus, in many

¹⁷⁸ Marc Raeff, *Origins of Russian Intelligentsia: The Eighteenth Century Nobility* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1966), 148.

¹⁷⁹ Duffy, *Russia’s Military Way to the West*, 168.

¹⁸⁰ Alexandre Langeron, “Letters of Alexandre F. Langeron, 1796,” in Kapitanov, ed., 269.

¹⁸¹ Philip Longworth, *Art of Victory: The Life and Achievements of Field-Marshal Suvorov, 1729-1800* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966), 152. Comte De Damas, a witness to much of the fighting between the Turks and Russian and Austrian forces never understood this. In his memoirs, he is perplexed

aspects of its development, Russian thought was a reaction to external pressures. Rather than being a stroke of genuine originality, its sum product increasingly resembled Western patterns.

Instead of consciously developing a ‘Russian Model’, Rumyantsev subconsciously synthesized many of the western theories and adapted them to the requirements of peculiarities of the Russian military experience. In the process, he pushed the western ideas further up their evolutionary path as a response to Russian necessities in war against numerous and obstreperous neighbours.

Administrative and Organizational Theory

Curiously, in his first major work composed in 1770 - *Customs of Military Service (Obryad Sluzhby)*, Rumyantsev did not address the topics of tactics, strategy and war directly, but rather concentrated his attention on administrative vectors.¹⁸² The text is divided into twelve chapters and covers everything from how to feed the horses to what a soldier had to do to relieve himself on the march. The text explains how to take care of weapons and magazines, how to perform guard duties around the camp, and outlines general responsibility for everyone in the army - from a private to a general officer. It is not so much a battlefield manual as a description of intricacies of camp life. As such, it

with the performance of the two allied armies and asks why the Russians always crush the Turks and Austrians are rarely victorious. In his deliberations he assigns Russian victories to “some mental influence that one nation automatically exercises over another” rather than to concrete tactical or theoretical basis. Damas, 46-47.

¹⁸² A manuscript of a much earlier holistic work by Rumyantsev on military theory and practice was discovered by A. Baev in 1910. Subsequently titled simply *Instructions*, it was apparently composed in 1761. The *Instructions* detailed guard duties and force dispositions, order of marches, quartering for troops as well as discussed a number of other specific questions touching upon life, work, and inner workings of the armed forces. Most of the ideas that he developed in *Instructions*, Rumyantsev would later incorporate into his longer and broader work *Obryad Sluzhbi*. The discovery of Baev points that the intellectual activity of the author belonged to a much earlier era. *Instruction* forces us to re-examine some of the views contained in Russian military historiography about the purely Russian strand of military thought and field-practice in the period of Seven Years’ War. Fortunatov, Vol. I, 334-335.

serves not only as an indispensable source of anthropology of military life, but also as a valuable source for the cultural and social history of eighteenth century Russia. Without digressing from the context of the present inquiry, of particular interest becomes what this seemingly cultural, at times narrow and detailed writing can disclose about the trends in the military thought of early Imperial Russia. Besides the obvious attention of the text to governing and supplying a military camp, its chapters also reveal a strong preoccupation with sanitation, hospitals (*lazarety*), civil-military relations, and even prayer.¹⁸³ Picking up his favourite topic of proper camp hygiene, Rumyantsev even described proper measures to be taken against the disposal of human waste. To avoid cholera and other viral and bacterial related diseases, proper sewage treatment was necessary, especially in a crowded space containing tens of thousands of soldiers. Rumyantsev's solution was simple. Every infantry company and every cavalry squadron, before entering camp, had to dig out a deep hole covering it with hay on all sides. In the summer heat, old ones had to be filled back in with earth and new holes dug out every day. "The new ones should be dug out in behind the old ones in a straight line," Rumyantsev wrote, adding a stroke of his organizational brilliance to the whole affair. As far as cavalry was concerned, the drinking places for the horses should always be located below the camp, downstream, so that the people would have clean water and in the hot summer days could go for a swim.

Rumyantsev never failed to touch upon civil-military relations in his writings. Visitors to the camp from the nearby towns should be greeted with a respectful and friendly disposition and care should be given to protect them from harm and offences and

¹⁸³ The role and use of religion will be developed further by Rumyantsev in his *Mysl'*. Later, Suvorov, being a very religious persona, understood the function of God as a motivational factor for the Russian soldiers and made numerous references to the "Almighty Father" in his famed *Nauka pobezhdat'*.

keep them always “in cordial caution.”¹⁸⁴ When looking for forage for the horses in villages, soldiers should never bring the animals into barns so as not to disturb the inhabitants, but bring the forage outside. To ensure that nothing besides forage was taken from the civilians, “guards should be put in the villages and sentries should be kept near village exits,”¹⁸⁵ added Rumyantsev.

When Rumyantsev turned his attention to describe medical services, he wrote that “nobody deserves more attention than the sick soldier, with whose rest and convenience all administrators (*chiny*) should be concerned.” He reminded readers that during a march the wounded and the sick should be shielded from the rain, cold, and heat. In the villages they should be put in barns and not in the houses, so not to disturb the villagers, and in the camps they should be placed in dry places with clean air. Medics should visit their patients daily.¹⁸⁶

Rumyantsev also recognized the importance of religious services, prayer and ceremony to the superstitious peasant-recruits. Upon arrival to the prayer at nine in the morning, he noted that the officers should not bring any weapons but their swords. The ceremony should be conducted in a circle led by a priest, with attendees kneeling on one knee. On special occasions, even churches were to be erected in the middle of brigades.¹⁸⁷

Six years after Rumyantsev wrote *Customs of Military Service*, it was accepted as a manual and institutional framework for the whole Russian army. The Military

¹⁸⁴ Rumyantsev in Goncharov, ed., 124.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 138.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 134.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 132.

Collegiate, headed by Catherine's most influential favourite, Prince Potemkin, sent the empresses the following letter in October 1776. It read that Rumyantsev's customs were:

derived from real experience, with some changes in the training (*ekserzizii*), currently in use, and with valuable additions to the customs of service itself that were previously lacking....The additions made by him to the custom of service, and the changes to the training, coming as they did from practice, are recognized as quite applicable and for the army, quite necessary; thus the Collegiate brings before your highness to consider the memorable *Customs of Military Service*...and asks the permission that the whole army should be based on the above mentioned...¹⁸⁸

It remained a standard read for the Russian officers and a guideline to maintaining military bases in Russia and abroad for twenty years. In a way, by adopting the main tenants of Rumyantsev's writings, the Russian army embraced many of the Western ideas that were encapsulated in his thought.

Rumyantsev's last and arguably most philosophical contribution to the Russian military thought came in the summer of 1777 in his *Mysl'* (*Thought*). If *Customs* dealt with mundane directives of micro-management of military life, *Mysl'* was definitely a teleological text. In its pages, Rumyantsev tried to coalesce his hitherto abstract notions of theory and practice of war, which appeared sporadically in his correspondence, into a comprehensible group of principles and codify them in one holistic text. Written for the Russian court (and Catherine in particular), the opening page of this overlooked work reads:

The military institution, which is different from all others, has become simultaneously indispensable to all the states, according to some European views; however, due to the inequalities in physical and moral sense, they could not have been in either quantity nor quality similar to one another, and as states have discovered that the army is a burden on all other components of the state, they now are striving to employ all means to improve the connections among them, in which endeavour one country has done better than the rest.

¹⁸⁸ Military Collegiate to Catherine II, 10 October 1776, *Ibid.*, 139-141.

Since we, due to the extensive territory, mixed and for the most part wicked neighbours, and sectarian and customary differences of our inhabitants, are least comparable with other states, we should expand as much as it is beneficial and advantageous for us and imitate others only to the extent that it suits our needs.¹⁸⁹

This surprisingly insightful observation points to the degree of self-awareness in Russian military thought. Rumyantsev understood that Russia possessed a different political and social composition from the rest of Europe and therefore could not wholeheartedly adopt the Western way of war. Accordingly, Russian geo-political expansion could and should be maintained only if the benefits of conquests outweighed the drawbacks of administration of and military investment into new regions. More than anything, it was the political relevance that Rumyantsev gave to military projects that defined his military theory and, by extension, imprinted Russian military thought.

He proceeded to elucidate and develop further his ideas about the interaction between the politics and war, merging the two to serve military goals. Even when the full title of the text submitted to Catherine is considered, *Thoughts on Organization of the Military Part (chasti voinskoi)*, it had something of a hidden intimation that betrayed what Rumyantsev thought of things military. Imbedded therein is an implicit acceptance that war is just a part of the greater whole, and cannot be examined in a vacuum if anything of value is to be derived from its purpose. In the introduction Rumyantsev warned that it is important:

to respect the source, which for now only one we have, that sustains our armed forces: by this I mean the people, who supply the army with soldiers and money, and who should not be exhausted by way of unreasonable and unbearable requisitions; and we should take such measures that would find us, in the time of need, with surplus in money and forces without experiencing any discomfort.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁹ Rumyantsev in *Ibid.*, 99.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 100.

Rumyantsev was the first Russian commander since Peter the Great (who looked at the military business from the government's point of view) who did not offer the one-dimensional perspective exhibited by many military men. His vision of military theory forced officers to confront political reality. For instance, as Kersnovsky noted, Rumyantsev "points at the necessity to maintain the equilibrium between military expenditure and other government needs,"¹⁹¹ because the well-being of the army depends on the well-being of the populace. Population driven to poverty and deprived of food, farms robbed of the men through recruitment, and stables stripped of their horses for cavalry could never support a significant and prolonged war effort. Rumyantsev wanted his country to avoid the French exhaustion after the War of Spanish Succession. While Rumyantsev thought that regiments should be maintained at full strength during peace time, soldiers should spend only nine months a year in the army so that during the summer they could go home and work their fields. People with skills, such as carpenters and blacksmiths, should be retired yearly to their villages to attend to local needs and to make up for whatever was broken or used up during the year. In this way, roughly a third of the army was to be rotated every year.¹⁹² In essence what Rumyantsev was suggesting to Catherine was equivalent to what a modern military theorist would call a rudimentary organization of a 'home front.'

In its basic constitution, *Mysl'* reiterates all the points of concern to Rumyantsev, including discipline and military police, soldiers' pay and rations, armaments, uniforms, recruitment, promotions, and cleanliness. Furthermore, Rumyantsev's views on the utility of fortifications provide a vivid theoretical connection to some of the ideas expressed in

¹⁹¹ Kersnovsky, Vol. I, 117.

¹⁹² Rumyantsev in Goncharov, ed., 112.

the West by such writers as de Saxe and Frederick II. In *Reveries*, de Saxe analyzed the war based on seigecraft. “It seems to me that what I have said should demonstrate the irremediable defects of fortified cities, and that it is more advantageous for a ruler to establish his strong points in localities aided by nature, and situated to cover country, than to fortify cities at immense expense or to augment their fortifications.”¹⁹³ Rumyantsev’s thought followed de Saxe’s analytical pattern. Rumyantsev thought that fortresses and citadels should be maintained “for guarantee of inner security”.¹⁹⁴ He maintained, however, that the existence of fortifications should correspond to the layout of the borders and their preservation, on circumstances at hand. “All those fortresses,” Rumyantsev wrote, “that due to changes in circumstances and borders were rendered unnecessary and yearly consume a large sum of money for upkeep, should be destroyed.”¹⁹⁵ Just like with the cordon system, Rumyantsev never abandoned the use of fortresses. In Rumyantsev’s thought, fortresses acquired theoretical properties that made them compatible with his highly flexible and offensively-minded military doctrine.

Rumyantsev’s view on foreign servicemen in the Russian army, which he kept well hidden at most times, were in conflict with the cosmopolitan spirit of eighteenth century European nobility. Even though he slightly bemoaned the status of foreigners in the Russian army, Rumyantsev knew that in some ways their skill and expertise were indispensable. He admitted that Russia possessed a low number of men of knowledge, “scientists and skilful workers necessary for the armed forces.”¹⁹⁶ At the same time he believed that officers from the West could be eventually replaced by indigenously

¹⁹³ De Saxe, in Thomas R. Phillips, ed., 252.

¹⁹⁴ Rumyantsev in Goncharov, ed., 112.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 103.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

cultivated talent. To remedy the dependence on foreign intellect, he encouraged “the creation of military institutions of highest foundations, under the titles of schools of military science, art, and crafts, in major and other cities of every region...”¹⁹⁷ Following in the footsteps of his namesake, Rumyantsev wanted more military academies to educate future generations of the Russian officer corps instead of sending them to Berlin, Vienna, Paris or London. Based on his previous experience, and by touching on almost all pillars of military art and reconciling them with the politics of the state, Rumyantsev reached a theoretical threshold in *Mysl'* which would remain unsurpassed until the late Napoleonic era.

Assessing Rumyantsev's Theories

In retrospect, Rumyantsev's strategic theory, even though he never expressed it explicitly in writing, can be summarized in six distinct but inter-related points:

1. Destruction of human resources of the enemy – the main goal of war.
2. Success in war can only be achieved through relentless and active offence.
3. Total obliteration of enemy forces is attained in a pitched battle that must be sought for this purpose.
4. All the matters relating to command of the armies, organizations of the rears and operations in the field must be subordinate to achieving the main goal of war.
5. There is a link between war and politics, where the former takes precedent over the latter.
6. Emphasis on camp hygiene and soldier welfare.

If the ideas cocooned in Rumyantsev's thought are related back to the West, they become remarkably attendant to the principles developed by European writers and the behaviour of the Western armies. The destruction of the enemy was epitomized by the French

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 104.

Revolutionary warfare, and the spirit of the offensive was both present in Folard's and Frederick's earlier writings (before the King grew old and cautious). The idea of pitched battle was not very popular in practice, but several theorists including de Saxe hinted at its efficacy. Finally, the necessity to consider political objectives in war had been expounded by both British and Prussian writers.

In the 1780s, Rumyantsev's authority and his sway over the Russian court began to wane. Even though his ascendancy was short lived and his influence was restricted to a period of less than two decades, Rumyantsev's intellectual efforts and military feats left a lasting impression. His work, on and off the battlefield, evolved the Russian military establishment into a more aggressive and sharper tool of foreign policy. By the habitual lecturing of his sovereign in his reports, Rumyantsev equipped the Russian army with theoretical knowledge that ensured its further development. In some instances his ideas present curious clusters of nascent Clausewitzian thought, while in others a seeming departure from the accepted norms.¹⁹⁸ He put Russian military thought on a more confident footing, and painted it with a broad brush of Russian cultural idiosyncrasy, thus giving it an air of distinctive uniqueness. This sudden change in the theoretical demeanour, strikingly illustrated on the battlefield, provoked the claims that Rumyantsev developed a genuinely Russian way of war. Even if this assumption is sometimes taken

¹⁹⁸ During the nineteenth century, Russian military thought never really digested or accepted Clausewitz's *magnum opus On War*. Instead, Russian theorists gravitated towards the works of Jomini, Clausewitz's main intellectual rival. In the 19th century, General Leer submerged in the sea of scientific positivism while Dragomirov, undergoing an intellectual psychosis, turned back to Suvorov and the bayonet, with deep consequences for the Russian army. Bruce Menning gives a brief overview of Russian problematic relationship with Clausewitz's work in his *Bayonets Before Bullets: The Imperial Russian Army, 1861, 1914* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992), 124-125. For influences of Clausewitz on Russian strategic theory see Carl van Dyke, *Russian Imperial Military Doctrine and Education, 1832-1914* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1998), 68-69. David Alan Rich also has a short discussion on the subjects, in *The Tsar's Colonels* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 54-59. Finally, Hines considers the influences and legacy of Leer and Dragomirov in his unpublished dissertation, 96-119.

out of context, Rumyantsev still managed to knit several important strings of theory into the fabric of Russian military craft. Under minute orders stemming from the restless pen of the Field Marshal, staff work improved, control of the Russian forces strengthened, and cooperation among different branches of the army matured.

The stylistic trait that made Rumyantsev's writings so authoritative was the inherently descriptive nature of the text. He walked a fine line between Frederick the Great's blind prescription in *Instructions* and the didactic description of de Saxe's *Reveries*. In nearly all of Rumyantsev's orders is imbedded a clear explanation of his decision and why such a course had to be taken. At the same time, his orders usually left room for private initiative. His orders, "systematically outlining the tasks of each element of the army,"¹⁹⁹ improved its performance and harmonized the military bureaucracy.

Constant attention was paid both to civil-military relations and care for the human capital of the Russian armies. The gradual abandonment of the cordon system coupled with Rumyantsev's injection of political considerations into the art of war marked him as one of the central figures in the development of Russian military thought. As Duffy concludes, "[t]his remarkable man represented probably the most important single formative influence on the Russian army in the second half of the eighteenth century."²⁰⁰

Rumyantsev's last project was directed at the reform that would divide Russian armed forces in four different but interconnected parts: ground forces, comprising active armies; garrison forces – whose primary duty was to be the defence of strategic fortresses and which could join ground forces if necessary; provincial (*gubernskie*) forces to perform strictly guard and sentry duties (a kind of regional proto-police force); and

¹⁹⁹ Duffy, *Russia's Military Way to the West*, 176.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 173.

finally the reserves, where new recruits would be trained for the ground forces of active armies. History, however, denied him the opportunity and time to put his designs into practice. Rumyantsev was too distracted by the campaigns against the Ottoman Empire and when they were brought to conclusion “on the northern horizon there already appeared the shining star of Potemkin...”²⁰¹ He was ousted by the jealous favourite of Catherine the Great and spent the remainder of his days in idleness on his estate in Ukraine. Rumyantsev’s ideas lived on, however, and were picked up by the most eccentric of his pupils, Alexander Suvorov.

²⁰¹ Kersnovsky, Vol. I, 122.

III

THE SUVORIAN EPILOGUE

“Suwarrow chiefly was on the alert,
Surveying, drilling, ordering, jesting, pondering;
For the man was, we safely may assert,
A thing to wonder at beyond most wondering;
Hero, buffoon, half-demon, and half-dirt.”
Byron, Don Juan, Canto VII, LV

If Rumyantsev’s efforts are comparable to the steady build up of a theoretical edifice, then the contributions of Alexander Suvorov²⁰² represent a whirlwind of tactical theory and soldier pedagogy. The persona, or rather the behaviour, of Field Marshal Suvorov is even more importance than that of Rumyantsev. In the words of one foreign observer, Suvorov’s “gross and ridiculous manners have inspired his soldiers with the blind confidence, which serves him instead of his military talents, and has been the real cause of all his successes.”²⁰³ Suvorov’s social conduct was so closely entwined with his ability to win battles that it eventually became the cornerstone of his military success; and, in some instances, a point of criticism. Regardless of how Suvorov has been portrayed by his contemporaries or in subsequent Western and Russian historiography, the reader is well advised to keep Suvorov at the center of the narrative when surveying his military works. His unique methods only worked for Suvorov, since no one could replicate his energies, his crude style, or relate to regular soldiers as he did. As Catherine’s

²⁰² The name is subject to variations. In the 18th century it was spelled ‘Suwarrow’ or ‘Suworow’, while in the late 19th century, and early 20th it was sometimes written as ‘Suvorof’. However, ‘Suvorov’ has been accepted as a standard transliteration.

²⁰³ Charles Francois Philibert Masson, *Secrete Memoirs of the Court of Petersburg* (New York: Arno Press & The New York Time, 1970), 177.

preponderant favourite and Suvorov's perennial rival,²⁰⁴ Prince Georgii Potemkin, joked, "You can't oversuvorov Suvorov."²⁰⁵

Alexander Vasil'yevich Suvorov (1729-1800) was born into lesser gentry who benefited from the Petrine reforms. He received an education through a tutor, probably his father,²⁰⁶ which was complimented by his personal quest for universal military knowledge. He spoke French, German, and Russian and, in the course of his long career, he added Polish and Turkish to his linguistic arsenal. Suvorov was an avid reader of history and biographies of great men, as well as of books about military sciences such as siege engineering and artillery.²⁰⁷ The military writers in the West were influenced by the exploits of the classical age, and Suvorov was similarly fascinated by the ancients. He read Plutarch, Plato, and Cornelius Nepos,²⁰⁸ and was a great admirer of Julius Caesar. He encouraged others to read the works of Charles XII, Montecuccoli, Princes Condé, Eugene and Turenne and Marshal de Saxe.²⁰⁹

Suvorov's military promotion was slow, as he neither purchased his rank nor enjoyed favours from above. He achieved the rank of Field Marshal at the respectable age of sixty-five entirely due to merit, which was rare in eighteenth century armies.²¹⁰ Like many prominent people of his day, he was a freemason and belonged to the Russian

²⁰⁴ Suvorov had many rivals. For instance see N. N. Kamesnkii, *Devyatii vek na sluzhbe Rossii: Iz istorii roda grafov Kamenskih* (Moskva: OOO "Velinor", 2004), 28-40 for Suvorov's competition with Count Mikhail Fedotovich Kamensky.

²⁰⁵ Montefiore, 390.

²⁰⁶ Suvorov's father, Vassily Suvorov, was a military scholar of sorts who translated the French Marshal's Sébastien de Vauban (1633-1707) work on fortification into Russian. Longworth, 19.

²⁰⁷ Philip Longworth, *Art of Victory*, 19.

²⁰⁸ Cornelius Nepos (100-24 BC) was a Roman biographer.

²⁰⁹ Longworth, 19

²¹⁰ Mikhailov, 584. This was also true of Maurice de Saxe, who started at the bottom of the officer rank, and of Peter the Great, who promoted himself only when he felt justified to do so.

Masonic movement.²¹¹ By the end of his career Suvorov was regarded as one of the most educated officers in Europe and as “one of the most cultured men of his time.”²¹² His superb theoretical education was complimented by harsh experience. His life coincided with six major wars: the Seven Years War (1756-1763), the Polish Civil War (1768-1776), the First Turkish War (1768-1774), the Second Turkish War (1787-1792), the Polish Revolt (1793-1794), and the War of the Second Coalition (1798-1800).

His notoriously strange behaviour and character, sometimes bordering on madness, did not help to improve his standing with the elite. For example, Suvorov hated mirrors and everywhere he stayed they had to be covered. The manner in which he dressed and conducted himself verged on the scandalous.²¹³ Even as a Generalissimo he wore the simplest clothes and his numerous medals could only rarely be seen on his chest. He preferred to sleep on a haystack and eat simple meals with the soldiers. Suvorov was relatively short, thin and often ill. As Duffy describes him: “His shoulders and arms were heavy, but he walked as if he were about to break into a dance – and indeed he had a way of surprising the most solemn companies by doing just that.”²¹⁴ To his soldiers Suvorov asked the strangest questions, such as ‘what is the distance to the moon,’ ‘how many stars are there in the sky,’ or ‘how many fish are there in the Danube,’ and expected a ready reply.²¹⁵ It was not the correct answer Suvorov was looking for;

²¹¹ Maria Carlson, “Fashionable Occultism: Spiritualism, Theosophy, Freemasonry, and Hermeticism in Fin-de-Siècle Russia,” in *The Occult in Russian and Soviet Culture*, ed. Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 145. See also Arsenii Zamostianov, *Suvorov bil neobichnim chudom...* (Moscow: Lepta Kniga: 2006), 80-84. Suvorov once complained that it is difficult to compete with Prince Repnin, one of his military rivals, because the latter had the Mason connections. Zamostianov argues that Suvorov was never a true Mason. *Ibid.*, 83.

²¹² D.S. Mirsky, *A History of Russian Literature*, 5th ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1964), 58.

²¹³ Christopher Duffy, *Eagles Over the Alps: Suvorov in Italy and Switzerland in 1799* (Chicago: Emperor's Press 1999), 20.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 19.

²¹⁵ Suvorov, *Nauka pobezhdat': mysl', aforizmy, anekdoty*, 365.

rather, he was testing the wit of his men and how well they responded in unfamiliar situations. When the answer he received was ‘I don’t know’ or ‘I can’t remember,’ Suvorov would lose self-control and spit verbal fireballs at his men. His preferred insult, one that his men feared even more than court-martials, was *nemoguznaika* or ‘donthinker.’²¹⁶

Despite what many contemporaries thought, his ‘insanity’ was not random but methodical and controlled. As Christopher Duffy explains: “Those who knew Suvorov were aware that he was not the lunatic he pretended to be.” He continues to say that Suvorov’s strange behaviour was a psychological “device to disarm potential enemies in the army and at court.”²¹⁷ Through his bizarre conduct and strange language, Suvorov could convey sharp criticisms or telling lessons that otherwise would have not been allowed to be uttered. Yet, this eccentric and overlooked historical figure possessed an unlikely military skill and, as many historians agree, he was “the greatest soldier Russia ever produced.”²¹⁸ Suvorov’s mind was as sharp as a bayonet, and his original observations of the Russian army enabled him to develop a combination of didactic principles of great generality and power.

Not everyone in the West was optimistic or confident about Suvorov’s ability as a military commander. Perhaps the most unflattering, even if fallacious, account of the man was left by Poet George Gordon Byron, who described him as a “bafoon,” “Momus,”²¹⁹ and “Harlequin in uniform.”²²⁰ After the incredible string of Russian victories against the

²¹⁶ His corresponding term for the clueless Austrian officers was *nichtswisser*.

²¹⁷ Christopher Duffy, *Russia’s Military Way to the West: Origins and Nature of Russian Military Power, 1700-1800*, 194.

²¹⁸ Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*. 6th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 275.

²¹⁹ In ancient Greek mythology, a god of mockery, satire, and criticism.

²²⁰ George Gordon Byron, *Don Juan* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1958), 239.

French in Italy, Emperor Francis sneered that Suvorov's success was often the result of his good fortune and sheer luck. "Great talent is a piece of luck in a military man,"²²¹ retorted Suvorov.

Modern criticisms have also been harsh. In the words of Gunther Rosenberg,

Suvorov's reputation rested on his victories over the poorly disciplined and rather backward forces of the Ottoman Empire and Poland, and at that was much inflated. His strategy was primitive, calling for an attack on the enemy wherever he was found, and his tactics, based on the cult of the bayonet, were outdated and wasteful when delivered against troops relying on fire.²²²

Such an approach to and analysis of Suvorov and his model of warfare is flawed, Jeremy Black argues. It "underrates the problems of campaigning in Eastern Europe and mistakenly implies that there is a clear continuum of achievement in military method in the light of which it is readily possible to assess what was 'primitive.'" Black suggests a more detailed study of Suvorov's methods.

Russian military success has been attributed to...the use of compact mobile forces drawing on advanced bases and supply magazines, by reliance on storming fortresses rather than on conventional sieges, and by a 'credible offensive formation': the battlefield use of mutually supporting squares, attacking in an articulated fashion and benefiting from crossfire.²²³

Luck and primitivism aside, Russian military methods were built on solid theoretical foundations, which were in turn derived from the West.

A Petite Magnum Opus: Science of Victory

To assess Russian military performance at the end of the eighteenth century and to examine the above claims about Suvorov in critical fashion, Suvorian thought must be

²²¹ K. Osipov, *Alexander Suvorov*, translated by Edith Bone. (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1944), 152.

²²² Gunther E. Rothenberg, *Napoleon's Great Adversaries: The Archduke Charles and the Austrian Army, 1792-1814* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), 58.

²²³ Jeremy Black, *European Warfare 1660-1815*, 26.

oriented in the annals of military-intellectual history. Alexander Suvorov produced the most celebrated Russian military classic of the imperial period. The name of this rather short document is *Nauka pobezhdat'* or *Science of Victory* (sometimes translated as *Science of Winning*, *Science of Conquering* or *Art of Victory*).²²⁴ The proper translation of the work is imperative, since the appeal to 'science' instead of 'art' points to the influence of Western works that Suvorov read as a young man.

In his last and most famous work, Suvorov established a paradigm that would influence the progress and evolution of Russian military theory throughout the nineteenth century and beyond. It influenced the thinking of Russian officers throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, and in 1918 Lenin included parts of this work in the training manual for the Red Army.²²⁵ In *Science of Victory*, Suvorov refined "more than four decades of experience into a simple set of guidelines to govern the training and indoctrination of soldiers in the fundamentals of the military art."²²⁶ Completed in 1796, the manual was forgotten soon after its author's death in 1800. The nineteenth century Russian military reformer General Mikhail Dragomirov, who reintroduced the manual and Suvorov's ideas into the mainstream of Russian army, explained the amnesia this way: "*Nauka Pobezhdat'* is composed from folk idioms and other such phrases, this is why it was so close to the hearts of Russian soldiers, and did not provoke any interest among the highly educated officers of Suvorov's time."²²⁷

²²⁴ These translations are inaccurate. *Nauka* is a noun that in Russian means "science", and *pobezhdat'* is a verb, "to win", which is derived from the word *pobeda*, or "victory".

²²⁵ Alexander Suvorov, *Nauka pobezhdat'* (Moskva: Voennoe Izdatelstvo Ministerstva Oboroni SSSR, 1980), 13.

²²⁶ Bruce W. Menning, "Train Hard, Fight Easy: the Legacy of A. V. and His 'Art of Victory'," *Air & Space Power Chronicles* (1986). <<http://www.airpower.maxwell.af.mil/airchronicles/aureview/1986/nov-dec/menning.html>> [26 July 2006].

²²⁷ M. Dragomirov, "Velikaia Nauka Pobezhdat'," in Savinkin A. E., et al., eds. *Ne chislom, a umeni'em! Voennaia sistema A.V. Suvorova*. (Moscow: Voennyi Universitet, Russkii Put', 2001), 113.

This is the quintessential difference of Suvorov's writing, and the one that sets this work apart from many of its contemporaries. Notwithstanding its reception in the last years of the eighteenth century, *Science of Victory* greatly enhances the understanding of Suvorov's theory and philosophy of war. Furthermore, it helps to explain how the Russian army began to possess the same traits that had distinguished, and in turn made militarily successful, the armies of Revolutionary France.²²⁸ This is important in light of the major themes of this work, namely that Russian military thought arrived independently at the same Western military model that ushered in the French Revolution.

Science of Victory is divided into two sections: 1. *Uchenie razvodnoye, ili pred razvodom* (Drill Instructions) and 2. *Slovesnoye poucheniye soldatam o znanii, dl'ya nih neobhodimom* (Verbal Instructions). The italicized words within the text symbolize commands given by officers, and the words that follow are explanations. The first part of *Science of Victory* is a detailed tactical instruction written for eighteenth century battlefield soldiers. Here Suvorov instructs the new recruits how to shoot their muskets, how to engage enemy cordon with linear formations, and how to repulse cavalry attacks. "Enemy cavalry is galloping to help its infantry. *Attack!* – Here hold up the bayonets at the enemy stomach level; it happens too that the bayonet gets in the muzzle, neck, especially in the chest of the horse. – Quick counter attack."²²⁹ He then explained how to attack with columns and *kares*. Suvorov was not a strong proponent of frontal attacks,

²²⁸ *Science of Victory* has yet to be translated into the English language. The only commentary available about the text in English is Bruce Menning's *Train Hard, Fight Easy: the Legacy of A. V. and His 'Art of Victory'*. See also Longworth, 213 – 221 and Lyon W. Blease, *Suvorof* (London: Constable and Company, 1920), 192-199. The latest Russian biography of Suvorov by General Shishov contains a chapter devoted to this work, A. V. Shishov *Generalissimus Suvorov* (Moskva: "Olma-Press", 2003), 276-293. There are several versions of *Science of Victory*. After reading four, the author has decided to use the one published by the Ministry of Defence of the USSR, because this edition provides extensive aid to the reader in the form of footnotes and endnotes. For historiography of the text of *Nauka Pobezhdat'* see Pigarev, 127-128.

²²⁹ Suvorov, *Nauka pobezhdat'*, 18.

which in their tactical form required the least effort from the commanders. He preferred wide flanking manoeuvres that were more difficult to execute but were strategically more rewarding.²³⁰ At the time, in the age when tactical evolutions dominated the field of battle and decided the victor, Suvorov tried to increase the speed of and smooth out the complicated reformations from marching columns into lines, from lines into squares, and *vice versa*. In the ‘Comments’ at the end of the first section, Suvorov talked about fundamentals of proper firing techniques, offensive, and retreat. Suvorov did not allow his forces to retreat out of general principles, and in his writings no provisions were made for such a manoeuvre. “It is better not even to think about this,” warned the Field Marshal. “The influence they [retreats] exert upon a soldier is quite dangerous and therefore it is better not even to contemplate this in cavalry and infantry!”²³¹

Suvorov made his greatest contribution to military training theory in the first part of the manual. In an age when soldiers’ training was usually confined to parades in the capital and drills in the barracks, Suvorov’s approach was both original and daring. He began with forced marches. During training, he ordered marches in the most inhospitable weather and terrains: over swamps, broken ground and forests, as well as during winter snowstorms and summer heat. Suvorov’s objective was to make training conditions approach as close as possible the conditions of real combat. To do that, he devised his renowned *skvoznaia ataka* (“through attack” or “transparent attack”).²³² It was a simulation of real battle, where soldiers were divided into two groups and were ordered to commence an attack on each other. They would stop at intervals to fire blank volleys, just like in a real engagement, and then continue the advance. When coming closer, the

²³⁰ Shishov, *Generalissimus Suvorov*, 289.

²³¹ Suvorov, *Nauka pobezhdat’*, 21.

²³² *Ibid.*, 19.

lines launched at each other with a bayonet assault and soldiers were forbidden by their officers to slow down. As one contemporary wrote, “this attack was indeed a mess, reminiscent of real business of battle. It was conducted by both attacking sides head on...amidst infantry and cavalry fire, with screams of Hurrah (*Ura!*)!” In the meantime, the officers on each side were cheering their men on, yelling “Cut them down lads! With the bayonets!”²³³ To sustain the momentum of the exercise and to maintain the martial atmosphere of battle, the participants would at the last moment step to the right, raise their weapons above their heads and squeeze through the openings in the opposing line, hence the name of the exercise. The lines would then be turned around and the attack repeated.²³⁴

Menning explains that “to approximate the conditions of combat as closely as possible, Suvorov often incorporated cavalry and artillery into his ‘attack through’ exercises. The crash of blank cannon fire, the drumming of hoofs, the flash of bayonet and saber, the din and smoke of mock battle – all injected a heavy dose of realism into the exercise.”²³⁵ Unsurprisingly, in the turmoil that ensued during such an exercise there were injuries and even fatalities, but Suvorov was unconcerned. He once coolly remarked that, at the expense of a few lives, he was able to teach and consequently save thousands.²³⁶ His motto was ‘If you train hard, you will fight easy!’ After the age of Napoleonic warfare, especially when bayonet charges had faded away, *Drill Instructions* had become largely an archaic piece of tactical directives and in many subsequent editions of Suvorov’s book, this highly technical part was omitted.

²³³ Ibid., 33

²³⁴ Ibid., 32-33.

²³⁵ Menning, “Train Hard, Fight Easy: the Legacy of A. V. and His ‘Art of Victory’”.

²³⁶ Ibid.

The second part, *Verbal Instruction*, is more theoretical and as such its usefulness transcended the time in which it was written. It also serves as an analytical benchmark for passing judgment on Suvorov's military thought. As far as tactics were concerned, Suvorov differentiated between column, line, and square formations, and suggested under what circumstances each should be employed. Linear formations should be used against regular troops and *kares* against the Ottomans. "It is possible that a-five-hundred-soldier *kare* would have to tear through a mass of six or seven thousand Turks,"²³⁷ he wrote. Suvorov's most interesting commentary, however, concerned the use of columns. Suvorov was a keen observer of the political developments in the West and was aware of the potential military force that had been released by the French Revolution. He warned that one day Russian soldiers might have to confront the French chimera. Listing Russian enemies, Suvorov wrote unflatteringly: "There are also the atheist, wind-bag, maddened, Frenchies. They war on the Germans with columns. If we will ever fight them, we too should use columns."²³⁸ Not even Suvorov could have fathomed the prescience of his prediction. If anything, Suvorov's clear understanding of the Revolutionary warfare underlined the power of influences that events in the West exercised over Russian military mind. Just like his mentor Rumyantsev, Western practices had shaped Suvorov's thought.

Much like de Saxe and Frederick II before him, Suvorov supplied his readers with several essential military arts (*voinskii iskusstva*), one innate and two acquired, which according to him determined the fate of military campaigns. The first art was *glazomer*. No equivalent word exists in English, but in French, the Russian word closely

²³⁷ Suvorov, *Nauka pobezhdat'*, 24.

²³⁸ Suvorov, *Nauka pobezhdat'*, 18.

corresponds to *coup d'oeil*. In the words of Suvorov it denoted the ability to seize and comprehend the situation on the ground quickly. It meant the knowledge of setting up camps, conducting marches, and developing attacks.²³⁹ Suvorov probably borrowed this concept from Frederick, who wrote in his *Instructions* that “the *coup d'oeil* of a general is the talent which great men have of conceiving in a moment all the advantages of the terrain and the use that they can make of it with their army.”²⁴⁰

Bystrota or speed was the second art.²⁴¹ Suvorov outlined, in a very meticulous way, his approach to successful logistics. Suvorian marches became legendary even during his lifetime, and the speed of movement enabled him to be at the right place at the right time and take the enemy by surprise. In the winter of 1768, during the war with Poland, his Suzdal regiment of 1,500 men marched almost 500 miles in seventeen days - or 29.4 miles a day.²⁴² In May 1789, during the war with the Turks, Suvorov had to link with his Austrian ally, Prince Couburg, and Suvorov's division covered forty miles in twenty-eight hours.²⁴³ Later that year, Suvorov had another occasion to come to the assistance of the Austrian corps that faced the whole Ottoman army. Suvorov moved out at midnight of September 8. As Potemkin wrote to Catherine on September 10:

The order given by me to the commanders of the corps [i.e. Prince Couburg] to go where the enemy has concentrated, is why general Suvorov is currently underway to help them, but for him to reach [Couburg] at the mentioned time is impossible.²⁴⁴

At 10 am, the same day that Potemkin's report was dispatched, Suvorov's tired division reached the Austrian camp. Suvorov defied the expectations of his commander and as

²³⁹ Suvorov, *Nauka pobezhdat'*, 25.

²⁴⁰ Frederick II, in Thomas R. Phillips, 341.

²⁴¹ Suvorov, *Nauka pobezhdat'*, 25.

²⁴² Longworth, 59.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, 152.

²⁴⁴ Potemkin to Catherine II, 10th September 1789, Mesheryakov, Vol. II, 474.

Longworth calculated, it took the Russian forces to cover sixty miles of some of the most difficult terrain in Europe thirty-six hours.²⁴⁵ Eventually, Suvorov grew to take *bystrota* to the extreme. For example, in Italy in the summer heat of 1799, his marches were too excruciating even for the seasoned Russian troops. The forced march to the Trebbia river to cut off the French General Macdonald lost all the resemblance of orderly eighteenth century formations – the soldiers ran in disorganized groups as fast as they could, many collapsing from exhaustion never to get up again. As one soldier testified, “a terrible trail marked the passage of the [Russian] army.”²⁴⁶

The third and last principle of Suvorov’s military art was *natisk* or impetus of offensive operations.²⁴⁷ For Suvorov a step back or a retreat was equal to death. The word ‘retreat’ does not appear once in the whole of *Science of Victory*. All of his operations were by design, nature, and purpose offensive. Suvorov developed his three military arts as the means by which a strategic goal of the field army could be achieved. For Suvorov this meant crushing the enemy on the battlefield and then chasing after him to achieve complete annihilation. A clear continuity and influence of Rumyantsev’s thought is unmistakable.

Another trait that Suvorov has inherited from Rumyantsev was the highly visible humanism and an obsession with cleanliness and health. In *Science of Victory*, Suvorov spilled much ink writing about hospitals and the welfare of the troops. Suvorov preferred folk remedies such as herbs, roots, clean water, and fresh air. He warned his soldiers, “Beware of hospitals! German drugs are from far away, expired, useless and dangerous.

²⁴⁵ Longworth, 158.

²⁴⁶ Ibid., 250.

²⁴⁷ Suvorov, *Nauka pobezhdat’*, 27.

The Russian soldier is not used to them! You have in the artels²⁴⁸, roots, grasses... Stay healthy!”²⁴⁹ He also imposed fines for soldiers who did not take proper care of themselves, reinforcing the universal values of the Enlightenment philosophy that was concerned with the preservation of human dignity and life.

Far from the blood-thirsty beast that the Western newspapers portrayed, Suvorov always maintained that the surrendered should be given quarter. “It is a sin to kill indiscriminately, they are human beings too,”²⁵⁰ wrote Suvorov of his enemies. He remained true to this principle to the very end of his life. In 1799, before engaging General Macdonald on the banks of Trebbia, he wrote a *prikaz* (an order) to the Cossacks on how to engage the French:

1. The enemy army take prisoner (*vzyat' v polon*).
2. Cossacks shall bayonet; but should listen carefully if the French will scream ‘pardon’²⁵¹ or ‘shamade.’ [sic] While attacking, the Cossacks should yell ‘balezarm, pardon, zhette lezarm’²⁵² and after this the cavalry should brutally attack, and descend upon the batteries to drive home the attack.
3. ... With the prisoners be kind... As far as the French Generals [and officers] are concerned... shout ‘Pardon’ and if they do not surrender cut them down.²⁵³

Similar orders run through all of Suvorov’s correspondence, which indicates a clear and conscious effort to impose some rules upon the irrationality of war.

²⁴⁸ Artel was a type of soldiers’ commune within a company, unique to the Russian army. It was a resource for the soldiers that enabled them to take a better care of themselves. Artel was based on the egalitarian principles of contribution to the common pot which in turn could be shared among the members of the cooperative.

²⁴⁹ Ibid., 28.

²⁵⁰ Ibid., 23.

²⁵¹ French words were written out in Russian Cyrillic letters so that the Cossacks, who did not read Latin alphabet, could read them phonetically.

²⁵² “pardon, jette les armes,” is French for ‘forgive, throw the weapons.’ Suvorov’s transliteration prevented the author from attaining a complete translation of what he meant to say.

²⁵³ Order of A. V. Suvorov to the Cossack forces about the rules of engagement with the French, 6 June 1799, Mesheryakov, vol. IV, 153-4.

In the *Science of Victory*, Suvorov also wrote about civil-military relations. He declared “Do not harm civilians: they provide us with food and water. A soldier is not a bandit.”²⁵⁴ With such words the old man instilled honour into the profession of soldiery and gave clear guidelines governing the interaction between military and society. Unfortunately, Suvorov had a hard time enforcing this part of his teachings in practice. Soldiers gave little heed to such stipulations in the heat of battle. At the same time, it is doubtful that the highly pious Suvorov would openly suggest threatening to cut the throats of hostage women and children, as Frederick had suggested in his instructions for his generals in 1747.

Perhaps Suvorov’s most influential contribution to Russian military theory was his advocacy of bayonet tactics, another theme that runs visibly through all of his orders, letters, and works. Suvorov’s idioms such as “Shoot rarely, but deadly, with the bayonet stab firmly,” later became part of the military lexicon. Suvorov’s best-known catch phrase was “The bullet is a fool, but the bayonet is a fine chap!” (*Pulia dura, a shtik molodez!*).²⁵⁵ It was more than just a tactical maxim for an eighteenth century infantryman. The aphorism denoted a particular aspect of the Russian military psyche. With this crude phrase, Suvorov was able to drive a clear wedge between the human and technological elements in war. His obvious implication was that the human or moral element, represented by the bayonet and the hand that wields it, triumphs over its material, or technological counterpart, the bullet. Moreover, with his brilliant victories won at the tip of bayonet charges, Suvorov could prove the dominance of the human element on the battlefield.

²⁵⁴ Ibid., 23.

²⁵⁵ Suvorov, *Nauka pobezhdat*, 22.

Even though he mostly fought against non-Western armies, this was enough to demonstrate the accuracy of his conviction. The superiority of the Russian morale and the ability of soldiers to endure hardships carried the day, he believed. In the age of smoothbore, muzzle-loading muskets, the effect of the bullet was only relative, and its accuracy decreased significantly with range. Against this background, despite the danger of proximity associated with the use of cold weapons, the bayonet was very practical, since it was more deadly, cheaper, easier and faster to use than muskets that took time to load and fire. Wrote Suvorov: “Three attack you – bayonet the first, shoot the second, stab the third!”²⁵⁶ There was a psychological factor. As Menning notes, “Victory in battle ultimately represents a triumph of will, and there is no better way to demonstrate outright mastery than to dominate physically with cold steel.”²⁵⁷ Facing hundreds of rapidly approaching, glittering, razor sharp bayonets is nerve-racking, which Suvorov understood. From Turkish janissaries at Rymnik to French infantry at Trebbia, Russian bayonet charges undermined the morale and broke the will of opposing forces.

Even though it was an original approach and one that suited the socio-economic character of the Russian armies, the trend to rely on the bayonet and the disillusionment with the firearms had already been expressed by French authors. Years before Suvorov, de Saxe wrote that “the abuse of firing began to be appreciated; it causes more noise than harm, and those who depend on it are always beaten.”²⁵⁸ The only new element in Suvorov’s thought was the degree of fanatical trust that he placed in cold weapons.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁶ Ibid., 23.

²⁵⁷ Menning, “Train Hard, Fight Easy: the Legacy of A. V. and His ‘Art of Victory’”.

²⁵⁸ De Saxe, in Thomas R. Phillips, 206.

²⁵⁹ As the story goes, when Suvorov was on his death bed expiring from an uncontrollable fever, in the last delirious words were

Connected to the use of the bayonet was the theme of training and drill that can be seen throughout *Science of Victory*. In fact, Suvorov is remembered best as a military pedagogue, because his approach to that branch of military art was pioneering. “For Suvorov, training began with the individual soldier,” writes Menning. “The task was to transform annual levies of raw and illiterate peasant conscripts into fighting troops.” Suvorov always worked from the bottom up. Furthermore, he made officers take direct interest and initiative in and responsibility for the training of their soldiers.²⁶⁰ In other words, Suvorov occupied himself with the question of how to turn an apathetic Russian serf into a military specialist without making him into a Prussian-style automaton, while injecting him with motivation and patriotic fervour that could match the nationalistic brewery of the revolutionary France.

To cultivate the dedication of the Russian serfs to the profession of soldiering was not an easy task. Unlike France, Russia in the 1790s did not witness the bourgeoning of nationalism as a distinct and independent ideology. Suvorov did not know what nationalism meant, and to him the events unfolding in France seemed ghastly unpatriotic. Yet subconsciously he strove to replicate the effects of nationalism in his soldiers. Suvorov’s goal was to make his serf-recruits believe in their own abilities, in their moral superiority over enemies, and to nurture a spirit of invincibility. As Menning writes, “his methods developed men confident in their own capacities and abilities to succeed, even under most trying condition of battle.” Suvorov wanted his soldiers to project to the enemy “a sense of self-contained control, a sense of disciplined will power that led inevitably to victory.”²⁶¹ To achieve this, Suvorov appealed to the two main pillars of

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

²⁶¹ Menning, “Train Hard, Fight Easy: the Legacy of A. V. and His ‘Art of Victory’”.

monarchical state that were readily accessible to him and his soldiers. In order to generate the same military responsiveness from the Russian soldiers as Republican France was able to extract from its citizenry, the Russian Field Marshall turned to religion and the institution of Tsardom.

Suvorov was a deeply religious man. He composed a canon of nine songs²⁶² and even crafted a wooden cross for the church of St. Peter and Paul in Ladoga.²⁶³ He recognized and reinforced religious and patriotic sentiments and tried to awaken them in his recruits to strengthen “common identity and loyalty to shared values.”²⁶⁴ As Best writes, “Suvorov took [religion] to such a heady pitch”²⁶⁵ that it almost served as brainwashing mechanism. Suvorov wrote to his soldiers: “Pray to God! He delivers us victory. Wonder-heroes! God is our general!”²⁶⁶ The soldiers should die for “Virgin Mary, (*bogorodiza*), for the mother, for the Holy Kingdom of God! (*presvetleyshey dom*)”²⁶⁷ One would be at a loss to find a similar referene of religious devotion in Western military writings.

Suvorov never bothered to explain the political reasons for war to his troops, but chose to present the wars and campaigns in the cloak of religious self-righteousness. It was the easiest way to ignite a fire of comradery in Russian armies while at the same time intensifying the patriotic feelings of individual soldiers. On the way to the Italian front in 1799, Suvorov stopped in Mittau (modern day Jelgava, Latvia) to meet with French political exile, Louis XVIII, and received his royal blessings for the upcoming campaign.

²⁶² Maria G. Zhukova, *Tvoi esm' az: Suvorov* (Moskva: Izdanie Sretenskogo monastyrya, 2006), 146.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, 160.

²⁶⁴ Menning, “Train Hard, Fight Easy: the Legacy of A. V. and His ‘Art of Victory’”.

²⁶⁵ Best, 44.

²⁶⁶ Suvorov, *Nauka pobezhdat'*, 29

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 23.

As Longworth puts it: “This occasion set the final seal of authority on what was seen as a modern crusade.”²⁶⁸

Reflecting about the nature of his profession to his beloved daughter, Natasha, Suvorov wrote: “I am her [Catherine II’s] soldier, I die for my Motherland (*otechistvo*). The higher I am advanced by her graces, the happier I am to sacrifice myself for her...God has prolonged my life for the service to the state.”²⁶⁹ Suvorov projected his child-like and blind adoration and devotion to the Russian monarchy onto his soldiers. From the first day that recruits were torn away from their families, they were subjected to constant bombardment of slogans, aphorism, and catch-phrases, until they were conditioned for most suicidal missions and were ready to spring to defence of the Tsardom. An appeal to the Russian patriotism to make the troops labour harder, by referring to ‘Empress Mother Catherine,’ always worked.²⁷⁰ By the time his army was about to enter Italy, Suvorov had largely attained his objective of fusing religious pietism with indomitable devotion to institutional autocracy. This produced a patriotic mixture powerful enough to withstand the shock of the latest evocation of European military thought.

It seems that Suvorov was slowly drifting in the same direction as Guibert when he proposed the creation of military bodies tied together by the bonds of nationalism in their service to the state. Guibert proposed national participation in warfare, but this directly contradicted the established political order of the *ancien régime*. Suvorov tried to maintain the idea of Guibert alive with notions acceptable under the absolutism of the

²⁶⁸ Longworth, 236.

²⁶⁹ Cited in Zamostianov, 78.

²⁷⁰ Longworth, 116.

Imperial Russia. He was trying to solve this contradiction by substituting *liberté, égalité, fraternité* with his religious, paternalistic, and patriotic propaganda.

Finally, the stylistic contrast between Suvorov's *Nauka Pobezhdat'* and Rumyantsev's *Mysl'* is striking. Here is how Suvorov described the storming of a fortress should proceed:

Break through the abatis²⁷¹, throw down your hurdles over the wolf traps²⁷²! Run, fast! Hop over the palisades²⁷³, throw down your fascines²⁷⁴, go down into the ditch, put up ladders! Marksmen, cover the columns, aim for the heads! Columns, fly over the walls to the parapets, bayonet! On the parapet form a line! Guard the powder cellars! Open the gates for the cavalry! The enemy runs into the city – turn his cannons against him! Hit him hard, lively bombardment! Don't do it for too long. The order is given – get down into the city, cut down the enemy in the streets! Cavalry, charge! Don't enter the houses, hit them on the streets! Storm where the foe has hidden! Occupy city square, put up guards. Put up pickets immediately, by the gates, callers and magazines! The enemy has surrendered – give him mercy! The walls are ours – now to the loot!²⁷⁵

Suvorov's "writings are as different from the common run of classical prose as his tactics were from those of Frederick or Marlborough,"²⁷⁶ wrote Prince Dmitry Mirsky in the 1920s. The short sentences reflect the brisk mind of their author and the fast pace of battle. The passivity of a typical military manual was replaced with an active present tense. The language was calculated to be accessible not only to the officers, but also to the regular soldiers. As one of Suvorov's biographers claims, *Science of Victory* "is the first known written record on the art of war intended not only for officers but for every

²⁷¹ Abatis was a part of 18th century siege fortifications. It usually took the form of trees laid down in line with branches directed at the enemy. The purpose of abatis was to slow down the enemy and expose him to the fire of the defenders.

²⁷² A hole with sharp stakes dug in its bottom.

²⁷³ A wooden fence or an earthwork.

²⁷⁴ A bundle of wood tied together. It was carried by soldiers for negotiating such obstacles as ditches.

²⁷⁵ Suvorov, *Nauka pobezhdat'*, 24-25

²⁷⁶ Mirsky, 59.

serving man.”²⁷⁷ He used familiar folk idioms to drive home his message, such as “Ignorance is darkness – knowledge is light!” and compared the craft of war to the peasants tilling their fields. The metaphor was effective and relatable.

There was also a hidden psychological undertone throughout the text. In *Science of Victory*, Suvorov used a terminology that allowed him to extract incredible physical and mental efforts from his soldiers. The troops were never supposed to concentrate on the difficulties of their tasks, because they were made easy by the author. In Suvorian terminology, soldiers were called *bogatyri* or wonder-heroes. The heavy infantry backpack was called “the wind” (*veter*); regiments did not move out from their camp, but “jumped up, put on their winds, and ran forward”; the ditch was never “too deep”, and the parapet was never “too high”;²⁷⁸ the columns “flew” over the walls, and soldiers “hopped” over the parapets. These clever linguistic formulations blew a cool breeze of simplicity and excitement over the dangers of battle. Suvorov cleverly detached his text from the hardships of military life.

Suvorov’s aim was to get close to the soldier’s heart and learn its beat. According to many of his contemporaries, he succeeded in doing just that. “Weapons and warfare may evolve, but the hands which wield the weapons and the heart which directs the hands will always remain the same,” wrote Dragomirov. Therefore, *Nauka pobezhdat* “belongs to those works of literature that may become obsolete in form but in spirit and relevance will remain forever young.”²⁷⁹

²⁷⁷ Longworth, 220.

²⁷⁸ Suvorov, *Nauka pobezhdat*, 24. Suvorov preferred to avoid long sieges, and instead strove for divisiveness that could be guaranteed by a storm. This approach was clearly in accord with his highly aggressive military thought.

²⁷⁹ Dragomirov in Savinkin, et al., eds., 115.

Assessing Suvorov's Theories

Suvorian battles were bloody, exhausting, and costly in human life, but they were decisive. His soldiers were well trained and taken care of, and fought with dedication only matched by the citizens of the French Republic. Suvorov was convinced that the shortest way to end a conflict was through a decisive battle and here no sacrifice was too great.

At the heart of the Suvorov's ideas was the Russian serf-soldier who was transformed by Suvorian training into the sturdy "wonder-hero." Suvorov invested heavily into the training of the recruits, as his *Nauka pobezhdat'* clearly shows. He wanted the Russian army to believe in itself, and to inculcate the idea that everything it set out to do was within the intellectual capacity of its officers and within physical grasp of the soldiers. When morale faltered, Suvorov did everything in his power to raise it. At Kinburn and at Trebbia the old man inspired the troops by personal example. The Field Marshal always maintained that it is the people, not guns, who win wars. Therefore, he always took good care of his human capital, providing his soldiers with good food, reliable medical services, and improved barracks.

The main principles of Suvorian model can be formulated in the following terms:

1. A decisive and powerful attack using a combination of column, linear, or square formations employing all branches of forces at one's disposal.
2. Constancy in maintaining of the initiative.
3. The culmination of battle is an energetic pursuit of the enemy, with the goal of destroying the human capital of the enemy forces.
4. Presence of strong humanitarian trends that defined the conduct of soldiers towards civilians and prisoners.
5. Strong emphasis on personal hygiene.
6. The use of religion and patriotism as tools for unity and motivation.

The success of Suvorian methods, which were effective regardless of military circumstances, must be above all measured against the progressive military system that emerged in France at the end of the eighteenth century. Instead of well-disciplined linear formations used by the armies of the *ancien régime*, “the French learned to break up quickly, reforming in columns so as to concentrate large numbers of troops in a single area of battlefield.”²⁸⁰ Out of necessity, the French Revolution introduced new methods of warfare. “The political Revolution in France had caused a military revolution and, indeed, was dependent on the latter for its survival,” writes Jeremy Black.²⁸¹ The old tactics associated with “cautious dilatoriness” were discarded in favour of offensive action. The French cared little about flanks, economizing the lives of their soldiers, or their lines of communications. They always went forward with “undaunted valour” even when hungry, tired, or out of ammunition.²⁸² All they cared about was breaking the enemy lines or outflanking him, and they were always eager to give battle. In addition, war was very dear to the hearts and minds of the French people who filled the ranks, because it threatened the very survival of something they themselves had helped to create - the republic. Thus, the French levies fought with unprecedented enthusiasm. No wonder that one after another, Prussian, Italian, Austrian and English armies, who relied on more traditional ways of conducting battle, and whose soldiers were blunt and unmotivated tools of dynastic politics, were defeated.²⁸³ Europe had no particular strategy in either theory or practice to counter the mobility that the French generals had created. As one

²⁸⁰ Alan Forrest, “Nation in Arms I: The French Wars,” in *The Oxford History of Modern War*, ed. Charles Townshend (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 69.

²⁸¹ Jeremy Black, *Warfare in the Eighteenth Century*, 192.

²⁸² Osipov, 135.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*

Russian historian sums it up: “Only one other system possessed the same vigour and elasticity: the system of Suvorov.”²⁸⁴

The question of a ‘military system’ or a model, in this case Suvorian, looms large over the analytical horizon. The thesis of national military schools that began with Rumyantsev had also been applied to the work of Suvorov. Many commentators have claimed that Suvorov was a progenitor of a truly Russian model of warfare that was both different and superior to the Western standards. Hew Strachan, for instance, sees Suvorov as “the father figure of Russian military thought.” According to him, Suvorov “spurned the emerging independent Russian military tradition, which traces itself from Suvorov through Rumyantsev back to Peter the Great.”²⁸⁵ The underlying theme of this study hopes to challenge the above interpretations of Russian military thought in the eighteenth century, and re-examine views that cause distortion or error by extreme simplification of the subject. Strachan’s analysis, like many others, stumbles into two pitfalls: one is related to the scope of military thoughts and the political freedom of their practitioners and the other speaks to the misinterpretation surrounding the military activity of Peter the Great.

First, Suvorov was a divisional or corps commander until he was in his late sixties, and his military activities were always circumvented. As Longworth correctly points out, “Suvorov never had an opportunity for the free exercise of his strategic judgment.”²⁸⁶ Unlike Rumyantsev, who was a governor of Ukraine and a commander of an army (and thus had to look beyond the field tactics), Suvorov’s strategic thought never evolved past tactical objectives. He never enjoyed the kind of authority that would have

²⁸⁴ Ibid.

²⁸⁵ Hew Strachan, *European Armies and the Conduct of War* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1983), 56.

²⁸⁶ Longworth, 310.

enabled a merger of his ideas with political prerogatives. Therefore, Suvorov was trapped in matters relating to training, tactics, and troop management. He never had an opportunity to plan a campaign, and even in 1799, when he was the nominal commander-in-chief, his actions were constrained by the Viennese court. As such, his military deliberations lacked the broad scope of a strategic mind, and were, in turn, too narrow to cast him as a father of Russian military thought. Suvorov was perhaps the father-figure for the Russian soldiers, but not of the intellectual trends that defined Russian responses to war. As this study has illustrated, that place has to be reserved for Rumyantsev.

The second misconception that Strachan has perpetuated is closely related to the Russian military development at the beginning of the 18th century. As many Soviet historians before him, Strachan drew a straight line over a very uneven intellectual surface, from Suvorov in 1800 back to Peter the Great in 1700. As the first chapter explained, Peter the Great was the founder of Western traditions in the Russian Imperial state. Moreover, he eagerly transplanted military style from the West. He introduced a table of ranks, re-designed the Russian uniforms to the point where they became distinguishable from the West only by their color, and imported Western firearms into his army. He held councils of war, injected German, English and French words into the Russian military lingo, and established Western-style ministry of war. Among many misleading metaphorical constructs is the famous expression by Kersnovsky: “Never yet has the Russian military art stood as high as at the end of the eighteenth century. The plan for its mighty structure was drawn up by Peter, the foundation had been laid down by Rumyantsev, the building itself has been raised to the skies by the great Suvorov.”²⁸⁷ If Peter I was an ardent Westernizer, the blueprint for the Russian army was already laid to

²⁸⁷ Kersnovsky, Vol. I, 164.

mimic the military culture of the West. Does the layout of the foundation not define the architecture of the house?

That Alexander Suvorov was preoccupied with the study of tactics rather than strategy, and troop management instead of politics, should not belittle the intellectual magnitude of his ideas. Methodological misconceptions aside, the question remains whether Suvorov's thought was autochthonous or simply a variation on themes developed in the West. Humanism, training, discipline, bayonet, religion and superficial patriotism (not to be confused with nationalism as understood today) came together in the Suvorian model. He understood that the demands of the Russian army were different from the West, but at the same time his core ideas, and more importantly his goals and the end product of his military synthesis, were curiously Western. On close inspection many of the elements of Suvorov's model were if not explicitly borrowed from, then definitely formed by, practices in the West. Suvorov's ideas about the bayonet suspiciously resembled theories developed by Folard. The need to study the heart of the soldier also made its appearance in de Saxe's *Reveries*.

Much also had been ascribed to Suvorov's insistence of developing initiative in lower ranks. His insistence on individual fire often comes up in Soviet scholarship to justify this claim. De Saxe had already proposed that officers should only show the soldier "where to direct his fire, allowing him to fire at will, that is when he has found a target."²⁸⁸ The major differences between the Suvorian thought and that of the West related to his rejection of the geometric science of tactics and strategy. Suvorov saw no need for carefully calculated angles of von Bülow. Unlike Henry Lloyd, who saw the army as a machine, Suvorov conceptualized it as an organic being.

²⁸⁸ De Saxe, in *The Roots of Strategy*, Thomas R. Phillips, ed., 240.

Without robbing Suvorov of the credit for composing a text that defined the theoretical and tactical development of Russia's armed forces for the next century, it is important to note that even though *Nauka Pobezhdat'* was an original piece of work, its message was not original. Suvorov borrowed many of the themes found in *Science of Victory* from the West. His devotion to developing professionalism in officers, and the drive to nurture the three I's (initiative, intelligence, and independence) in soldiers, was already evident in earlier Western military works. Suvorov's greatest intellectual contribution was the synthesis of complex ideas found in works of thinkers like Rumyantsev, and digesting them so that they could be disseminated in terms comprehensible to the simple mind of the Russian recruit. In this task Suvorov soared above other Russian and European military theorists, even though he relied heavily on their ideas.

AFTERTHOUGHTS

“The object of war is victory;
that of victory is conquest;
and that of conquest preservation.”
De l'esprit des lois, 1748
Charles de Montesquieu

As Hans Rogger remarked in his doctoral dissertation, “the single most important fact of Russian history in the 18th century remains the unprecedented receptivity to all that came from the West.”²⁸⁹ This openness of Russian mind extended above all to the realm of military ideas that helped fashion an Eastern power into a major player in European politics. This development extrapolated the political dictums of a philosophical mind that came to dominate the intellectual scene of Europe. Accordingly, Russian military thought in the second half of the eighteenth century joined the chorus of other writings about war in fulfilling the logical, linear progression succinctly and eloquently evoked in Montesquieu’s *On the Spirit of the Laws*. Like any empire, Russia fought for the laurels of victory, but it never lost sight of the fact that victory was merely a prerequisite military function of geographic conquest, which translated into political annexation. Annexation served to quench the thirst of the imperial bureaucracy for natural resources and taxable subjects who in a circular motion fuelled the engines of imperialism. Russia’s existence, or in Montesquieu’s words ‘preservation,’ depended on this cycle. Its military thought became the guardian of this process.

There are several uncomfortable contradictions that emerge both within the scholarship about Russian eighteenth century military-intellectual developments and

²⁸⁹ Hans Jack Rogger, “National consciousness in 18th century Russia,” (Ph. D. Dissertation, Harvard University, 1956), 375.

within the developments themselves. While Soviet/Russian scholarship has insisted that this period served as conduit for the growth of distinctly Russian and superior style of war, careful analysis of primary sources points to the contrary. Moreover, incongruence within Russian military thought itself is even more daunting.

The trans-cultural transfer of military ideas between Russia and the West is clear enough to undermine the claims of Russian scholarship. Large portions of thought that were found in the Russian body of writings were clearly present in those of Western theorists, and often at earlier times. This inevitably points to a congruence not only of military practices but also of models of thought. Differences inevitably existed between the Russian and Western approaches to the practice of military craft, which is understandable given that the wars with the Turks did much to define Russian idiosyncrasies. For instance, Rumyantsev challenged the established norms when he broke away from the cordon, but his departure from them did not change the face of battle beyond recognition. Finally, in the twilight of the eighteenth century, Suvorov, the last major military writer of his time, was slowly devising a mechanism to nationalize the Russian army without ideological preconditions. French nationalism was mirrored by Russian patriotism that manifested itself in the blind allegiance to the double-headed eagle of the Romanov house and the three-bar Orthodox cross. While the French had a Republic, the Russians had a motherland. Even though the two were politically and philosophically different conceptual entities, they still served the same purpose of societal unification behind the objectives of military struggle. Suvorov's thoughts were original but not indicative of a new military system. Neither he nor Rumyantsev have been iconoclastic enough to usher in a decisively different way of thinking about or conducting

war. In retrospect, the final verdict should rest upon the assumption that those differences were not enough to render Russian fundamentally distinct from the Western way of war. Russian thought, and to a lesser extent its army, still represented an extension of Western values, practices, and thoughts.

The contradictions within Russian thought itself are not as easily reconciled. It is beyond the capacity of this work to explain the origins of certain intellectual patterns of Russian thought in the eighteenth century. That is a job of a significantly more in-depth and lengthy study. What can be done here is to put the ideas of Russian thought into perspective, and outline some peculiar paradoxes. To begin, the two main agents of Russian thought were acting army commanders with significant military and political responsibilities, a luxury that many Western theorists like Lloyd or von Bülow did not enjoy. The vocation of the Russian thinkers could account for why Russian military thought at that time was less philosophical, lacking any serious deliberation on whether war is an art or a science, and why it was inherently more political than Western thought. Curious also is the total absence of an attempt to create a new system of warfare. That Russian thinkers did not search for a universal theory of war – the preoccupation of many Western minds – is equally puzzling.

There were also theoretical disagreements between Rumyantsev and Suvorov. For instance, while the former advocated the construction of hospitals, the latter advised his soldiers to avoid them altogether. Another contradiction is found in the highly visible humanism of Russian thought. Even though Suvorov and Rumyantsev attempted to improve the physical conditions of Russian soldiers by making their life in the army more endurable, they had no scruples sacrificing the fruits of their training. Suvorov, who

valued human life in principle, pushed his soldiers to the brink of death from physical exhaustion from battles or his deadly exercises.

So what is historians' verdict on eighteenth century military thought? As Martin Creveld has stated, while eighteenth century theoreticians had interesting things to say, their contribution to the modern warfare is remote, and their writings had little that "foreshadows the future."²⁹⁰ The question of denouement of relevance of bygone eras is an important one, as has been attested by both Jeremy Black²⁹¹ and William Odom.²⁹² More particular to the Russian case, Walter Pinter writes that "Russia produced no strategic thinkers whose work has had more than a temporary impact." He assures his readers: "There were not Russian Mahans, Clausewitzes, or Jominis..."²⁹³

This brings the present work to its final inquiry: what can be extracted from the saga of a Russian eighteenth century military mind? What principles of Rumyantsev's thought or parts of the Suvorovian model, if any, can be used in or applied to modern warfare? Have the ideas espoused by the Russian military theorists in the eighteenth century lost their relevance over time? Is there a place for them in modern military craft or do they deserve, in the early 21st century, to be relegated to 'the dustbin of history'?

It is obvious that modern warfare has evolved into a completely different beast from the time of Rumyantsev and Suvorov. The complexity of modern combat, the involvement of a great number of high-tech and mechanical equipment, the use of air power and missile systems, and satellites have changed the approaches to solving

²⁹⁰ Creveld, 93.

²⁹¹ Black, *Rethinking Military History*, 176.

²⁹² William E. Odom in Bruce Menning and David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, eds., 330-331.

²⁹³ Walter Pinter, "Russian Military Thought: The Western Model and the Shadow of Suvorov," in *Makers of Modern Strategy: From Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age*, Peter Paret, Gordon Alexander Craig, and Felix Gilbert, eds. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1986), 354.

questions related to tactics, strategy, organization and command and control in war. As Baiov argues, however, “it is important to understand that first and foremost, the changes that had taken place in warfare since Suvorov are of a material nature, which always play a secondary role on the battlefield when compared to the dominant human element.”²⁹⁴

In contemporary wars, there is a tendency, especially in Western armies, to place primary emphasis on technology and give soldiers a secondary role in combat. This became the essence of the so called “Revolution in Military Affairs” (RMA). RMA has been viewed as “technical Rubicon across which lies a world where warfare has been transformed by science and an unprecedented capability to know everything.”²⁹⁵ This notion has become particularly engrained into the American military establishment, reflected in doctrine that sees warfare as fundamentally transformed by “the innovative application of technology.”²⁹⁶ As conflicts from Vietnam and Afghanistan to modern Iraq have demonstrated, the human spirit remains a major factor in achieving victory. Mighty nations with advanced equipment were often at pains to subdue lesser states with more resolute fighters. Morale, unity and the inner fortitude of warriors remain critical variables in determining victory or defeat in combat.

Baiov insists that no matter how advanced the weapons are, or how effective they will become, they will never be able to replace the functions performed by a soldier. He emphasizes that the soldier, or the human element, is the main weapon and catalyst of war.²⁹⁷ To win a battle one must study human nature, not the nature of a gun. Suvorov

²⁹⁴ A. Baiov, “Suvorov i budushchia voina,” in Savinkin A. E., et al., eds. *Ne chislom, a umeni'em! Voennaia sistema A.V. Suvorova* (Moscow: Voennyi Universitet, Russkii Put', 2001), 408.

²⁹⁵ Douglas L. Bland, “The RMA: Managing an Idea,” in *Managing the Revolution in Military Affairs*, Matthews, Ron, and J. M. Treddenick, eds. (Hampshire: Palgrave, 2001), 22. See also Morillo and Pavkovic, 76-77.

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

²⁹⁷ Ibid., 409.

realized the advantage of the human element and the importance of morale over technological innovations. The high spirit, iron resolve, and stubbornness of his soldiers proved to be more potent than a hundred musket volleys. Therefore, at least on a conjectural level, lessons of the past remain relevant to the present and, in the words of Bruce Menning, “the classics are always modern.”²⁹⁸

Eighteenth century Russian thinking concerning war was neither primitive nor abstract, and forces historians to reconsider the hastily pronounced verdict of Frederick the Great and his contemporaries about the barbarians from the East. The writings of Rumyantsev and Suvorov undermine Western claims of Russian military backwardness, as well as Soviet/Russian claims of a unique theory of warfare. Instead, these important texts speak to the intellectual sophistication and surprising degree of awareness of Western military trends and their subsequent influences on early Russian imperial military thought.

²⁹⁸ Menning, “Train Hard, Fight Easy: the Legacy of A. V. and His ‘Art of Victory’”.

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