

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW

Subject: Gen.-Col. Dmitrii Volkogonov
Position: Director, Institute of Military History
Location: Moscow, USSR
Interviewer: John G. Hines
Date: March 5, 1990
Language: Russian
Prepared by: John G. Hines, based on notes

The present situation is unprecedented. The 1920s and 1930s are not really analogous to the present situation, because today numbers of weapons are far less indicative of real military power. Today, political approaches are more important than military ones. The 1917-19 period was analogous because the Soviet state was simply trying to survive and at Brest-Litovsk huge concessions were made to achieve peace.

New thinking began with the 1941 U.S.-Soviet coalition. Stalin in 1951 decided that China and North Korea should not win because this would lead to U.S. nuclear use. In the Cuban Missiles Crisis, partnership was stronger than confrontation. U.S.-Soviet relations were destined to be cooperative.

The U.S. is emerging much stronger than the USSR because of its military capabilities and scientific-technological potential. If the U.S. tries to exploit its advantage, then both sides will lose (the USSR will have an electorate that would respond with rearmament). Shrinking strategic forces and possible BMD (ballistic missile defense) deployments might make the U.S. completely invulnerable, but the USSR can never achieve complete invulnerability because of the small, potentially nuclear states along the Soviet periphery. The USSR will have less influence than the U.S. in the development of a new European security system because the USSR is preoccupied with its economy, nationalism, shrinking army, and the dissolution of its alliance in Eastern Europe.

As advisor to the Supreme Soviet Defense Committee, Volkogonov has recommended the establishment of a purely professional army and advocated a 33 - 40% reduction in the size of the Armed Forces. Professional armies tend not to fight major wars (in part because of the mobilization needed for reserves).