

section training. Thus, in a fast-paced training environment, a readily accessible SOP can help make the best possible use of unexpectedly available training time.

The contents of an SOP are not limited to these subjects, of course. Each unit's mission is different, and different leaders may expect an SOP to cover different needs. But most important of all, the SOP should make sense and be realistic. It should not just pay lip service to anything.

Once the people in a unit have decided what their unit SOP should include, their next step is to put the information together. Different techniques apply here, but all of them require solid formatting, preparation, and distribution, and also consistent command emphasis.

The format of an SOP can be important in three ways: An SOP should be easy to carry, easy to keep clean in the field, and easy to change. One way of achieving these goals is to print copies in a size similar to that of a CEOI. Unlike a three-ring notebook, a booklet of such a size can be easily carried in a pocket. And the SOP can be made relatively fieldproof if it is covered with plastic or cardboard on the outside and secured with green tape. And so it will be easy to change, the SOP should carry each subject on a separate page or series of pages. In this way, the unit can revise a section without having to repackage the whole SOP.

The organization of subjects within an SOP might include a general section at the beginning, but the nuts and bolts of the SOP should be in separate

sections. These sections can be put in whatever order the author thinks is appropriate. One way is to group them into four categories:

- General — the normal organization and the location of key personnel.

- Tactical operations — alert operations, quartering party operations, assembly areas, road marches, fire distribution, and security (day and night).

- Support operations — daily track maintenance, breakdown procedures, sensitive item reports, and communications maintenance.

- Information — brevity codes; the duties of platoon leader, platoon sergeant, section leader, squad leader, and team leader; and unit navigational procedures.

Any annexes that are needed should be prepared in a succinct and straightforward manner, with a minimum of words being used to get the ideas across.

Once an SOP has been compiled and printed, its distribution largely determines whether it will be effective or not. If a platoon leader and his platoon sergeant, for example, are the only ones who have copies of the platoon SOP, the SOP will not meet the platoon's needs. Every soldier in the unit should have his own copy from the first day he comes into the unit.

Leaders of regularly attached units should also have copies. And when a unit goes to the field, extra copies should be taken along for other units that may be unexpectedly attached, or for other headquarters to which a platoon or the company may be cross-attached.

Even when everyone has a copy, something more is needed to make it work — command emphasis. Platoon leaders, platoon sergeants, and squad leaders should operate and train using their SOP and should let it be known that they expect their subordinates to do the same. Then everyone will use it and profit by it. But if the soldiers see their leaders selectively ignoring certain subjects, they will also start picking areas to ignore. In short, for an SOP to be effective, all the soldiers must believe in it and follow it.

An SOP, to remain effective, also needs to be reviewed regularly. A good time for a unit to examine its SOP's effectiveness is when it returns from a long field problem. The leaders might ask themselves: Are all the annexes being adhered to? If not, why not? Is it because the unit is slack, or is it because a part of the SOP has become unrealistic? Has a better way been found to do something?

When an SOP has been carefully prepared and kept up to date, and when all the unit's members are familiar with it, can refer to it, and will follow it, it will be one of the leader's most valuable assets. It will then make a continuing contribution to the unit's efficiency, and it will outlast all of the unit's leaders.

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A Forgotten War

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Most American military professionals, when discussing 20th century warfare, talk about the Argonne, Nor-

mandy, the Ardennes, Pork Chop Hill, and Tet. But they rarely mention (in fact, may never have heard of)

Velikiye Luki, Kharkov, Nikopol, or Prokhorovka. This is understandable, perhaps, considering the fact that

United States soldiers have never engaged in combat with Russian troops (except for small contingents of U.S. troops that were sent to Russia in 1918 and 1919). The Germans, however, have fought the Russians on a number of occasions, and between 1941 and 1945, for example, committed three-fourths of their ground and air forces to the thousand-mile-long Eastern Front.

With all the present emphasis on countering a Soviet threat in Western Europe, one might assume that our leaders would be as familiar with some of the 1941-1945 Russo-German battles as with famous American battles. What better way is there to study Red Army operations and tactics? But, amazing as it may seem, those battles have been largely ignored by our leaders and by our historians. World War II's Eastern Front has become, in effect, a forgotten war.

There has been only one definitive Western history of the conflict: Albert Seaton's *The Russo-German War*. The U.S. Army's historical publication *From Stalingrad to Berlin* is quite thorough, except that it glosses over the first year of the campaign. A few popular historians, such as Harrison Salisbury, William Craig, and Cornelius Ryan, have written of events on the Eastern Front, and Martin Caidin, in *The Tigers Are Burning*, tells the story of Kursk, one of history's greatest land battles. But the coverage of the war in Russia is minuscule when the few books that have been published about it are compared with the multitude of volumes about other World War II battlefronts. This lack of attention to the Eastern Front deprives us of one of the best tools we have for analyzing Soviet combat methods.

Although the Soviets' technology and weaponry have certainly changed over the past 40 years, the psyche of the Soviet soldiers and officers probably has not altered significantly. It is doubtful, too, whether the tactics of a Warsaw Pact offensive in Western Europe today would differ greatly from those used during the massive Soviet combined arms offensives of

World War II. The major differences would probably be in the use of nuclear and chemical weapons and in the total mechanization of the Soviet infantry units. Other variations might include Soviet air superiority and the Soviet use of large scale vertical envelopments. But if we accept that neither the soldiers nor the basic tactics of the Soviet Army have changed greatly, then it is clear that studying the small unit actions on the Eastern Front from 1941 to 1945 would help us to know our potential enemy a lot better than we know him now.

The U.S. Army did make a tremendous effort after the war to preserve the lessons the Germans had learned when it published its German Report Series. Unfortunately, though, this series is not being used to the extent that it should be. (In the Infantry Officer Basic Course at Fort Benning, for example, it is used only in "break-out from encirclement" instructions, and a poll of officers in a recent class showed that few of them had ever read the series.)

The series consist of 17 pamphlets that examine various German combat

experiences during the campaign in Russia. The authors were, for the most part, high-ranking German officers, all veterans of the Eastern Front. The reports were written in the early 1950s under the supervision of General Franz Halder, who had been Chief of the *Wehrmacht* General Staff from 1938 to 1942, and were published as Department of the Army pamphlets. (See the accompanying list.)

By far the most instructive of these pamphlets, at least for company grade combat leaders, is *Small Unit Actions*. Detailed scenarios complete with maps trace platoon and company level engagements across the vast expanse of European Russia. Assaults, defenses, delays, meeting engagements, and urban combat are all dealt with at a small unit level. Few, if any, literary works give a better impression of what it was like to lead men in combat against the Russian soldier.

The other pamphlets in the series are also quite valuable as teaching aids, but two of the most relevant ones are *Russian Combat Methods* and *German Tactics Against Russian Breakthroughs*. The former takes a

GERMAN REPORT SERIES
(Publication date in parentheses)

20-201	Military Improvisations During the Russian Campaign (Aug. 51)
20-202	German Tank Maintenance in World War II (Jan. 54)
20-230	Russian Combat Methods in World War II (Nov. 50)
20-231	Combat in Russian Forests and Swamps (Jul. 51)
20-232	Airborne Operations: A German Appraisal (Oct. 51)
20-233	German Defense Tactics Against Russian Breakthroughs (Oct. 51)
20-234	Operations of Encircled Forces — German Experiences in Russia (Jan. 52)
20-236	Night Combat (Jan. 53)
20-240	Rear Area Security in Russia — The Soviet Second Front Behind the German Lines (Jul. 51)
20-242	German Armored Traffic Control During the Russian Campaign (Jun. 52)
20-243	German Antiguerrilla Operations in the Balkans, 1941-1944 (Aug. 54)
20-260	The German Campaign in the Balkans, Spring 1941 (Nov. 53)
20-261a	The German Campaign in Russia — Planning and Operations, 1940-1942 (Mar. 55)
20-269	Small Unit Actions During the German Campaign in Russia (Jul. 53)
20-290	Terrain Factors in the Russian Campaign (Jul. 51)
20-291	Effects of Climate on Combat in European Russia (Feb. 52)
20-292	Warfare in the Far North (Oct. 51)

NOTE: Although not a part of the German Report Series, Earl F. Ziemke's *The German Northern Theater of Operations, 1940-1945* (DA Pamphlet 20-271, Dec. 59) is important because it tells of the German operations out of Finland that provided the first, and still unique, instance of major military forces operating in the Arctic.

close look at Soviet small unit tactics and at the psychological make-up of the Red Army soldiers as well. It does not, however, equate with what many of our military intelligence instructors tell us to expect in a future war; it does not picture, for instance, the Soviet soldiers of that era as being simple robots who melted away as soon as their officers were killed. John English, too, in his magnificent *Perspective on Infantry*, which was published in 1981, emphasizes the excellence of the Red Army's infantry units of that era in both the attack and the defense.

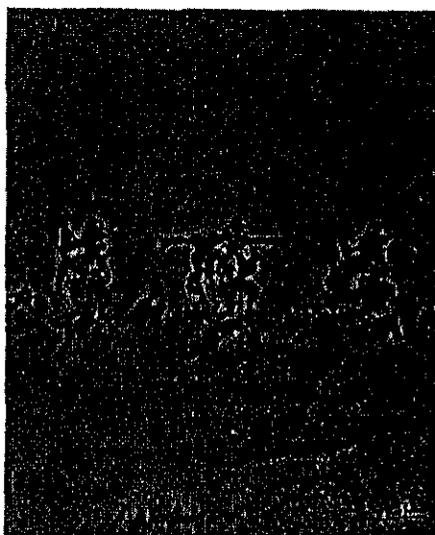
Some say naively that the Soviet infantryman has changed since then because of the mechanization of the Red Army, and Viktor Suvorov — a former Soviet officer who crossed over to the West — doesn't think much of his old comrades. But history does not support this attitude. Certainly millions of Soviet soldiers surrendered in World War II, and perhaps a million will desert in any future war, too, but it is the multitude that stayed and will stay again and fight that we need to be concerned about.

The massive combined arms breakthrough on a small front marked Soviet tactics in World War II. On a strategic level, the *Wehrmacht* was able to blunt the Soviets' 1941 offensive around Moscow and the Soviet breakthrough at Kharkov in the Spring of 1942. But beginning with the double envelopment of the German Sixth and Fourth Panzer armies at Stalingrad in 1943, the Eastern Front witnessed a series of Soviet breakthroughs that culminated in the penetration of the Oder River line in April 1945.

On a tactical level, though, the Germans consistently stopped the Red Army's local offensive, the most famous being "Manstein's Miracle" in Southern Russia in the Spring of 1943.

To expect our present-day NATO

forces to hold firm all along the East German-Czech border in the event of an all-out Warsaw Pact offensive is a pipe dream. Poland in 1939, France in 1940, Russia in 1941-45, Korea in 1950, and the Bar-Lev Line in 1973 have all demonstrated that strong forward defenses can be torn assunder in a matter of days. If the NATO forces are to defend forward, then our leaders should be well versed in defensive tactics against breakthroughs. (Unfortunately, though, there is not even a field manual covering this topic.) The German Report Series' pamphlet that covers Soviet breakthroughs does contain the specific



"how-tos" of such defensive tactics. Ten types of tactics against Soviet penetrations are included in the pamphlet, complete with historical examples — a frontal counterattack; flank and spoiling attacks; defensive pincers; mobile reserves; position, zone, and isthmus defenses; and two types of delaying actions. The value of these and all the other techniques covered in the series are quite obvious when considering a future European scenario.

We can be proud of our military heritage, and there is much to learn from our past exploits. But if war

comes to Europe again, our opponents (hopefully) will not be German or Japanese. If any conflict of the past resembles the AirLand Battle that has been projected for the future in Europe, it must certainly be the Armageddon-like Russo-German war of 1941-1945. And we can only hope that those who write our doctrine will comprehend the enormity of the Soviet effort in World War II: For every U.S. serviceman lost in that war, the Soviets lost twenty and the Germans six on the Eastern Front. No country except the Soviet Union can claim to have had more than 20,000,000 military casualties and to have still won a war. For this reason, traditional U.S. tactics and "attriting the enemy" may not be enough against the Soviets in the future. The only guarantee of success even in a nuclear or chemical environment will be the tactical competence of our small unit leaders.

S.L.A. Marshall was wont to say, "a handful of men at a certain spot at a given hour could exert a decisive influence on battles and wars." If our "handful of men" do not know their enemy, their effectiveness will certainly be hampered. As leaders, we have a responsibility to train our soldiers to fight their potential foes. If history is indeed a great teacher, then let us study the right history so that we can meet this difficult challenge. "The forgotten war" may be just the right history.



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