



Icebreaker – Who Started the Second World War?

By Viktor Suvorov

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The Times – Saturday May 5, 1990 – Books

Allbecrushing Intellect

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THE myth that Hitlerite Germany waged a “preventive war” against the Soviet Union has become a vital component of anti-Communist ideology employed by world imperialism to camouflage its own militaristic essence. Bourgeois propaganda continues to warn about the “expansionist plans of the Soviets”, and the “Soviet military threat”. As the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU, Mikhail Gorbachov, remarked on the solemn occasion of the fortieth anniversary of the Soviet people’s victory in the Great Patriotic War: “The malicious myth of a ‘Soviet military threat’, once loudly mouthed by the Nazis, is alive to this day.”

The reader’s reaction to the opening paragraph of this review is complex, he knows that Mikhail Gorbachov has a new and different title, and that terms like “anti-Communist ideology” or “bourgeois propaganda” have all but vanished of late, even from the official Soviet vocabulary. On the other hand, he knows equally well that the “Soviet military threat” is no more, if only because he believes that the Soviet economy is in a shambles. There is certainly no doubt in his mind that Nazi Germany waged a war of aggression against Russia, a traumatic experience that made its leaders mistrust the West. And if he is a professor of Soviet studies at St Antony’s College, Oxford, he may even suspect that such mistrust is historic, its roots going back to the Tartar yoke, or at least Napoleon.

The answer to the question of whether or not “Hitlerite Germany waged a ‘preventive war’ against the Soviet Union in June 1941 is indeed a “vital component” of any coherent historical world-view. In support of this claim, I now reveal the author of my opening paragraph. He is General Zhilin, writing in the Soviet Army newspaper *Red Star*, on September 24, 1985, to rebut the thesis of Viktor Suvorov’s *Icebreaker*, publicized in the *RUSI Journal*, a British military review, in June of that year. Since “bourgeois propaganda” is not monolithic, it is impossible to identify every perception of the general’s “vital component” accepted as valid in the West, yet the startling thing is that contrary to his credal assertion, the sum total of all these perceptions is contiguous to his historical world-view, not adversarial to it. In short, everyone in the world agrees that the question is vital yet everyone in the West accepts that the *Red Star*’s answer is essentially correct.

Viktor Suvorov is not arguing with the *Red Star*. He is arguing with every book, every article, every film, every Nato directive, every Downing Street assumption, every Pentagon clerk, every academic, every Communist and antiCommunist, every neoconservative intellectual, every Soviet

song, poem, novel, and piece of music ever heard, written, made, sung, issued, produced, or born during the last 50 years. For this reason alone, *Icebreaker* is the most original work of history it has been my privilege to read. In and of itself, of course, originality does no more than whet our appetite for truth.

I can only say that this book is equal to the mind-boggling claim it makes on the reader's attention. It cannot be compared with Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's *Gulag Archipelago* or Robert Conquest's *Great Terror*, because its revelations are fundamental to the understanding of totalitarianism. The book's significance lies in its phenomenological approach, which uncovers the essence of totalitarianism – strategic deception – with analytical rigour that would make Euclid, not to mention Kant, recognize Suvorov as a spiritual peer. To be sure, like every other pioneer historian of Soviet Russia from Melgunov on, Suvorov focuses on what is ostensibly an isolated issue. He proves that Stalin was using Hitler as his “icebreaker” to crush democracy in Western Europe, while preparing to invade Germany and occupy, or “liberate”, Western Europe in the summer of 1941. Yet the issue is less isolated from the whole of Soviet foreign policy, and the whole of the West's response to it since 1941, than the issue of whether or not Lenin, Stalin, or for that matter Gorbachov, was or is a bad man.

I have not invoked the names of Euclid and Kant by accident. *Icebreaker* reads like a breathtakingly elegant theorem, Suvorov's intellect an industrial grinder of received wisdom reminiscent in its power of Coleridge's favourite epithet for Kant, “Allbecrushing”. On Suvorov's behalf, I challenge any publication, specialized or popular, to solicit a rebuttal of a single one of *Icebreaker*'s syllogisms, providing its author – unlike the *Red Star* – with equal space for an allbecrushing reply.

One corollary attendant on Suvorov's argument deserves special mention. It shows that Stalin was neither mad nor a fool, and comes rather close to my own conviction that he was, in fact, a strategist of genius. “You are the last admirer of Stalin left on this earth, my friend,” the Oxford historian Norman Stone once told me. “My father was probably the only man in Russia to have voted against Stalin when Stalin was alive,” I answered, “and now that he is dead I see no reason to betray our family tradition of non-conformism.” Because if Stalin was no fool, perhaps Gorbachov is not, after all, a man we can do business with. If he was no madman, perhaps those who believe that today's Soviet economy is in a shambles are themselves emotionally unbalanced. And, last but not least, if the history of the 20th century has been written, and non-conformists who strive to reopen debate are merely neo-Nazi revisionists, why does Suvorov, apparently a neo Stalinist revisionist like myself, so vex General Zhilin?

Going against the tide of editorial opinion, as Winston Churchill once went against it, David Owen wrote recently that “what we have witnessed in Moscow over the last decade is a transfer of power from the Communist Party to the KGB”. “Discrediting the Party”, he went on, was done in part by “pinning the blame for economic decay on Stalin's legacy”. Not tied to the Kremlin by a special relationship, Dr Owen is an honest man reading the ‘newspapers more attentively than the rest of us. When he reads Suvorov, he may well become the Churchill of our time.