"Militarizing Masculinities in Red Army discourse and subjectivity, 1942-1943"

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Abstract:

This article examines the development of soldierly masculinities in the Red Army in 1942-1943. The period served as a critical juncture between initial crisis and fully mobilized national war effort, in which rhetoric, identity, and experience had yet to adapt to the reality of total war. By comparing individual soldiers' writings and Soviet media sources, this article argues that the interaction of soldierly and official masculine norms that shaped their evolution over the course of the war. The article focuses on how individuals developed a masculine subjectivity that responded to links with home, frontline experiences, and official discourse as their senses of self evolved in wartime. Studying masculine subjectivity in the seemingly stifling context of Stalinism at war reveals the important role masculinity played in the legitimating and contesting of power that replaced direct challenges to political or military authority. Such a study of masculinity in the Stalinist context likewise affirms the larger theoretical and methodological value of focusing on the reception and adaptation of masculine discourses alongside their production.

Keywords: Russian history, masculinity, subjectivity, discourse, Red Army, World War II

“Kızıl Ordu Söyleminde ve Öznelliğinde Militarist Erkeklikler, 1942-1943”

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Özet:

Bu makale askerî erkekliklerin, 1942-1943 yıllarında Kızıl Ordu içindeki gelişimini incelemektedir. İncelenen bu zaman dilimi, savaşın başlangıcındaki kriz durumu ile tam bir ulusal savaş seferberliğine geçişin yan yana geldiği kritik bir dönemdir. Retorik, kimlik ve deneyim bu geçiş sürecinde, topyekûn savaşın gerçeklerine henüz uyum sağlayabilmiş değildir. Bu makale, sıradan askerlerin mektupları ile Sovyet medyasında yer alan haberleri ve yorumları karşılaştırarak, askerlerin ve resmi yetkililerin bağlı oldukları erkeklik normları arasında savaş boyunca süren etkileşimin, askerî erkekliklerin gelişimini şekillendirdiğini savunmaktadır. Makalenin odak noktası, bireylerin savaş sırasında benlik algılarının değişmesiyle birlikte, geride bıraktıkları aileleri, cephe deneyimleri ve resmi söylem arasındaki ilişkileri idare etmelerini sağlayacak bir eril öznelliği hangi şekillerde geliştirdikleridir. Savaş zamanı Stalinciliği’nin görünürde boğucu atmosferi çerçevesinde erkek öznelliklerini incelemek, politik ve askeri otoriteye doğrudan meydan okumanın yerini almış olan, iktidarı meşru sayarak onunla çekişme sürecinde erkekliğin oynadığı önemli rolü ortaya koyar. Stalincilik bağlamında erkekliği bu şekilde incelemek ayrıca, odak noktasına erkeklik söylemlerinin üretimlerinin yanı sıra, alımlanmaları ve uyarlanmalarının da yerleştirilmesinin teorik ve metodolojik kıymetini bir kez daha göstermektedir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Rus tarihi, erkeklik, öznellik, söylem, Kızıl Ordu, İkinci Dünya Savaşı

The Soviet Union's sudden, forced entry into the Second World War presented a new set of physical and psychological challenges to a generation of men who lived through the extraordinary transformations and turmoil of the Stalinist 1930s. Soviet propaganda had emphasized the masculine character of national industrial achievements and individual labor heroes throughout that decade, providing a rough template for wartime mobilization (Schrand, 2002: 195). Under Soviet leader Joseph Stalin's iron hand recycled political slogans and increasingly prevalent national themes, all of which received apathetic public responses, contribute to a case for continuity in wartime discourse (Berkhoff, 2012: 274). This article asserts that a study of masculine ideas in both official discourse and the soldierly subjectivities of individual men reveals change in Soviet propaganda and the diversity of Soviet soldierly masculinities. The lens of masculinity enables this analysis of Soviet wartime culture to move beyond political or ideological binaries of support and opposition or belief and rejection by illustrating the interaction and reinterpretation of crucial motives and goals for fighting men.

This study focuses on masculine themes in Soviet frontline culture by drawing from the work of theorists as well as historians of masculinity and gender. The article engages sources based on the insights of Michael Roper, a historian of masculine subjectivities, who asserts that soldiers' writings constitute a site of gender performance alongside their actions at the front (Roper, 2004: 301-302). Roper provides a further methodological parameter essential to this study: incorporating subjectivity into the study of masculinity restores the importance of personal relationships and emotions over the clear but often hollow discourse of official culture (Roper, 2005: 59-61). The theoretical works of R.W. Connell and Demetrakis Demetriou underpin this article's analysis of Red Army masculinity's official and soldierly variants. They explain gender hierarchy as comprised of 'internal' and 'external' masculine hegemony, in which internal domination over subordinate masculinities serves as a prerequisite for external

patriarchal domination over the opposite and inferior 'emphasized femininity' (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005: 847-848). Demetriou provides further elaboration of the reformulated theory of hegemonic masculinity crucial to this article's analysis, whereby masculinity changes but remains dominant through the evolution of different elements of a 'masculine bloc,' which develops through a process of constant hybridization and incorporation of 'diverse elements from various masculinities that makes the hegemonic bloc capable of reconfiguring itself and adapting to the specificities of new historical conjunctures' (Demetriou 2001: 348-349).

These distinctions are essential to understanding the complexity of wartime masculinities in the Soviet Union, in which ideas of femininity and actual women's roles mattered, but contested ideas and interactions among men played a critical role. Male political workers, whose writings and speeches constituted frontline propaganda, and male soldiers entered the war with different notions of masculine duty, and responded differently to the strategic changes and local conditions of war. Beyond illuminating divergent ideas of masculine duty, this article seeks to engage the role of 'social practice' in relationships between individuals in forming subjectivities to consider the ways in which gendered subjectivities deviated from official norms and models (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005: 843). By employing a theory of dynamic masculinity, this article argues that masculine ideals and subjectivities changed during the war. Soldiers were willing to adapt or ignore official discourse without opposing it, while aspects of soldiers' views of duty often appeared months later as elements of the heroic masculine ideals presented in propaganda. Such changes become apparent in a close reading of official newspapers and leaders speeches in combination with soldiers' letters and memoirs.

The start of 1942 marked end of the immediate German threat to capture Moscow, and by the end of January 1943, the commander of the German Sixth Army surrendered at Stalingrad.

The period therefore provides a valuable chronological case study of a much larger set of interactions, changes, and adaptations as a time when the initial shock of invasion and crisis of invasion had subsided and new ideals of duty and interpretations of military service developed amidst see-sawing military fortunes. The stabilization of the front line by the start of the year provided a clearer glimpse of the German enemy and the invasion's impact on the country. Entrenched at the front, soldiers faced the reality of extended removal from their role as familial provider and the renewed existential threat to national and familial survival that put prewar and wartime duties in conflict. In this phase of the war, the interaction and divergence of official and soldierly masculinities focused on the contrast between Soviet and enemy treatment of women, the use of violence, and the nature of comradeship. The significance of this transition period from initial crisis to sustained and total war lies in the reinterpretation of masculinity it forced on propagandists and soldiers alike, with few illusions of quick victory and restored civilian status surviving the winter months of 1942.

The German Enemy as Masculine Other

Once frontline propaganda began to consistently represent the German enemy in 1942, it produced a figure unseen in the desperate months of 1941. Propagandists no longer sought to present a worthy foe as they had with Japanese or Finnish enemies during the border war period, but an antithetical masculine other, who challenged the Red Army hero's honor and ethics through his attacks on Soviet women and civilians (Petrone, 2002). The German enemy appeared in a battle between two types of men idealized as good and evil, rather than battlefield opponents engaged in a struggle of strength and tenacity.

Enemy atrocities began to feature prominently in the main Red Army newspaper, *Krasnaia Zvezda* [Red Star] from the first days of the year based on the reports of soldiers advancing into occupied territory and 'preliminary information' from areas further behind enemy lines. In

early January, a front-page editorial entitled 'A Pack of Murderers and Robbers' elaborated on the scale and variety of 'heinous acts of violence' the enemy had perpetrated in occupied territory, including the numbers of dead in different regions and the methods involved. The editorial highlighted 'women, girls, and schoolchildren' as victims and explained that the atrocities took place due to the 'unleashing…of the most base, animal instincts among [enemy] officers and soldiers' (Red Star, 1942: 1) Such reports continued to appear in *Krasnaia Zvezda* throughout the winter, including a multi-panel illustration of the hanging of Soviet civilians on February 6. Neither Hitler nor fascist ideology received more than a passing mention, if any, in the condemnation that accompanied these reports.

Instead, the German rank-and-file soldiers and frontline officers appeared as the central perpetrators in a consistent definition of a single enemy type. Such articles made clear that the enemy pursued violence outside the normal bounds of the conventional soldier, which suggested he would not surrender or obey the rules of war or accepted military conduct. Above all, he lacked honor. In an article titled simply, "On Hatred," celebrated Soviet writer Ilia Ehrenburg explained the psychology of the enemy:

> Spite drives every soldier of Fascism… One German lance corporal wrote in his diary that torture 'cheers and even excites' him… The naïve ones thought that there were people marching against us, but against us marched monsters who had selected the skull as their emblem, young and shameless robbers, vandals who were thirsting to destroy everything in their path (Red Star, 1942: 4).

Rather than traditional notions of honor or national duty, destruction and violence drove the enemy to fight. Ehrenburg went on to explain that it was the enemy's perpetration of atrocities during the invasion, rather than killing on the battlefield, which made them barbarians:

Above all, they brought death with them to our land. *I do not speak of the death of soldiers*: there is no war without victims. I speak of the gallows on which Russian girls swing, of the terrible ditch near Kerch

where the children of Russians, Tatars, and Jews were buried. I speak of how the Hitlerites finish off our wounded and burn down our peasants' homes (Red Star, 1942: 4).

Descriptions of the enemy as "monsters" and "vandals" were part of a consistent set of terms that emphasized his sadistic use of violence in war, which separated him from the soldiers of the Red Army. In line with the overall portrayal of the enemy in *Krasnaia Zvezda*, Ehrenburg articulated the belief that the objects of the enemy's violence, and the reasons for that violence, distinguished and diminished him as a soldier and as a man.

What fully set apart and vilified the German soldier in Red Army propaganda, and further marks Ehrenburg's portrayal as that of an enemy soldierly masculinity, is his behavior towards women and children. An editorial on 10 April, 'For the honor of our women!' named several women found raped and killed by the enemy before elaborating on the larger ramifications of such behavior: 'German fascists, brazenly mocking the honor of Soviet women – these are lustful animals.' Beyond the obvious love of destruction and violence evident in their behavior, the motive of lust reinforced portrayals of the enemy as driven by savage, but human impulses. The editorial emphasized that the enemy's actions were not the result of wartime circumstances, but had deep roots: 'They have defiled their youth in German brothels and made the customs of brothels the catechism of their behavior in occupied countries.' The editorial continued to emphasize how the enemy's lustful behavior and rape of women, rather than the torture of other civilians generally, was definitively the behavior of savage men: 'They have no shame, no remorse, [and] no heart. In the village of Semenov in Kalinin oblast Hitlerites raped 25-year-old Olga Tikhonova, the pregnant wife of a Red Army soldier.' Young German men with lustful and violent 'animal instincts' were therefore the typical enemy type to appear in propaganda (Red Star, 1942: 1). Such depictions helped strengthen the contrast with Red Army soldiers' rational nature and ethical defense of their homeland.

The propaganda effort to characterize the German invader as a savagely masculine figure also explained how heroic Red Army soldiers should respond. They were to hate the enemy, but fight differently than him, and of course treat women in an entirely different manner. Inspiring hatred would help motivate soldiers, according to Stalin in his May Day speech:

> A change has also taken place in the ranks of the Red Army. Complacency and laxity regarding the enemy, which was evident among the troops in the first months of the war, have disappeared. The atrocities, pillage, and violence perpetrated by the German fascist invaders against the peaceful population and Soviet POWs have cured our men of this disease. … They have learned to hate the German fascist invaders.

This newfound hatred would inspire soldiers to defeat the enemy, because 'one cannot defeat the enemy without learning to hate him with every fiber of one's soul' (Red Star, 1942: 1). Hatred did not mean Soviet troops should themselves become like the enemy. Their task was to kill only the enemy, rather than massacre prisoners and ravage civilians: "acre by acre, town by town we are cleansing our land of the rapists. There is no greater exploit' (Red Star, 1942: 3). The invocation of a man's duty to defend women's honor revealed an unambiguous distinction between Soviet citizens' relationship with violence, and the masculine nature of national defense.

Amidst the new focus on the enemy in propaganda, male soldiers, writing to an overwhelmingly female audience of relatives, wives, and girlfriends, continued to perform a civilian-oriented masculinity in their letters home. Red Army troops' focus on family and personal ties affected their discussions of the enemy more than the vitriolic language of newspaper propaganda. Many troops cursed the enemy simply for disrupting their lives, as one junior officer explained: 'At the enemy that has broken our happy life, I strike mercilessly, to destroy every one of them' (GARF Fond 6903 Opis 9 Delo 142 List 161). Some troops expressed their duty to contribute to the enemy's defeat,

but nonetheless presented returning home as their ultimate priority. A reconnaissance squad leader on the Kalinin Front explained this to his wife and daughter: 'the duty of every soldier should be to destroy the German oppressor in order to return home with victory' (RGASPI Fond M-33 Opis 1 Delo 48 List 1). A lieutenant reassured his wife in a similar manner: 'don't worry, everything will be alright. …be fully confident that I will return home only as a hero who destroyed the [fascist] reptiles' (RGASPI Fond M-33 Opis 1 Delo 779 Listy 9-10). Another soldier, lamenting that he had not yet seen his newborn son, wrote to his wife: 'If it weren't for these Hitlerite dogs, we would be enjoying our life together' (RGASPI Fond M-33 Opis 1 Delo 254 List 11). Taken together, these letters suggest the continued importance of personal motives and a duty to family for frontline soldiers in early 1942.

Instead of discussing the enemy, Red Army men's letters usually sought to minimize concern for their own safety. The favored way to do this was by focusing on their family's well-being in the rear and omitting any discussion of frontline danger as a way to remain a symbolic masculine protector. Lieutenant Ismaev expressed this concern when he wrote to his wife: 'I'm very happy, that [my parents] are out of harm's way… About me there's nothing to write, I'm healthy' (RGASPI Fond M-33 Opis 1 Delo 222 List 5). Red Army men still attempted to provide for their families' material needs through the unreliable option of sending home their pay. In typical fashion, one soldier promised his wife: 'I do not know if you have received any from me, [but] I have money now from which you will get a sum of 750 rubles every month' (RGASPI Fond M-33 Opis 1 Delo 254 List 13). When faced with the prospect of confirming their families' fears of frontline danger, wounded soldiers continued to downplay the seriousness of their condition to minimize their loved ones' worry. A soldier on the Leningrad front took a typical approach to report his condition in a reassuring manner: 'presently, I am wounded, but it is not serious so do not worry… Kiss [our] son and daughter for me, and tell them that papa will soon be home' (RGASPI Fond M-33 Opis 1 Delo 110 List 14). While only a performance, in this

way, soldiers could preserve some calm at home by silently enduring frontline hardships.

The focus on hatred of the enemy that emerged in soldier-specific propaganda in 1942 followed the discovery of mass atrocities in liberated regions. The same pattern seemed to operate in individual expressions of hatred against the Germans, whether contemporary or remembered decades later. Violence distinguished enemy and hero, not only as opposing forces, but as fundamentally different men, with women as passive figures caught in between. As a mobilizing tool, official rhetoric emphasized the suffering of women and children, Germans' animalistic nature, including sexual urges, and the defense of women's honor as recurring theme tied to the masculine ethic. Still strongly oriented toward family, especially in the first months of the year, servicemen showed little concern for Germans' violation of general ideals of honorable warfare. Only after soldiers grew more accustomed to frontline life and especially combat would they contrast themselves as soldiers.

Heroic Violence and the Individual Soldier

As the Red Army prepared to expel the German invader in 1942, the violence and aggression of offensive operations gained greater attention at all levels of the military. A new hero emerged in propaganda to reflect the focus on using violence differently from the enemy. This imagined Red Army fighter's motives, qualities, and combat exploits marked a departure from the desperate calls to sacrificial defense of 1941. In their place, propagandists and political workers sought to connect the male soldier of 1942 with the New Soviet Man and masculine labor heroes of the 1930s, and in particular coal miner Alexei Stakhanov, who gained national fame for a record-breaking shift in the mine attribute to Communist zeal.

This new ideal, hitherto referred to as the Stakhanovite-at-arms, strove to exterminate the hated enemy by engaging his fellow soldiers in socialist competition. On 20 January, a report about Communist Youth

League work in the military, one of the first efforts to promote the new movement, demanded that 'the expansion of competition among fighters in the destruction of fascist troops. There is too little fury [at present]. …Political work is needed to support this competition' (RGASPI Fond 77 Opis 1 Delo 936 List 8). In February, Andrei Zhdanov, chief Party representative on the Leningrad Front, deliberately employed the language of socialist competition and Stakhanovism to explain the heroism that political workers should promote: "the *Komsomoltsy* of a single division decided to begin socialist competition between units in the extermination of the fascist reptiles…there are many similarities with the Stakhanovite movement, and I would call our exterminating soldiers Stakhanovites on the military front' (RGASPI Fond 77 Opis 1 Delo 938 List 5). Such heroes' skills and optimistic belief in victory were to overcome the unfavorable military realities that prevailed at the front in 1942, just as Stakhanovites' strength and will-power overcame the empirical limits of production (Clark, 1993).

Socialist competition to exterminate the hated enemy, inspired by Stalin, motivated the new hero, and the number of enemy dead he produced demonstrated his merit. The new ideal combined established norms of masculinity in labor centered on strength and skill with a military focus on killing. Official rhetoric promoted a high number of enemies killed as the measure of a hero, rather than the bravery or risk-taking otherwise involved in successful battler performance. The difference in who and how the hero killed further defined the "Stakhanovite-at-arms" through contrast with the enemy. Unlike the enemy barbarian who slaughtered women and children, the hero of Red Army propaganda only struck down other men, did so skillfully, and killed with a calm, detached demeanor, despite his hatred.

The new hero also provided another important example for Red Army men: the basis for frontline comradeship. Snipers commonly appeared as examples, given their favorable circumstances to personally kill (and keep count of) individual enemy soldiers and officers, but were not operating as isolated hunters. Zhdanov explained that what further distinguished these new heroes was their 'fulfillment of their comradely,

civic duty to the [other] soldiers of our army, to pass on their shooting experience to their comrades by all means' in order to 'raise all marksmanship in our army to the highest level' (RGASPI Fond 77 Opis 1 Delo 938 List 8). Indeed, Zhdanov made sure to emphasize that other skillful soldiers could achieve the feats of snipers, and that the Stakhanovite-at-arms 'exists among soldiers of all types of weapons' (RGASPI Fond 77 Opis 1 Delo 938 List 11). Much like his predecessor in labor, the new ideal soldier was to act as an example for others to emulate and proof that the Soviet system could transform men, whether from peasants into advanced workers or from civilians into sharpshooting exterminators. These skills and their dissemination were to form bonds, but they simultaneously created an elite status that reinforced the notion of combat and national defense as a masculine realm.

Red Army fighters began to develop masculine bonds at the front without any connection to these calls to kill counts or skill sharing. Soldiers emphasized the masculine character of their new bonds by describing them as brotherhoods. They used this term only starting in 1942, when their sense of solidarity and commitment to each other grew strong, and well after official rhetoric deployed it in the first months of the war. A tank man explained that he liked to use

> The term brotherhood. The crew was one family. Of course, much depends on the character of the commander and on the character of the crew, but in the majority of cases, in the absolute majority, the crew had one united purpose, it was one person. It never happened, that one or two did something, and the others sat or watched or smoked. Everyone worked together (Shishkin, 2007: 254-255).

Popular usage at the front differed from propagandists' description of the whole Red Army as a brotherhood that followed Stalin's guiding hand. Troops did not discriminate by age or generation, but they remained selective in terms of who belonged, even among the men of their regiment, by ensuring that everyone received and provided mutual support. Among infantry, brotherhood could begin on the march to the

front, as when soldiers took the packs of those who struggled during overnight marches: 'In the war such small gestures of assistance, and others like it, gave rise to frontline brotherhood. ...We particularly valued these unwritten rules of conduct. They eased our difficult army life, drew the men together, and lifted our combat spirits' (Gorbachevsky, 2008: 65). Such brotherhoods were not national, nor counted in millions, but operated as close knit groups that functioned as surrogate families. Individual actions counted, punishment and praise operated outside the rank or disciplinary structure, and propaganda had little influence.

Non-combat hardships at the front further contributed to the formation of primary groups among Red Army fighters. Among frontline soldiers, the same action, taken for oneself or for ones comrades, prompted contrasting reactions. The same submachine gunner noted without criticism how 'one of our soldiers slipped secretly into a food cellar adjacent to a house where an outside office stayed. The officer caught the soldier red-handed and shot him down on the spot' and yet fondly remembered how the next evening, thanks to a thieving orderly, 'The main course of our company's festive table was the goat's meat. To steal in your shelter is the highest extent of meanness! There we were!' (Guzhva, 2012: 56-57). It was with everyday aspects of front life that bonds were forged, even before combat, given the extent of the hardship and the feelings of separation from civilian life that they brought (Lynn, 1996: 29). Traditional practices of Russian working class masculinity, drinking and smoking also added to group bonds outside battle (Starks, 2008: 181). A tank man remembered how while waiting for the order to advance, 'The gun-layer Vitya Belov and the loader Misha Tvorogov lit up "goat legs" [hand-rolled cigarettes] – how quickly they had learned from the 'old guys' how to roll a cigarette deftly around the little finger' (Krysov, 2010: 8). In each aspect of front life, both the shared practices themselves and the extra effort that comrades displayed for each other helped build the cohesiveness of their primary group and the linking of their sense of self with it as a collective (Lynn, 1996: 33).

In response to presentations of exterminator-heroes and kill tally exploits, letters from Red Army troops expressed a remarkable lack of enthusiasm about the act of killing as part of their duty as soldiers. While some fighters adopted the language of killing and exterminating enemy soldiers, making proclamations such as 'I can already note a tally of 21 exterminated white Finns," they more commonly failed to mention it at all' RGASPI Fond M-33 Opis 1 Delo 445 List 2. This likely reflected the fact that Soviet military failures throughout the winter and spring provided few opportunities for troops to match official rhetoric and exterminate the enemy in large numbers. Perhaps the most compelling reason that soldiers failed to embrace the socialist competition in killing promoted in official rhetoric was their actual experience of combat at the front. A political worker, who was otherwise responsible for spreading propaganda in his unit, wrote his wife a bleak letter, hoping to discourage his son from volunteering for the front: 'at the front, romance and poetry are much less [evident] than hardships and even horror. War is war. It is full of death, wounds, and other terrors' (RGASPI Fond M-33 Opis 1 Delo 92 List 7). Such sobering thoughts of combat hardly endorse the masculine ideal of propaganda that linked the numbers of passive enemies killed with records in coal hewing.

For many other Red Army men, killing remained a basic and inevitable part of warfare, part of the duty they had to perform to end the war and return home. One soldier explained this view matter-of-factly: 'If you don't kill the German, he kills you' (RGASPI Fond M-33 Opis 1 Delo 254 List 12). Others did not accept the new measure of a fighting man, and understood the exterminator-hero as one role among many. Signaler Aleksandr Myl'nikov explained this to his brother: 'I have not managed to finish off a single German because I am not a rifleman, nor a machine-gunner, nor an artilleryman, but a radio operator and such opportunities have not yet arisen…and I carry out my orders pretty well' (RGASPI Fond M-33 Opis 1 Delo 484 List 3).While Myl'nikov addressed the significance of personally killing the enemy, he expressed an alternative pride in his specialization, which lay outside the bounds of socialist competition and the sniper-centered heroic ideal. Such

responses amidst a general silence about the specific act of killing demonstrate the limitations of the new heroic ideal, the Stakhanovite-at-arms, to resonate amidst soldiers who otherwise shared some of the hatred of the enemy present in official rhetoric.

In 1942, comradeship, despite its value for unit cohesion and combat effectiveness, provided for the greatest divide between the ideal hero of propaganda and the masculine subjectivities of the rank and file. Soldierly subjectivities focused on a sub-unit-sized group of comrades, not the Red Army or Soviet population at large, which was not inherently a problem for military effectiveness, but revealed the limited effectiveness of official rhetoric and political work. Given the articulation of a clear model of soldierly behavior in the Stakhanovite-at-arms, soldiers' orientation toward local front groups shows how independent their thinking could be. While they upheld a sense of masculine bond that separated them from family at home, front experiences limited their interest in official discourse.

Desperation and the Interaction of Masculine Ideas

After the Germans launched a massive offensive in June, a new soldierly ideal in propaganda developed from the deteriorating military situation that culminated in the battle for Stalingrad. Propaganda continued to present the enemy as a brutal killer, but a much more dangerous one, who threatened the very existence of the Soviet people. Stalin used this approach when he mentioned that the enemy would shoot civilians if partisans prevented 'some German beast… from raping women or robbing citizens' in his October Revolution anniversary speech (Stalin, 2010: 67). Discussions of such enemy villainy sought to inspire soldiers' hatred and will to resist, and began to echo soldiers' focus on home and defense of family. Hitherto referred to as the Last Soviet Man, this ideal figure fought out of desperation, killing to keep his country from being overrun, and no longer part of the march to impending victory. A notion of young men's generational duty helped define the new hero, in which "sons" had to

defend the victory of their fathers and the gains of the Revolution. In battle, the Last Soviet Man remained disciplined without resorting to sacrificial actions, and yet he refused to retreat under pressure. Instead, he fought on and stayed alive because his will was greater than that of enemy.

Speaking to agitators on the Voronezh Front in September, formed after the German summer offensive began, Army Commissar Lev Mekhlis focused on the stakes of the battles about to unfold while explaining what motivated the Last Soviet Man:

> We are talking about – whether or not the great Russian people will be in slavery, and all peoples of our country, who on the field of battle have bloodily linked their fate with the fate of the great Russian people…We are talking about – Comrade Stalin has highlighted this – whether or not there will be Soviet power…The issue is the national and social enslavement of our country (RGASPI Fond 386 Opis 1 Delo 14 Listy 26-27).

The existential threat to the Soviet people and the Soviet system operated as the basic motivation of the new hero, and reflected desperation totally absent from the "Stakhanovite-at-arms" ideal soldier that preceded him. Newspaper articles explained to soldiers directly that in response to the enemy's invasion 'there can only be one answer: death or victory!' because death could allow 'fascist bandits…to make your wives and children into slaves' (Red Star, 1942: 2). Despite changes to official soldierly masculinity, it remained tied to the femininity of the Soviet home front to be defended and of victims under occupation.

Generational distinctions further differentiated the "Last Soviet Man" from previous soldierly masculinities in official rhetoric. Such soldiers had a duty not only to defend Soviet women, but also as 'sons of October,' to defend the Revolution their fathers had won and thus prove their manliness (Red Star, 1942: 3). On 4August, a *Krasnaia Zvezda* article presented the oath of a group of Don Cossacks, who, 'death threatening our children, our wives…Vow on the honor and blessed memory of our fathers, grandfathers, and great-grandfathers…to destroy

mercilessly the hated enemy' (Red Star, 1942: 3). In September, another such article invoked the duty of the younger generation of men to act as defenders, this time unfavorably comparing battles of the Russian Civil War to those of 1942: 'when under the ruins of our homes our wives and children perish, we, the defenders of Tsaritsyn, decided to contact you, defenders of Stalingrad' (Red Star, 1942: 1). To mark the anniversary of the Revolution, editorials reinforced the message of inter-generational male contrast and obligation, 'In October of 1917 our fathers and brothers went into battle against the forces of slavery and oppression…in battles with the hated German invaders we defend the gains of October' (Red Star, 1942: 1). The language of family in official rhetoric consistently presented the general duty of soldier heroes as unambiguously masculine: saving wives, honoring fathers, and holding off total defeat and the loss of a generation's worth of progress under Soviet power.

The combat exploits of the "Last Soviet Man" also diverged from those of the heroic ideal that preceded him, and continued to contrast with portrayals of the enemy's use of violence. Red Army soldiers no longer became heroes by accumulating a high number of enemies killed, but by overcoming larger forces through whatever means necessary, fueled by greater will and hatred. A lieutenant in the article 'One against ten' demonstrated the power of hatred: 'he was wounded, but his hatred of the enemy gave him strength. He pushed the German off him and, grabbing him by the throat, strangled him' (Red Star, 1942: 2). Killing the last of ten Germans with his bare hands, the Lieutenant highlighted the importance of continuing to fight, rather than panicking or retreating, not only to display heroism, but also to survive, as the Lieutenant's actions helped his unit escape encirclement and continue fighting. The article 'Not a step back!' emphasized this same theme: 'Four fearless Soviet guards, Belikov, Aleinikov, Boloto and Samoilev drove back the attack of 30 enemy tanks, destroying 15, and they themselves remained alive. Staunchness conquers death' (Red Star, 1942: 3). Rather than skills or kills, or sacrifice against superior enemy

numbers, soldiers who were so driven to destroy the enemy that they would not retreat, panic, or even die appeared as the true heroes.

As the Red Army's crisis over the summer and fall of 1942 grew, Red Army soldiers' letters changed significantly in response. The intensity of combat and high casualties wore down the resolve and altered the masculine performance of many Red Army men in their letters home. Troops could still emphasize their devotion to family, but their pessimism about survival was clear, as in a soldier's final letter before reaching the front outside Stalingrad: 'I'm sorry that we did not have more time together, but nothing can be done about war' (RGASPI Fond M-33 Opis 1 Delo 299 List 1). A junior lieutenant wrote to his wife: 'Many of my comrades from the academy assigned here have been wounded or killed. Several mortars just fell not far from where I am writing' (RGASPI Fond M-33 Opis 1 Delo 76 List 3). Soldiers' growing willingness to share such details communicated not only their proximity to mortal danger, but also the continued development of new relationships and loyalties at the front. Another soldier began a letter to his mother by detailing the fate of two comrades: 'Firstly, I want to report that I am alive and healthy. Ilya Baiakin was killed [10 days ago], and Ivan Bogatov was wounded in his first battle' (RGASPI Fond M-33 Opis 1 Delo 1413/6 List 3). This focus on the fate of comrades underscored the breakdown of earlier letter-writing performances along with the growth of new relationships with male comrades.

Alongside seeing fellow soldiers die, the need to kill increasingly separated troops' war experience from that of their families in the rear as the year wore on. Men at the front often realized that combat altered their sense of self, as Mansur Abdulin, an infantryman, recalled: 'By nature I am a tender and sensitive person. I was never a hooligan or a brawler. But when I went to war I wanted to destroy the Fritzes: "Kill or be killed." This was my message to the newcomers' (Abdulin, 2004: 109). Changes like the one Abdulin described helped very different people integrate into effective units and emotionally connected groups of soldiers, but often at the price of their family ties. A submachine-gunner reflected on the difference between 'relatives and the group on which he

places his hopes in combat. At times, [the group] will pull him to shelter. I would not give preference to one relationship – they are parallel and very important' (Evdokimov, 2012: 29). Others more casually noted the contrast between the toughness of the combat collective and the comforts of home: 'If anyone started to grumble, he was immediately rebuked: "You haven't come to your mother-in-law's for pancakes!" Quite so!' (Gorbachevsky, 2008: 67) Troops often idealized home as a safe place as their own lives grew more centered on violence. Their feeling of distance from family and their civilian selves contributed to an imagining of front and rear as distinctly masculine and feminine spaces.

Soldiers' reactions to death and killing reveal the cultural transformation of citizen soldiers that took place as the Red Army replenished its ranks in 1942. Killing had profound meaning to individuals, in strong contrast to thoughtless kill count accumulation of the Stakhanovite-at-arms, which provided few soldiers with a serious blueprint for action. Red Army troops believed that killing set them apart from civilians, brought them closer to the veteran combatants among them, and reflected a certain masculine nature to undertake. Because it had such an impact on them, they believed that it defied the capabilities of most women. Troops thus possessed a parallel view of violence dividing the front and rear, but changes to their sense of self, rather than propaganda portrayals, fueled their assessment.

Conclusion

The experience and exercise of violence dramatically reshaped Soviet perceptions of the war effort by integrating the enemy as a counterpoint to heroic masculine ideals and driving individual men to form new relationships and communities at the front. Contrasting uses and targets of violence distinguished official heroic and enemy masculinities, while fighting men found combat and violence to have a transformative impact on their sense of self. Propagandists focused on the character and motives of the enemy to explain his violent actions, which targeted Soviet women and children above all. Rather than simply

dehumanizing the enemy, frontline newspapers presented an enemy soldier who contrasted with his counterpart in the Red Army in very specific ways, but remained comparable as well as different. He emerged as an "other" to the Red Army hero as a soldier and as a man, defined by opposing notions of honor regarding motives for waging war, the individual use of violence, treatment of women, and personal courage in the face of danger. The enemy's villainy therefore rested on heinous wartime behavior and motivation, rather than ideological differences, historical connections, or leaders' machinations. The depiction of the enemy that emerged reinforced the masculine ethic and underpinned exhortations to drive him out of Soviet territory. Despite this sustained effort, soldiers' reaction to the enemy were quite varied, and the universal hatred expressed in print rarely echoed in soldiers' views, even in hindsight, without firsthand experience of atrocities.

The Soviet idea of enemy masculinity contrasted significantly from that of its two major allies, the United States and Great Britain, both in content and in the extent to which it helped define their respective heroic masculinities. In British newspaper propaganda, the enemy appeared as an overly-militarized but professional soldier: focused only on war and combat, always in the company of other soldiers, quick to show dominance and aggression, and utterly devoid of civilian relationships or interests. In contrast, British soldiers appeared as typical citizens above all: husbands and fathers, who retained their civilian personas and morality in wartime through humor, camaraderie, and reserved emotions (Rose, 2003: 153-159). The prevailing American view of the German enemy was essentially that of an honorable foe, although a clear competitor in masculine vigor and physical power. However, American propaganda appeared quite similar to its Soviet counterpart when discussing its Japanese enemy. Racist rhetoric constructed Americans' Japanese enemy as a savage killer, prone to torture and rape, and often compared him to animal figures such as monkeys or gorillas (Jarvis, 2004: 125-129). In both British and American cases, much more limited experiences of German soldiers in battle and especially occupation were likely a factor in the more

restrained presentation of the German enemy, just as specific atrocities appeared as a consistent feature of the Soviet idea of enemy. Nonetheless, the differing cases of its allies show the extent and significance of the enemy in Soviet efforts to define the Red Army hero and motivate soldiers to fight.

Official and soldierly perspectives interacted as a masculine bloc, modulating and responding to developments while preserving combatant status as an elite masculine role. Troops' bonds and feelings of comradeship developed in opposition to the women they left at home and engaged through letters, as well as through interaction with official rhetoric. Identifying such consistent gender change matters because it played a central role in the interaction between individuals' masculine subjectivities and the ideals official rhetoric promoted through its soldier heroes. The framework of the masculine bloc shows how frontline culture developed across the boundary of official and popular values and norms. Even for the military sub-group of the Soviet population, the pace of change in masculine ideals meant that there were multiple scripts for individuals to adopt in any given year of the war, in addition to the competing influence of comrades, family, and wartime experiences.

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