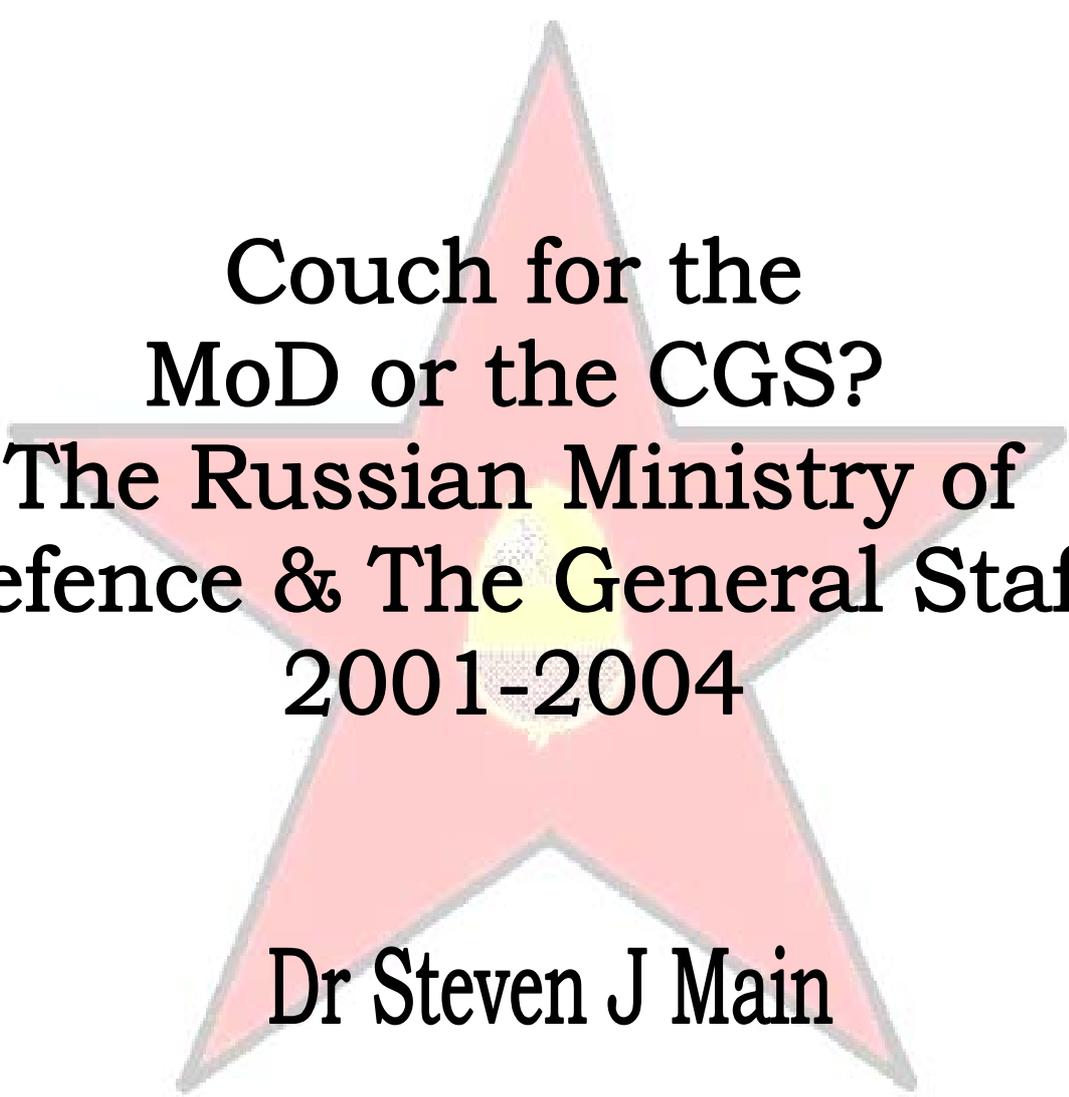


**Conflict Studies Research Centre**



**Couch for the  
MoD or the CGS?  
The Russian Ministry of  
Defence & The General Staff  
2001-2004**

**Dr Steven J Main**

**April 2004**

**Couch for the MoD or the CGS?  
The Russian Ministry of Defence & The General Staff  
2001-2004**

**Dr Steven J Main**

**Key Points**

- \* Defence Minister Sergei Ivanov and Chief of the General Staff General Anatoliy Kvashnin disagree on who should control the development of the Russian Armed Forces.
- \* Since 1997 Kvashnin has gained increasing control of the day-to-day running of the Armed Forces. Whilst this may have been justifiable in the early 1990s, since March 2001 Sergei Ivanov has sought to re-impose MoD control.
- \* Kvashnin has political ambitions and wants to be Defence Minister. He has already disposed of a number of potential competitors.
- \* President Putin appears content to let the two fight it out. However, recent public criticism of Kvashnin and the General Staff in January 2004 probably had his tacit approval.

# **Couch for the MoD or the CGS? The Russian Ministry of Defence & The General Staff 2001-2004**

**Dr Steven J Main**

This paper examines the background to the latest public disagreement between the Russian Minister of Defence, Sergei Ivanov, and the Chief of the Russian General Staff (CGS), A G Kvashnin. Whilst the public spat between the two men in January 2004 was by no means the first time that rumours had appeared of the imminent removal of one or other from their offices, this manifestation highlighted, once again, that there was something fundamentally at odds between the Ministry of Defence and the General Staff.

Both men have been in post for quite some time – Ivanov has been Minister of Defence since March 2001; Kvashnin has been CGS since June 1997. The tension between them has had an impact not only on the nature of the relationship between the Ministry of Defence and the General Staff, but also on ideas concerning the overall role of the General Staff in the military organisation of the state. It will be no surprise to learn that there is a degree of politics involved: there has been widespread speculation that Kvashnin covets Ivanov's job. For his part, Ivanov has no great desire to leave his current post. Indeed, on at least one occasion, Ivanov has remarked that he would like to stay on as Minister of Defence until 2008, in other words, until the end of Putin's second term in office as President. By then, Kvashnin will be 62, 2 years older than the usually strictly adhered to retirement age for senior posts in the political and military apparatus. Thus, unless Putin becomes dissatisfied with Ivanov's performance, time would appear to be running out for Kvashnin to fulfil at least this part of his career development plan.

## **“Problems of the contemporary military command and control system and ways of improving it in the light of changes in the nature of modern war”**

This was the title of the military-scientific conference held by the Academy of Military Science in late January 2004, the scene of the latest public dispute between Ivanov and Kvashnin.<sup>1</sup> The conference was designed to look at a number of issues concerned with the legal basis of the existing military command and control system, as well as to analyse the nature of the contemporary military threat and future defence issues.<sup>2</sup> The annual conference is a show-piece event for the Russian military-scientific community and the latest conference was no exception. Not only was it addressed by both Ivanov and Kvashnin, but also by the Minister of Defence of Belarus', Colonel-General L Mal'tsev and the Chief of the General Staff of Ukrainian Armed Forces, General A Zatynyko, who was formally accepted into the Russian Academy of Military Science during the proceedings. Held in the conference hall of the Ministry of Defence, 530 Doctors of Science attended, as well

1

as the country's senior military leadership: in short, "the whole flower of the military thought of our country".<sup>3</sup> Ivanov was addressing the best possible audience for his remarks on the role of the General Staff in predicting the nature of the future military threat and how best Russia should deal with it. The Supreme Commander-in-Chief, Putin, did not turn up himself at the Conference – he simply sent a message of greeting – but this was a very influential audience, and an important issue.

It is therefore inconceivable that Ivanov did not enjoy Putin's tacit approval, at least, for his criticism of the recent role of the General Staff. Russia's political system is still too centralised for a senior government minister to criticise the country's most senior soldier without the agreement of the country's President. Whilst Putin would prefer, no doubt, that such disputes not be conducted in public, nevertheless if he had so desired, he could have brought Ivanov to heel quite easily. Putin may have thought that not attending the conference would grant him distance, but he is only postponing the inevitable: he will have to choose, at some point in the future, whether Ivanov or Kvashnin remains in charge of the continuing military reform process. In the dispute between the previous Minister of Defence, Marshal I Sergeev, and Kvashnin 3 years ago, Putin came down on the side of Kvashnin.<sup>4</sup>

Ivanov's address, which was published on the official website of the Russian MoD within days of his appearance at the conference – to date, May 2004, the official website of the General Staff still does not have a copy of Kvashnin's address - was long, detailed and full of many "digs" at the way the General Staff had operated over the last few years. Ivanov did not launch an all-out attack on Kvashnin personally, but there could be no doubt that in criticising the organ, he was criticising its head.

Almost at the beginning of his address, Ivanov spoke about the importance of the Ministry being in charge of developing the Russian military and criticised the "seclusion" which had appeared in various intellectual centres of military thinking:

"the leadership of the Ministry of Defence has always devoted and continues to pay attention to the scientific grounding of plans for the development and construction of the military ... At the same time, unfortunately, there has appeared in military science a general departmental seclusion [*zamknutost*], as well as strict internal demarcation lines between different areas of military science, individual military-scientific institutions, including those belonging to various branches of the services."<sup>5</sup>

An interesting opening statement, and the Academy did not have to wait long before Ivanov launched further criticism of the way that contemporary warfare had not been analysed properly, and the inherent danger of too much thinking being done "through the prism of Chechnya":

"the nature of future war makes demands on the structure and functioning of the state's military organisation, including its Armed Forces, and determines what the system of military command and control should look like. However, I have to say that not all has been done which should have been done in both understanding ... and forecasting the nature of future war. It is impermissible that modern-day conflicts and wars are so little studied, including the Soviet and American experience in Afghanistan, the NATO operation in Yugoslavia, the two wars in Iraq.

Couch for the MoD or the CGS? The Russian Ministry of Defence  
& The General Staff 2001-2004

These conflicts are not like one another, they have their own dynamic of development and peculiarity of unfolding. The task of military science today is to uncover their common laws [*zakonomernosti*]. Up until now, we have constantly formed our views of future conflict through the prism of the counter-terrorist operation in Chechnya. This is understandable – many of our commanders and chiefs have been through the cauldron of this conflict, there they gained experience in controlling troops and organising the mutual interaction with the other power structures ... We ourselves did not notice how gradually our thought process [*myshleniye*] became primarily fixed at the tactical level.

We should not forget that operational and strategic levels [of military thought] exist, working on which demands colossal knowledge and skill. As a result of the absolutisation [*absolyutizatsiya*] of the experience of operations in Chechnya, it seems to me that today insufficient attention is being paid to training staffs to conduct army-and front-level operations.”<sup>6</sup>

Such criticism of the quintessential work of the General Staff – analysing the experience of past wars in order to prepare better for the next one – must have left the audience with little doubt that the real target for Ivanov at the conference was Kvashnin. His phrasing in relation to the “absolutisation” of the experience of Chechnya at the expense of a proper analysis of other conflicts must have made a number of his audience feel uncomfortable, particularly Kvashnin, who largely made his name as a direct result of the wars in Chechnya.

Kvashnin’s discomfiture was set to increase, as Ivanov continued his examination of what had to be done in order to rectify the mistakes of the recent past:

“the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation and the highest organs of military command and control must be prepared to take part in any military conflict ... As Minister of Defence, I see that one of the most pressing tasks is the creation of new approaches to the command and control of the Armed Forces and their mutual co-operation with the other power structures. From this point of view, the most pressing question is the functioning of the highest command and control organs in the military arena.”<sup>7</sup>

In short, the General Staff – one of the “the highest command and control organs” in the state’s military organisation – was not doing its job, not least thanks too much attention to being paid to too little, ie the wars in Chechnya were given greater prominence than they warranted. This had to change, for Russia to cope, intellectually at least, with the demands of modern warfare and military technology. How Russia – or, for that matter, any state – analyses past conflict has a direct bearing on how it prepares for the next one and this, in turn, has a huge impact on training, weapons procurement, border protection, etc. Emphasising that, as part of the “structure of the Ministry of Defence”, the General Staff in war time is responsible for both “strategic planning and control of the troops”, Ivanov listed a number of functions which the General Staff should “concentrate” on, turning it into the “intellectual centre of the military command and control system”:

- “reveal at the earliest possible stage ... the possible military threats to the security of Russia, preparing recommendations in the way of neutralising them;
- study the experience of the combat use of the armed forces in conflicts, revealing new military and military-technical tendencies;
- prepare plans for the combat use of the Armed Forces and the other power structures in various types of military conflict;
- maintain improvements in the approach to the forms and methods of the combat use of the Armed Forces on the basis of a study of the experience of modern armed conflicts;
- make recommendations on the tactical-technical characteristics of new combat technology, based on an assessment of the military-political situation and a forecast of the most likely types of threat which Russia may face;
- ensure the conduct of command-staff, general troop and special exercises, working out scenarios for the conduct of such exercises taking into account contemporary experience of military actions;
- improve the system of operational mutual interaction between the Armed Forces and other power structures of Russia in the course of military conflicts;
- prepare recommendations on improving the statutes of the military doctrine for the Ministry of Defence.

Thus, the General Staff will, in the fullest possible measure, become an organ completely corresponding to the famous definition of Marshal of the Soviet Union Shaposhnikov - ‘the Brain of the Army’.<sup>8</sup>

Having outlined how it had got off track and where he thought the main responsibilities and duties of the General Staff should lie in the future, Ivanov proceeded to praise its earlier role:

“today, many reproach the leadership of the General Staff for being excessively concerned with the administrative process and questions of everyday control of the troops. With absolute certainty, I must say that this is unjust. Until recently, the General Staff operated in accordance with the realities which existed both in the country and in the Ministry of Defence. And they were, in all honesty, unfavourable. And the General Staff, in order to ensure the very survival of the Armed Forces, definitely took on surplus administrative and command and control functions which, probably, were to the detriment of the basic tasks of a classic General Staff ... we, in many ways, owe the General Staff much in that our troops maintained military capability and combat effectiveness.”<sup>9</sup>

An indication of how the functions of the General Staff had developed in the past decade can be found in an article by deputy CGS Colonel-General A S Skvortsov:

“since 1991, a weight of new problems had been placed on the shoulders of the General Staff, connected to the discharge of Russia’s treaty obligations in reducing significantly its Armed Forces, as well as the withdrawal, in quick time, of troops from the territory of other states, their deployment ... in new areas ... within the borders of Russia.

Couch for the MoD or the CGS? The Russian Ministry of Defence  
& The General Staff 2001-2004

In connection with the redeployment of troops, the General Staff took a number of steps to strengthen Russia's new territorial border in the west and in the south, creating combat capable groups of troops on the territory of the Russian Federation, defining the most acceptable variant for the development of the strategic nuclear force groupings, improving the command and control system of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation. Special attention was paid to the ability of the General Staff, operationally, to take decisions during the beginning of a conflict situation in the world, on the territory of coterminous CIS member-states and in certain regions of Russia.

In accordance with the Law ... on Defence (1996) and the Statute on the General Staff (1998), the functions of the General Staff were very diverse. The most important of these concerned drafting recommendations on the fundamental issues of preparing the country for defence, the military doctrine of the Russian Federation, structure, composition, number, deployment and tasks of the Armed Forces, defining the demands of the Armed Forces in weapons and military technology ... organising measures connected with planning and constructing parts of the military infrastructure.”<sup>10</sup>

In conclusion, Skvortsov did not hesitate to state that “the General Staff is the most important central military command and control organ”.<sup>11</sup>

Although the article was designed to put the overall work of the General Staff in a historical context – it was published as part of a series designed to illuminate various aspects of the history of the General Staff in the past 240 years – as far as Skvortsov was concerned, the General Staff was *the* central organ which had kept the Armed Forces together. For instance, in examining the work of the General Staff in the 1990s, there is only a single reference to the Ministry of Defence. Kvashnin himself had pointed out the dominating role of the Staff HQs even in the late 1990s. In an article published in 1998 – and one of the few penned by him which actually deals with the work of Staff HQs – he wrote that “without belittling the role of the other command and control structures ... the basic burden in controlling the troops (forces) is borne by the Staff HQs ... They account for 50-75% of all administrative tasks.”<sup>12</sup>

Despite being separated by 5 years, both articles underline Ivanov's case: the Staff HQs and the General Staff were too involved in the day-to-day running of the country's Armed Forces and, as far as Ivanov was concerned it was time for a significant re-distribution and re-definition of the role of the General Staff. Thus, in his address to the conference in January 2004, Ivanov talked about the need to free the General Staff from “unsuitable functions” and “administrative routine”:

“and today in the current difficult situation, we do not have the right to waste this powerful organisation and the intellectual potential of the General Staff on solving second-rate questions ... In order to solve the broad spectrum of tasks in the sphere of military planning, the General Staff must be freed from unsuitable functions ... which it has been overburdened with in the past few years. The function of strategic planning ... is extremely broad and multi-aspectual. The excessive burdening of management responsibilities and administration ... is pushing the General Staff into a channel of ... administrative routine when such

highly-qualified specialists, concentrated in the General Staff, should be daily involved in working on questions of strategy and operational art.

It goes without saying that none of this is possible without training a modern-day staff officer with the corresponding intellect and professionalism. In the pre-revolutionary and then in the Soviet period, a highly professional and effective school of staff thought and operational control of troops was created. However, in the past few years, much has been wasted.”<sup>13</sup>

In terms of what the MoD expected of the General Staff officer, the Commandant of the General Staff Academy, Colonel-General V S Chechevatov, stated in an article published in 2002:

“the Minister of Defence of the Russian Federation particularly demands an increase in the professional authority of our graduates. The general and the officer with a diploma from the Military Academy of the General Staff ... must distinguish himself by the breadth of his military knowledge and innovative style of thinking, very modern administrative culture, by the purity of his moral outlook, professional intellect and clear understanding behind the aims of military reform.”<sup>14</sup>

Whilst the General Staff had done a good job in the recent past in maintaining the country’s Armed Forces in some sort of shape, nevertheless, in Ivanov’s opinion, it was time for it to revert to a more traditional role. As far as Ivanov was concerned, it was no longer necessary for the General Staff to maintain functions in relation to the day-to-day running of the Armed Forces. In fact, it would be a criminal waste of the talent of the General Staff for it to occupy itself with anything other than issues of strategic planning and operational art. His words also had a political message: Ivanov is determined to wrest back from the General Staff, and from Kvashnin, control of the everyday running of the country’s Armed Forces. This was not a re-run of the earlier dispute between the previous Defence Minister, Marshal Sergeyev, and Kvashnin – that was more to do with resource allocation, ie too much going to the development of the Strategic Missile Forces – but the Minister of Defence was once again attempting to draw a line in the sand between himself and the CGS. Kvashnin must have found the next few sentences even more disconcerting:

“some assert that the experience of commanding troops in real combat situations gives more than years working in staff HQs and the training in the academies. This is a dangerous illusion. Staff work demands a particular approach, a special level of knowledge, knowledge of new military and command and control technologies. Experience of commanding troops, despite all its value, is no substitute for the culture of working in a staff HQ ... We must, at a qualitatively new level, re-create the traditional Russian military elite – the officers of the General Staff.”

But Ivanov had one more punch to throw before he returned to his seat. Drawing on Russia’s pre-revolutionary experience to support his next argument, Ivanov reasserted the importance of one-man command and the unity of the military control system.

Couch for the MoD or the CGS? The Russian Ministry of Defence  
& The General Staff 2001-2004

“In conclusion, I would like to draw your attention to one very important aspect. Regardless of the discussions we have held, concepts advanced, it is necessary to remember one thing, that in military organisation there is one invariable constant: the principle of one-man command and the unity of military command. The Armed Forces exist as such only as long as this principle rules and is maintained by the strict vertical structure of command.

The breaking of this principle has always created a lack of co-ordination in the leadership of military development, introduced confusion in the command and control of the troops and given birth to squabbles, intrigues, irresponsibility ... We have already witnessed this in our most recent history.

There was also such a period in the history of the pre-revolutionary Russian Army, when from June 1905 - December 1908, the Chief of the General Staff was directly subordinate to the supreme power with the right to personally report to the Emperor. The end result was to disorganise the work of the entire war department and discredit the healthy idea of dividing functions between the organs of military command. The rational “Prussian” model of military command proved to be ineffective when mechanically transferred to Russian soil. As a result, at the end of 1908, Russia returned to a centralised system of military organisation.”<sup>15</sup>

In other words, there was to be no dual control in the Armed Forces, no possibility of the two top officials reporting to the President separately. If Kvashnin had to report directly to Putin, then it would be if not in the actual presence of Ivanov, then at least with his prior knowledge. Any other option would not be tolerated. If there had been some earlier agreement – see below – allowing the CGS direct access to the President, this was no longer acceptable. Only in time of war could there be a legitimate case for the CGS reporting directly to the Supreme Commander-in-Chief, but certainly not in peace time, regardless of the situation which had existed in Yeltsin’s time. As Ivanov pointed out, when there had been a system of dual control, this had led only to a weakening of the Armed Forces, as conflicting reports were made to the Emperor. Duplication of effort simply meant wastage, in a variety of forms, as both the War Ministry and the General Staff competed for the Emperor’s ear.

Ivanov was careful to tie this in with the overall argument for the need for one-man command: an argument which stemmed back to the early days of the Red Army during and immediately after the Civil War. Many of the audience would have balked at the idea of one-man command being in any way under threat. Throughout his entire address, Ivanov had cleverly forged a link between the pre-revolutionary history of the Russian Army, the early development of the Red Army and the most recent experience of the Russian Army to prove his main point: whenever there had been a duality in the military command and control system, the Armed Forces were worse off, not better. “Every organ in the military command and control system of the military organisation of Russia must clearly ... occupy its place.”<sup>16</sup>

Judging by the immediate press reports of the meeting, Kvashnin found himself looking uncomfortably at Ivanov during the latter’s address. Some of the headlines must have added to the feeling that he had been the main target of attack: “Sergei

Ivanov has opened fire on the General Staff"; "The Minister of Defence has attacked the General Staff"; "View from the 6<sup>th</sup> floor. There will be no dual power in the Army"; "The 'brainless' military," "The reform of the General Staff begins with Kvashnin", etc. Whilst Kvashnin does not enjoy a particularly good relationship with the press, nevertheless these were the sort of headlines that even he could have done without reading so soon after a major conference.<sup>17</sup>

These early reports also give some indication of Kvashnin's reaction to Ivanov's address as Ivanov was delivering it: one described how, on a number of occasions, Kvashnin's face turned "red", as Ivanov criticised the intellectual quality of the staff officers currently being produced, and when Ivanov hinted at the dispute between Marshal Sergeyev and Kvashnin.<sup>18</sup> According to another report, following Ivanov's remarks about the Ministry of Defence being the supreme command and control organ for the Armed Forces, with the General Staff simply being part of its structure, "Kvashnin slowly turned his head with unconcealed surprise and stared at [Ivanov]".<sup>19</sup>

Certainly, most of the journalists present interpreted Ivanov's address as being not only an examination of the command and control system and ways of improving it, but also as a barely concealed attack on the performance of the General Staff under Kvashnin. According to the respected military correspondent of *Izvestiya*, D Litovkin, Ivanov's address was an attempt to put an end, once and for all, to the conflict between the leadership of the Ministry of Defence and the General Staff. Litovkin also wondered whether, given Kvashnin's subsequent address to the conference, Kvashnin had understood the essence of Ivanov's address, or even the theme of the conference itself. Kvashnin chose to concentrate on examining various geopolitical issues, rather than addressing the major theme, command and control in light of recent military conflict.<sup>20</sup>

In his opening remarks, Kvashnin stated that his address would focus "on several aspects of maintaining the defence capability of the Russian Federation".<sup>21</sup> With this in mind, Kvashnin spoke about the existence in the world of a number of "centres of strength" (*tsentr sily*), by which he meant nations, or groups of nations, which will exert great influence on the course of world development. In his opinion, the most powerful "centres of strength" in the contemporary world are USA and a United Europe; China, India and Japan; the Far and Middle East and North Africa and last, but by no means least, Russia. His justification for this was largely due to Russia's geo-strategic position: it could not be listed as belonging solely to one geographical region, nor could it be comfortably placed in any of the other "centres of strength".<sup>22</sup>

Kvashnin then proceeded to note the ever worsening demographic situation. He feared that Russia's population may fall as low as 112 million by 2050 which, in itself, would bring added economic and military insecurity for the country.<sup>23</sup> However, as he was quick to acknowledge, Russia's security was not just a question for Russia alone to tackle. In alliance with others, Russia's security could still be firmly guaranteed, by adopting a number of steps which would eventually turn "competitors" into "neutrals" and "neutrals" into "partners" and then finally, "partners" into "allies". Kvashnin argued that such a policy could only be pursued if "firm actions" were carried out in the country's foreign and domestic policies.<sup>24</sup> Further on, though, Kvashnin pointed out that today's world does not "like the weak" and that "political measures could only be effective ... if based on sufficient

Couch for the MoD or the CGS? The Russian Ministry of Defence  
& The General Staff 2001-2004

strength”.<sup>25</sup> In meeting the potential threat of force in the future, Kvashnin stated that, in general terms,

“current Russian planning, based on a realistic understanding of current resources and capabilities of the Russian Federation, proceeds from the basis that the Armed Forces, along with the other forces of the Russian Federation, must be ready to repel an attack or inflict defeat on the aggressor, conduct active operations (both offensive and defensive) under any variant of war or armed conflict, conducted against us ... against whatever modern or future weapons [are deployed] by the enemy”.<sup>26</sup>

It was not until more than halfway through his address that Kvashnin used the words “Ministry of Defence” and “General Staff”. Even that was simply to state that command and control of the troops is “from the top down – from the Supreme Commander in Chief, the Minister of Defence and the General Staff to the soldier (sailor)”.<sup>27</sup>

The rest of his address discussed the armaments programme; contract service; strategic forces of containment; more funding for conventional forces; the October 2003 Russian “White Book”, etc. In some ways, this could have been a speech made by the Minister himself, especially as there was virtually nothing about improving the command and control system. In conclusion, Kvashnin stated that “the development of the Armed Forces of the RF is a component part of the country’s defence. Maintaining a co-ordinated and effective control of this process is the most important task of the military-political leadership of the country and the Armed Forces”.<sup>28</sup>

One journalist at the conference noted that when Ivanov spoke about ‘strengthening’ the role of the General Staff by relieving it of all “superfluous” functions, Kvashnin had noticeably “stiffened” in his seat and looked even more “alarmed” when Ivanov criticised the current training of staff officers. The journalist reckoned that Ivanov had delivered an “ultimatum” to Kvashnin, “a signal about possible retiral”.<sup>29</sup> Much of the press comment did focus on this particular aspect of Ivanov’s speech. One commentator even hinted that Kvashnin’s retirement would take place “not long after the Presidential election”.<sup>30</sup> That has still not happened but, with the formal re-appointment of Ivanov in March 2004 as Defence Minister, it is difficult to see how both men can remain in their posts for much longer, given their mutual antipathy.<sup>31</sup> The reason why there is such a poor working relationship between them will be examined in the next section.

### **Ivanov versus Kvashnin, 2001-2003**

Ivanov and Kvashnin have not enjoyed a harmonious working relationship, not least due to the overtly political ambitions of the CGS himself and Ivanov’s determination that the General Staff be made to accept that the General Staff is part of the structure of the MoD, not the other way round. This is not simply indicative of a clash of personalities; it is also a reflection of the fact that the two men have very different views on the nature and role of the Ministry of Defence and the General Staff. Ivanov has very clearly defined views on the future of the Russian military and he appears to view Kvashnin as an obstacle on the path.

Putin appointed Sergey Ivanov Minister of Defence on 29<sup>th</sup> March 2001, after accepting the “retiral” of Marshal of the Russian Federation I Sergeyev. Ivanov had been Secretary to the powerful Security Council since November 1999. Thus, by the time of his appointment, Ivanov was well aware of the problems facing the Russian Armed Forces and also of the problems between the previous incumbent of the post and the CGS.<sup>32</sup> In his first major TV interview, Ivanov put his cards on the table:

“I am deeply convinced that the Armed Forces should have a single centre of authority ... There are no armed forces in the world which have two, three, etc., centres of authority. The principle of a single authority must be preserved in the Armed Forces and it will be maintained. My dream is to reinstate the General Staff as the true brain of the Armed Forces. I am confident and hopeful that we shall manage to develop such a formula under which I constantly feel the generating function of the General Staff as that of a generator of ideas and, at the same time, there will be no contention [between us].”<sup>33</sup>

Within weeks of Ivanov’s appointment, speculation began to appear in the Russian press that it would be only a matter of “weeks” before Kvashnin would be replaced as CGS: according to *Izvestiya*, “sources” reported that Ivanov had presented to Putin his choice for CGS in early April 2001, with Kvashnin becoming deputy-secretary to the Security Council.<sup>34</sup> Similarly, the decision to appoint Colonel-General N V Kormil’tsev, Commander-in-Chief of the recently re-created Ground Forces in late March 2001 and to raise his status to that of a deputy Defence Minister, a month later, were steps widely interpreted as measures designed specifically to limit the powers of the CGS and the General Staff. As one contemporary report commented:

“Commander-in-Chief of Ground Forces ... Colonel-General Nikolai Kormil’tsev has been appointed deputy-minister of defence ... the Ministry of Defence has explained the change in status of Colonel-General Nikolai Kormil’tsev simply by reference to the re-created Main Command of the Ground Forces now being in direct control of the administration of the military districts (they had earlier been subordinated to the control of the General Staff).

However, it’s not as simple as that. Ground Forces, the largest of the Service branches of the Armed Forces, up until now were subordinate to the control of the General Staff. More exactly, to the Chief of the General Staff, General of the Army Anatoly Kvashnin. Appointing the Commander-in-Chief of Ground Forces his deputy, the Minister of Defence, Sergei Ivanov, in essence is re-subordinating the control of the Ground Forces to himself, thereby significantly limiting the power of Kvashnin.

In the opinion of military experts, in raising the status of the Commander-in-Chief of Ground Forces to the post of deputy minister of defence, Sergei Ivanov is gradually moving the Chief of the General Staff away from important issues affecting the control of the troops.”<sup>35</sup>

Couch for the MoD or the CGS? The Russian Ministry of Defence  
& The General Staff 2001-2004

Somewhat diplomatically and very delicately, Kormil'tsev, in his first major interview in his new post, spoke about the new relationship between the Main Command of the Ground Forces and the General Staff:

“the formation of the Main Command is a step towards creating ... an organ which will have complete responsibility for the state [*sostoyaniye*] of this branch of the Armed Forces, its development, construction, training, etc. This will make it necessary to delineate the functions of the General Staff and the Main Command of the Ground Forces, so that they do not duplicate one another's functions.”<sup>36</sup>

Kormil'tsev's was one of a number of appointments designed to increase the professionalism of the central military apparatus, as well as introduce a core of trusted, seasoned, personnel whom Ivanov could rely on to carry out the next stage of military reform. These new appointments represented more than people being “rewarded” for their loyalty to the new Minister of Defence, as an examination of their previous careers would amply testify. The incorporation of so many new personnel – it was nothing short of a “purge” of the central military apparatus – was aimed at re-establishing the central authority of the Ministry of Defence.<sup>37</sup> It was also an early indication that Ivanov was going to be an active Minister of Defence. The Ministry was going to function in a different way than it had under Sergeyev. Kvashnin must have viewed such early activity with a degree of apprehension, especially in relation to his own future relationship with the Minister. Ivanov, well aware of the detail of the previous dispute between Kvashnin and Sergeyev, had obviously decided to embark on a course of action designed to curtail the power of the CGS and the duties and responsibilities of the General Staff, one of the easiest and earliest ways of doing that being to change key personnel. Whilst he was unsuccessful in any attempt – if any attempt was made – at removing Kvashnin from the post of CGS, nevertheless Ivanov was able to make a number of senior appointments which would help him re-establish overall control of the Armed Forces. Kvashnin would also now be aware that Ivanov was not going to be as easily managed as Sergeyev, prior to whose “retirement” an investigation by the chief military procurator's office revealed widespread corruption in the Ministry.<sup>38</sup>

Throughout 2002, a number of articles were published confirming the tension in the senior military command, not just between Kvashnin and Ivanov, but most notably between Kvashnin and the Commander of Airborne Forces, Colonel-General G Shpak and Kvashnin and the Commander of Strategic Rocket Forces, Colonel-General V Yakovlev. In overall terms, they paint Kvashnin as a man very focussed in his ambition to replace Ivanov as Minister of Defence. Anyone who could pose a threat to this ambition is either summarily dropped or disgraced in some way. His intention, for instance, to cut back on the size of the Airborne Forces was motivated less by the need to enforce a further cut of 200,000 men in the overall military strength and more “by his jealousy of the popularity of the combat capable Commander of the Airborne Forces, Georgiy Shpak”.<sup>39</sup> Similarly after Sergeyev's “retiral”, Kvashnin “panicked”, thinking that Sergeyev would be replaced by another “Missile Man”, Yakovlev, as Minister of Defence. Of course, Kvashnin did have a genuine disagreement with Sergeyev concerning the weight being placed on the development of the various branches of the Armed Forces. As a former Commander of Strategic Rocket Forces, it was not surprising that Sergeyev had given priority to their equipping and development. Kvashnin, on the other hand, wanted more funds allocated to the general purpose forces.<sup>40</sup>

In April 2002 *Versiya* once again expressed the view that “the potential resignation of Sergei Ivanov ... is virtually a foregone conclusion”.<sup>41</sup> The article analysed Kvashnin’s career to date, as well as offering an assessment of the importance of the two Chechen wars to Kvashnin. At the start of the first war, Kvashnin was first deputy chief of the General Staff’s Main Operations Directorate. However, following the debacle at Grozny in December 1994 and the resignation of the Commander of North Caucasus Military District (MD), Colonel-General A Mityukhin, Kvashnin agreed to take over as Commander of the MD in February 1995. It shows the ambition of the man that he was prepared to take on such a risky post. After all, there was no guarantee that his tenure would be any more successful than Mityukhin’s. However, Kvashnin also knew that it would give him a chance to prove that he was capable of holding down a proper combat command. There can be little doubt that his success – or should it be lack of obvious failure? – helped his career considerably. Nevertheless, as far as Ivanov is concerned, Kvashnin’s experience of command in Chechnya has led to too much emphasis being placed on tactics in modern warfare and not enough on the “bigger picture”, ie questions of strategic planning and operations. There is now a distinct “clan” of “Chechen” generals in various influential positions in the state – men like Troshev, Kazantsev and Baranov. The old “Afghan” clan amongst the *generalitet* is gradually being replaced with a “Chechen” group of senior officers, which could have interesting consequences on the future development of the Russian military, as well as Russian views on the nature of the threat facing Russia in the new century.<sup>42</sup>

*Versiya* also pointed out how Kvashnin had turned the General Staff into an “independent active structure” and had “politicised” its nature, not only by delivering an unprecedented number of interviews, public speeches and articles in the press in the immediate aftermath of his new appointment. Kvashnin had “politicised” the status, if not the work, of the General Staff, in obtaining Yeltsin’s agreement that in “extreme situations” the CGS could report directly to the Supreme Commander-in-Chief, ie the president, bypassing the Minister of Defence.<sup>43</sup> This has been one feature which Ivanov has been determined to bring to an end.

In May 2002, Kvashnin took advantage of Ivanov’s official visit to China to deliver a damning report on the crisis facing the country’s Armed Forces at a “scientific-practical conference”.<sup>44</sup> In his report to the conference, Kvashnin stated that “the Armed Forces of Russia are in a *very critical situation*. Unless emergency measures are adopted, a negative situation in the area of combat readiness of the Russian Army will assume an *irreversible nature* [emphasis in original]”.<sup>45</sup> Kvashnin also warned that unless a “guaranteed minimum subsistence level” for officers by increasing salaries “two or more times” was achieved, “*there will be no officer corps*” [emphasis in original].<sup>46</sup> His timing was not accidental: with Ivanov in China, he was able to re-emphasise his general pessimism concerning the state of the Armed Forces at a session of the Security Council, held at the end of May 2002, and presided over by Putin himself. Thus, Putin received a report on the crisis in the Armed Forces, in the words of one commentator, “exclusively from the mouth of Kvashnin ... the Chief of the General Staff would be able to show the president that he was not acting as a brake on military reform, but that it was not progressing in the way being made out by the leadership of the Ministry of Defence.”<sup>47</sup>

According to subsequent press reports, however, if Kvashnin’s intentions had been to frighten Putin or Ivanov into action and stimulate greater support for himself within the military apparatus, then he was less than successful: one reporter

Couch for the MoD or the CGS? The Russian Ministry of Defence  
& The General Staff 2001-2004

remarked that the argument concerning the need to increase officers' salaries for fear of losing the entire Russian officer corps sounded like an attempt at "blackmail".<sup>48</sup> Another stated that apart from firming up his support among the opposition element of the *generalitet*, he received no further support from elsewhere, including members of the Security Council. Even Putin's support could not be relied upon.<sup>49</sup> Thus, if he had hopes of making life more uncomfortable for Ivanov, the attempt failed and, it has to be said with a degree of hindsight, has to be seen as pretty clumsy. Hence, no doubt, Putin refused to take sides on the issue; Putin appears to be prepared to let both men argue out their disputes, even if it means using the mass media.

At first glance, this would appear to be at odds with the President's own training and background and, even on closer inspection, it does seem strange that Putin is prepared to let the two most powerful men in the military organisation of the state publicly disagree with one another so stridently. In Russia's past, public disagreement between senior officials was not encouraged in any form. Has Russian society changed to such an extent already? Putin, after all, has not seen fit to remove either man from his post. Might this be an indication of a more open society, where disputes between officials can be played out in the media, without careers automatically being placed in jeopardy?

Towards the end of 2001, a very interesting article was written by the former Chief of Staff of the Warsaw Pact Forces, General A I Gribkov, analysing the past experience and future role of the General Staff, in which he stated that "the Chief of the General Staff, it is my deeply-held belief, should have the right to report to the President of RF (the Supreme Commander-in-Chief). This does not in any way diminish the role of the Minister of Defence, whose responsibility is still great and wide-ranging."<sup>50</sup> Gribkov would have been well aware that the relationship between Kvashnin and Ivanov was not the most harmonious. Therefore, his views, so publicly expressed, would not have been welcomed by the latest incumbent of the ministerial chair. Ivanov himself must have known that his attempts to claw back what had been lost to the General Staff over the years would encounter resistance. Gribkov's article was like a gauntlet being thrown down: what would be the reaction?

Throughout 2002, in advance commemoration of the 240<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the creation of the first Russian General Staff in 1763, a series of articles appeared in many newspapers and journals, examining not only the achievements and importance of the General Staff over the centuries, but also encouraging an examination of its contemporary role. Among the more prominent contributions were a couple of articles by the President of the Academy of Military Science, General M Gareyev, an ally of Kvashnin's in the dispute with Marshal Sergeyev. Given his wartime record (he took part in the storming of Berlin in May 1945, for instance), Gareyev's voice carries weight in Russian military circles.

His most important published contribution was entitled "the role of Staff HQs in the military administrative system", published in the in-house journal of the Academy of Military Science.<sup>51</sup> The article is an analysis of the role of the General Staff, particularly in WW2; its utility today and its future. Its main thrust is to counteract what Gareyev perceives to be a growing tendency in Russian military theory to ignore Russian military past and traditions in favour of blindly copying the experience of the West. Gareyev emphasised that the experience of the West could prove useful to Russia, but the state had its own past to examine and use,

especially in the area of military command and control. Following a brief analysis of the standard Soviet work on the role of the General Staff – B M Shaposhnikov's "*Mozg armii*" (1927-1929) – Gareyev stated that:

“the effectiveness of the work of the General Staff depends a lot on the position occupied by the Chief of the General Staff in the overall system of military command and control. In war time, he immediately becomes the Chief of Staff of *Stavka* and becomes the fundamental figure through which are solved the most important military questions. In connection with this, in peace time, the Chief of the General Staff carries out all operational work in preparing for war ... In order to successfully complete these tasks, the following two fundamental conditions must be observed: first of all, the Chief of the General Staff must have the right to decide on the corresponding operational-strategic and organisational issues; secondly, subordinate to the Minister of Defence in peace time, at the same time, he must have the possibility, on issues of planning and preparing for war, of directly addressing the person who, in war time, is predetermined to become the Supreme Commander-in-Chief.”<sup>52</sup>

Thus, Gareyev was making a case for the CGS to have direct access to the Commander-in-Chief (even if under fairly strict conditions), placing himself at odds both with Ivanov's own stance on the issue and the woeful experience of Russia's past (particularly 1905-1908), which he completely ignored in the article. He made a passing reference to the earlier dispute involving Sergeev and Kvashnin, but simply brushed that aside, claiming that it had been “exaggerated” in the press and should not be taken as the basis for “placing in doubt” the necessity for a General Staff.<sup>53</sup> Gareyev's second article, examining the roles of the General Staff and the US Chiefs of Staff committee was more or less a condensed version of the earlier, more detailed piece. Here he argued against Russia creating its own version of the US Chiefs of Staff committee: it was not appropriate, given Russia's own historical record. It was important that the General Staff should not be an “independent, torn, bureaucratic, organ, [separate] from the Armed Forces, but organically part [of the Armed Forces], living one and the same life and [sharing] the same interests of the Armed Forces.”<sup>54</sup>

The debate was taken a stage further following an article by the respected military academic Lieutenant-General (retired) Professor S A Bogdanov, one of the most prominent members of the General Staff's think tank, the Centre of Military-Strategic Research (*TsVSI*). Bogdanov argued that “at the present moment in time, the General Staff has practically no influence on preparations for future war neither by the state, nor by ‘other troops’, military formations and organs of the Russian Federation”.<sup>55</sup> Bogdanov further argued that such a situation should not have arisen, given the presidential decree outlining the functions of the MoD and the General Staff issued on 11<sup>th</sup> November 1998:

“in the approved presidential Statute on the GSh [General Staff] there is a clear definition of the General Staff – it is the central military command and control organ and the fundamental organ for the operational control of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, co-ordinating the activity of all troops ... military formations and organs carrying out tasks in the sphere of defence.”<sup>56</sup>

Couch for the MoD or the CGS? The Russian Ministry of Defence  
& The General Staff 2001-2004

But as he himself was forced to concede, the presidential statute did not clearly delineate the command and control functions between the MoD and the General Staff. Solving this particular issue would lead

“to an increase in the centralisation of the command and control of the Armed Forces in questions of their use ... the experience of the past decade proves conclusively that in every war, the adoption of political, diplomatic, economic and purely military, as well as information-psychological measures, are not left to chance. The co-ordination of all these actions, the choice of time, place, sequence and their level of execution can only be undertaken by the strategic military command and control organ, that is the General Staff.”<sup>57</sup>

Thus, in his opinion, it was a matter of “urgent necessity” that the state adopt a new law on “the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation”, clarifying once and for all the functions and inter-action of every one of the country’s organs operating in the areas of national defence and security.<sup>58</sup>

Was the tide turning against Ivanov towards the end of 2002? Certainly according to a number of media reports, the answer was a decisive “yes”. “Sources” in the “Russian military establishment”, according to one article, were once again stating in December 2002, that Ivanov was soon to be transferred “to a new job”, noting the increased “activity of the Chief of the General Staff in the apparatus” of the military establishment.<sup>59</sup> The article also noted how the core of Ivanov’s team had now been effectively “neutralised” either by the direct interference of Kvashnin himself, or by the nature of events. The article noted that Ivanov’s core support consisted of people like Kudelina, Kormil’tsev and Puzanov, and by looking at each individually, sought to describe how their effectiveness had been reduced since Ivanov became Minister of Defence in March 2001. Kudelina was no longer prepared to act “independently” and, when Kvashnin “interfered” – for instance in his decision to extract 1 billion rubles to build a new road link to the Far East, she did not veto the decision – “she did not even dare to protest”; the continuing disorder in the Ground Forces, mass desertions, shootings, etc, also reduced the effectiveness of Kormil’tsev who, in the words of the article, could be removed from his post “at any minute”. Last but by no means least, Puzanov, in order “to avoid any unpleasantness” had “sunk to the bottom” and was not prepared to stand up against Kvashnin.<sup>60</sup>

A month later, another report appeared, which seemed to confirm that Kvashnin’s star had been in the ascendant in 2002 and that he would have been in line for another significant award/promotion, had it not been for the crash of the Mi-26 helicopter in Chechnya in August, killing 119 Russian service personnel. Noting his many and varied public appearances throughout the latter half of 2002, the report stated that the Kremlin had considered awarding him either his second Gold Star (Hero of the Russian Federation) or the rank of Marshal of the Russian Federation. Neither was awarded, because of the crash (apparently, his preference had been for Marshal of the Russian Federation, a useful title to have, especially remembering that the previous Minister of Defence, Sergeyev, was one).<sup>61</sup>

Whilst Kvashnin may have succeeded in curbing Ivanov’s influence in certain areas, Ivanov was still very much in control of the day-to-day running of the Armed Forces. Throughout 2002, the power of the Minister of Defence over the senior military – and, to a certain extent, his lack of power – were demonstrated on a

number of occasions: following a spate of helicopter “downings” in Chechnya, Ivanov removed the Chief of Army Aviation, Colonel-General V Pavlov, and strongly censured a further 11 senior generals, including Colonel-General Kormil'tsev, C-in-C, Ground Forces; Colonel-General G Troshev, Commander of North Caucasus MD; and his Chief of Staff, first deputy Commander, V Bulgakov.<sup>62</sup>

Sticking with the Caucasus, in September 2002 he increased his profile still further – and did himself no harm in the eyes of many Russians, in and out of uniform – when, on an official visit to the USA, Ivanov warned that Russia would launch “preventive strikes against bandit formations based in Georgia”, unless Georgia took steps against the “bandit formations” in question.<sup>63</sup> Similarly, in November 2002 Ivanov publicly supported moves for the return of the five-pointed star to the banners of the Russian Armed Forces and the re-naming of Volgograd to Stalingrad. For his part, Putin was quite amenable to the suggestion about the star, but not the re-naming of Volgograd, so the first was adopted but not the second.<sup>64</sup> Whilst these steps by themselves do not amount to much, they show that Ivanov is ready, like any politician, to think about his standing in the eyes of the electorate and will react to the popular mood. He has to ensure that his public profile is high, at least partly in order to continue persuading the great mass of the Russian public – especially those in uniform – that Russia is creating a mobile, creditable, military force able to respond to security threats to the Russian Federation, from wherever they may emanate.

However, in December 2002, Ivanov faced a further challenge to his authority when he attempted to move Troshev from command of the North Caucasus MD to the Siberian MD, recently shown to be the most combat effective of all Russia's MDs. It was a straight swap – with the Siberian MD Commander, General V Boldyrev, to take control of the North Caucasus. This was not a demotion, simply a continuation of a tradition, both within the Soviet and Russian Armed Forces, of rotation of commanders, thereby spreading experience and military skills over a broader base. Troshev publicly refused to go and, at the end of the day, was forced to take early retirement.<sup>65</sup> In the post-USSR history of the Russian Armed Forces, this was the first instance of such a public refusal to obey a direct order from the MoD.<sup>66</sup>

Troshev's refusal to obey the order was much less to do with his military career and much more to do with his political ambitions - there was even speculation that, as a former Grozny bairn himself, he had designs on the presidency of Chechnya.<sup>67</sup> It would be a safe assumption to make that Troshev was already eyeing up his future career and decided that, unlike General A Lebed', a transfer to Siberia would take him too far out the “Moscow loop”. The Troshev-Ivanov affair is still too recent to analyse properly. However, it was a public challenge to Ivanov's authority, worsened by the fact that it came from a senior military commander in the field. Troshev's quiet rejection would have been bad enough, but a public refusal made it common knowledge that a war hero – as many Russians perceive Troshev to be, because of his prominent role particularly in the Second Chechen War – was refusing to obey a direct order from the Defence Minister. This put the whole affair into a very special category. Political ambitions aside, it is interesting that Troshev felt it necessary to make his protest in such a public way. He was flying in the face of the old Russian military maxim, “orders are not debated, they are carried out”.

For what it's worth, the affair lends itself to speculation based on two important points: first of all, Troshev's challenge to Ivanov's authority failed. Ivanov did not

Couch for the MoD or the CGS? The Russian Ministry of Defence  
& The General Staff 2001-2004

back down – no doubt an indication of the support he enjoyed from Putin – leading to Troshev having to quit the Army; secondly, given the close professional relationship between Kvashnin and Troshev, it increases speculation that Troshev was being used, possibly unwittingly, as a “stalking horse”, that the refusal enjoyed the support of Kvashnin himself, forever keen to challenge Ivanov’s authority. However, Kvashnin is going to have to employ other techniques to discredit the Minister. Kvashnin will be well aware that lessons are to be learnt not only from victories, but also from defeats.

At the very end of 2002, Kvashnin’s “campaign” to undermine the standing of Ivanov attracted support from a man who himself was not averse to interfering in the country’s political process, General I Rodionov, who had been one of Yeltsin’s Ministers of Defence. In *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* in December 2002, Rodionov remarked that Ivanov, was “a victim of circumstances. He is working in something which is not his business.”<sup>68</sup> Rodionov criticised not only Ivanov but also Putin, for choosing Ivanov in the first place: “It is obvious that the president simply wants reliable comrades in key positions in the power structures. He’s not thinking how, at the end of the day, this structure will look after several years of such leadership. The situation in the country is complicated, but Ivanov is not where he should be.”<sup>69</sup>

Rodionov’s criticisms seem both unnecessary and born out of a grievance towards arguably Russia’s most successful Defence Minister to date. Whilst the previous incumbents of the post have hardly excelled, Ivanov has been consistent in his drive towards gradually changing the Armed Forces to meet the realistic threats to Russia’s security, rather than unnecessarily hanging on to the fears and force structures of the past.<sup>70</sup> By the time Rodionov had published his criticism, Ivanov had been in post for just under three years. If Ivanov stays in post until 2008, then he will be the continuously longest-serving minister in Putin’s cabinet.<sup>71</sup> For his part, Rodionov was Minister of Defence for approximately a year and achieved very little in the way of concrete military reform.

By the middle of 2003, at least according to one poll carried out by the respected National Public Opinion Research Centre, Ivanov was the most popular politician amongst the military – he polled an 11% popularity rating. In contrast, Putin only polled 1%. Admittedly, the poll was only conducted amongst 300 soldiers in Moscow, but it is at least partial evidence that serving soldiers, unlike the *generalitet* and those who belong to retired officers’ organisations, may be more appreciative and supportive of his medium-to-long-term aims.<sup>72</sup> The poll does show that Ivanov has been at least partially successful in convincing a section of the Russian Armed Forces that he is “good” for them, that Ivanov is winning over some of the hearts and minds of the people who should mean most to him. In this context, a completely unscientific opinion poll, carried out by the respected military newspaper *Nezavisimoye Voyennoye Obozreniye* recently on its Internet site asked its readers: “in your view, who should occupy the post of Minister of Defence of Russia?” The overwhelming majority voted in favour of Ivanov (45.7%); next came General Andrei Nikolayev (16.8%); Kvashnin tied with the C-in-C of the Russian Navy, Admiral V Kuroyedov (5.2.% each); the rest of the voting was for other candidates not detailed.<sup>73</sup>

October 2003 was another important month. Not only did it see the publication of the latest development plans for the Russian Armed Forces – “Actual tasks in the development of the Russian Armed Forces” – but it also witnessed an interesting

meeting of the “leading staff of the Ministry of Defence”, held at the beginning of the month, a few days before the public launch of the “Actual tasks ...”. There can be little doubt that at the meeting Putin was informed about the content of the plans in advance of their public presentation, which he did not attend.<sup>74</sup>

First to address the assembly was Putin who, as tradition dictated, arrived 20 minutes late. He admitted that the process of constantly cutting back on the size of the Armed Forces was now at an end and that Russia had reached the level of “defence sufficiency”. Putin stated that the size of the Armed Forces should not fall much below 1 million men. He admitted that the process of constantly cutting back over the past decade had been “difficult and painful”, but that was now in the past.<sup>75</sup> He also told the audience that the country’s Armed Forces should be ready “to repulse the threats of tomorrow, and not simply wars of the type of the last century and that is why the combat capabilities of the army, its strategy and tactics have to be flexible, adaptable to everything new.”<sup>76</sup> Putin also talked about the need for “more attention to be paid to studying the very nature and existing experience of contemporary military conflicts...It is obvious that there are tasks here for our own military science, for the analytical services of the General Staff. This is serious work for the command staff, which must adequately and operationally introduce this knowledge into the practical training of the troops.”<sup>77</sup> One can see why Ivanov later felt emboldened to tackle the General Staff head on and reclaim overall control of the country’s Armed Forces. Whilst Putin cannot be accused of launching a direct attack either on the General Staff or on Kvashnin personally – such an attack would have meant the end of Kvashnin’s military career – nevertheless there is enough here to have rung a few alarm bells: perhaps the Supreme Commander-in-Chief was not 100% happy with the way the General Staff was analysing recent experience of military conflict? Just in case that hint also left Kvashnin cold, the conclusion to be drawn was that such analysis was not for academic purposes, but lessons learnt were to be incorporated into the practical training of officers and men. It is hard to understand how Kvashnin, used to playing political games, did not prepare adequately for more criticism to be made a few months later.

Second to address the meeting was Ivanov, who delivered a detailed and considered report on the modernisation, development and use of the Armed Forces. In a power-point presentation, the most important of his utterances were flashed up in red letters on four screens behind him, so that the “generals could better see what was going on, or better understand the thought of what was being said”.<sup>78</sup> During the 10<sup>th</sup> minute of Ivanov’s presentation, Putin called Kvashnin to him. Apparently, the interruption took place when Ivanov was discussing the nature of future war and the importance of air power in future military conflict: “the enemy will not come to us in tanks. He will arrive either in planes, or he will deliver his weapons from the air.”<sup>79</sup> (This is logical but, given Kvashnin’s career in tank troops, may also have been a dig at the CGS.) In conclusion, Ivanov evaluated the military threat to Russia as not being “great ... not one of the conflict situations beyond Russia’s territorial borders constitutes a direct military threat to the security of the country”.<sup>80</sup> At the end of Ivanov’s address, Putin held a separate meeting with the Commanders of the MDs and the Fleets “to discuss various issues in relation to the functioning of the military units”. Ivanov and Kvashnin also took part in the meeting.<sup>81</sup>

## Conclusion

In the immediate run-up to January 2004's conference, there were thus a number of instances clearly showing the negative nature of the working relationship between Kvashnin and Ivanov, centred not just on a personality clash but also on different perceptions of the roles of the General Staff and the MoD, and the overall strategic direction of the Armed Forces. Not long after the January conference, in an interview with journalists, Ivanov admitted that he saw no need "for personnel changes in the Ministry".<sup>82</sup> Obviously, Ivanov is happy with the team he has at the Ministry, but does this necessarily include the team at the General Staff?

How long the current state of affairs can last is difficult to predict. Kvashnin's ambitions to sit in the ministerial chair do not look like abating; nor does Ivanov's intention not to vacate it. The control and direction of military development may therefore begin to suffer. Ivanov clearly wants to regain overall control, the ministry being responsible for the financing, administering and long-term development of the Armed Forces; and the General Staff for issues of strategic planning, operations and assessing the future military threat. With his political ambitions never formally expressed but always behind his actions, Kvashnin has striven to be never too far away from Putin's central circle; he is not content with being the longest serving CGS since the re-formation of the Russian Armed Forces, but he is running out of time to make enough mischief to have Putin replace Ivanov with him.

Kvashnin is not content with being CGS, it's as simple as that. His long-running dispute with Marshal Sergeyev proves that, as well as his relationship with both presidents – securing agreement from Yeltsin that he could approach him directly; and being, apparently, one of the key players in Putin's first presidential campaign team.<sup>83</sup> Putin's continuing tolerance of the fractious relationship between the two men may be because he has two competent officials in top posts neither of whom, even if they have major differences, deserves to be sacked. If Kvashnin had been forced to take the fall in the earlier dispute with Sergeyev, Putin may have reckoned that such a powerful and disaffected voice outside the political establishment would have created more trouble than it was worth. His assessment may now simply be based on political expediency: better to have Kvashnin inside the establishment, rather than run the risk of him becoming the focus of real military opposition in the future. Soviet/Russian politicians have always unduly worried about the "Bonaparte figure" appearing from beyond the horizon, riding on a white charger, ready to "save" Russia in its hour of peril, and it could be that Putin sees Kvashnin as being a future rallying figure for disaffected military, if military development does not go according to plan. Experience of General A Lebed' is still fresh in the memory of the body politic and there are a lot of men in uniform in powerful positions in the state apparatus.<sup>84</sup>

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Vadim Solov'yev, "Kontseptsiy", *Nezavisimoye Voyennoye Obozreniye*, No 4 (304), 6-12 February 2004.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Solov'yev, *ibid.*; A Vitkovskiy, "Nasha armiya. Sergei Ivanov, ministr oborony Rossii: korennaya perestroyka zavershena, perekhodim k normal'noy sluzhbe", *Parlamentskaya Gazeta*, 27 January 2004.

<sup>4</sup> For more on this, see Dr S J Main, "It's the thought process that first went to war", September 2000, ADVAB 1122, CSRC.

- 
- 5 S Ivanov, "Vystupleniye Ministra oborony Rossiyskoy Federatsii C B Ivanova na zasedanii Akademii voyennykh nauk", 24 January 2004, ([http://www.mil.ru/print/releases/2004/01/214203\\_47779.shtml](http://www.mil.ru/print/releases/2004/01/214203_47779.shtml)).
- 6 Ivanov, "Vystupleniye ...", *ibid.*
- 7 *Ibid.*
- 8 *Ibid.*
- 9 *Ibid.*
- 10 Colonel-General A S Skvortsov, "General'nyy shtab v sisteme organov tsentral'nogo voyennogo upravleniya strany", *Voyenno-Istoricheskiy Zhurnal*, No 1, 2003, 2-11; 9.
- 11 *Ibid.*, 9.
- 12 General A Kvashnin, "Shtaby v usloviyakh reformirovaniya Vooruzhennykh Sil", *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 24 November 1998.
- 13 Ivanov, "Vystupleniye ...", *ibid.*
- 14 Colonel-General A S Chechevatov, "Voyennaya akademiya General'nogo shtaba: proshloye i sovremennost'", *Voyenno-Istoricheskiy Zhurnal*, No 11, 2002, 13-21; 20.
- 15 Ivanov, "Vystupleniye ...", *ibid.* For the historical background, see Lieutenant-General (reserve) V T Smirnov, "Zarozhdeniye i stanovleniye General'nogo shtaba", *Voyenno-Istoricheskiy Zhurnal*, No 1, 2003, 22-28; A Kavtaradze, "Strasti po Genshtabu", *Soldat Otechestva*, 18 February 1995. According to Kavtaradze: "the defeat in the 1904-1905 Russo-Japanese War caused a storm of protest from all sections of Russian society. Fierce criticism was unleashed against the upper echelons of power – the Tsar ... the government, the Army and, in particular, the General Staff ... In September 1904, two notes were sent to Nicholas II, concerning the creation of a General Staff. In the first, General F F Palitsyn proposed ... the creation of an independent – of the War Ministry – command and control organ, the head of which would be directly subordinate to the Supreme Commander-in-Chief of the Army – the Tsar ... In June 1905, the post of Chief of the General Staff was established (occupied, naturally, by Palitsyn) ... The appearance in the War Ministry of two equal figures (the War Minister, responsible for military-administrative matters and personnel ... the Chief of the General Staff, whose competence included preparing the country for war, in a strategic sense) created, in the words of the Quartermaster-General, Yu N Danilov, '[an] exceptionally ugly and even threatening situation, in relation to the country's defence capability. The situation worsened because the War Minister, as before, in charge of the War Ministry's budget could, on contentious issues, block all the plans and proposals of the Chief of the General Staff. In November 1908, the Main directorate of the General Staff was incorporated into the War Ministry and its Chief made subordinate to the War Minister (only in certain particularly important instances was the right preserved to the Chief of the General Staff to report personally to the Tsar and only in the presence of the War Minister)."
- 16 Ivanov, "Vystupleniye ...", *ibid.*
- 17 For an analysis of Kvashnin's relationship with the Russian media as a whole, see Ya Firsov, "Ob'yekt chernogo piara", *Nezavisimoye Voyennoye Obozreniye*, No 25 (295), 26 July-1 August 2002.
- 18 I Safonov, "Razbor poletov. Sergei Ivanov otkryl ogon' po Genshtabu", *Kommersant-DAILY*, 26 January 2004.
- 19 N Poroskov, "Bezmozglaya' armiya", *Vremya Novostey*, 26 January 2004.
- 20 D Litovkin, "Tak govoril Mol'tke", *Izvestiya*, 26 January 2004.
- 21 "Vystupleniye nachal'nika General'nogo shtaba VS RF generala armii A V Kvashnina na obshchem sobranii (konferentsii) Akademii voyennykh nauk", *Vestnik Akademii voyennykh nauk*, No 1 (6), 8-13; 8.
- 22 *Ibid.*, 9.
- 23 *Ibid.*
- 24 *Ibid.*
- 25 *Ibid.*
- 26 *Ibid.*, 10.
- 27 *Ibid.*, 11.
- 28 *Ibid.*
- 29 Yu Tret'yakov, "Sergei Ivanov reshil polozhit' konets dvoevlastiyu v voennom vedomstve", *Trud*, 27 January 2004.

Couch for the MoD or the CGS? The Russian Ministry of Defence  
& The General Staff 2001-2004

- 30 Poroskov, *ibid.*
- 31 Ukaz prezidenta Rossiyskoy Federatsii 'o ministre oborony Rossiyskoy Federatsii', ot 09.03.04g, No 320, 10 March 2004 ([http://www.mil.ru/print/releases/2004/03/101332\\_5013.shtml](http://www.mil.ru/print/releases/2004/03/101332_5013.shtml)).
- 32 G Bennett, "S B Ivanov, the new Russian Defence Minister", CSRC Occasional Brief No 81, March 2001.
- 33 ORT, 29 March 2001.
- 34 D Safonov, S Babayeva, "Dve nedeli do prikaza", *Izvestiya*, 10 April 2001.
- 35 Colonel-General N Kormil'tsev, "Rossiyskoy armii osnova", *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 21 April 2001; "Povyshen status glavnokomanduyushchego", *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 28 April 2001; "Polnomochiya Genshtaba ogranicheny", *Profil'*, No 17, 7 May 2001. The journalist M Khodarenok also advanced this argument: "recent personnel changes in the Ministry of Defence signify a significant curb on the possibilities and rights of the Chief of the General Staff. The real power of the latter over the Armed Forces has been significantly reduced." (M Khodarenok, "V Minoborony razgorelas' kadrovaya revoliutsiya", *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 29 April 2001.) According to a number of reports, it was Kvashnin's decision to abolish Ground Forces in the first place, in order to get rid of its Commander-in-Chief at that time, General V Semenov, perceived by Kvashnin as a potential rival for the post of Minister of Defence (V Semiryaga, "Glavnaya izvilina armii. Iz-za intrig generala Kvashnina stradayet oboronosposobnost' Rossii", *Moskovskiy Komsomolets*, 28 March 2002; I Korotchenko, "Shtrikhi k portretu nachal'nika Genshtaba", *Nezavisimoye Voyennoye Obozreniye*, No 7 (277), 1-14 March 2002). For a more detailed and contemporary analysis of the impact of Kvashnin's reform of the Ground Forces, see V Georgiyev, "Reforma Sukhoputnykh voysk ne budet svedena tol'ko k ikh sokrashcheniyu", *Nezavisimoye Voyennoye Obozreniye*, No 11 (985), 20-26 March 1998.
- 36 Kormil'tsev, "Rossiyskoy ...", *ibid.*
- 37 V Georgiyev, "Novyye lyudi v Ministerstve oborony", *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 17 May 2001; I Korotchenko, "General'nyy shtab zhdut peremeny", *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 7 June 2001.
- 38 A A Mukhin, "Piterskoye okruzheniye prezidenta", M.2003, p183.
- 39 S Mitrofanov, "Kvashnin – predatel?" SMI.ru., 11 February 2002, (<http://www.smi.ru/pint/?id=8149>).
- 40 V Semiryaga, "Glavnaya izvilina armii. Iz-za intrig generala Kvashnina stradayet oboronosposobnost' Rossii," *Moskovskiy Komsomolets*, 28 March 2002.
- 41 Ye Kryutkov, "General vesya Rusi", *Versiya*, 1 April 2002.
- 42 Not an unbiased source, but in his memoirs Colonel-General G Troshev has stated that "his military successes in the Chechen campaigns" will help place Kvashnin "in the annals of the warrior-defenders of the Fatherland", (G Troshev, "Moya vojna", M.2001, p257).
- 43 Kryutkov, *ibid.*
- 44 A Rekova, "Otvergnutyy Kvashnin", SMI.ru, 31 May 2002, (<http://www.smi.ru/print/?id=472552>).
- 45 *Ibid.*
- 46 *Ibid.*
- 47 *Ibid.*
- 48 Unidentified source quoted by Rekova.
- 49 *Ibid.*
- 50 General A I Gribkov, "General'nyy shtab: istoriya i perspektivy", *Voyenno-Istoricheskiy Zhurnal*, No 9, 2001, 4-14; 12.
- 51 General M Gareyev, "Rol' shtabov v sisteme voyennogo upravleniya", *Vestnik Akademii Voyennykh Nauk*, No 1 (2), 2003, 2-13. Although the article was not published until 2003, it is obvious that it was written in 2002: the references alone confirm this. Gareyev made the main report at the January 2004 conference but more or less repeated what he had already written in this article. For those interested, his address to the conference can be found in *Vestnik Akademii voyennykh nauk*, No 1 (6), 2004, 22-32.
- 52 Gareyev, *ibid.*, 3.
- 53 *Ibid.*, 8.

- 54 General M Gareyev, "Genshtab protiv Komiteta nachal'nikov shtabov", *Nezavisimoye Voyennoye Obozreniye*, No 23 (292), 12-18 July 2002.
- 55 Lieutenant-General (retired) S A Bogdanov, "Uiyti ot slepogo podrazhaniya", *Nezavisimoye Voyennoye Obozreniye*, No 25 (295), 26 July-1 August 2002.
- 56 Ibid.
- 57 Ibid.
- 58 Bogdanov, ibid.
- 59 I Korotchenko, "Intrigi po-general'ski", *Nezavisimoye Voyennoye Obozreniye*, No 44 (314), 20-26 December 2002.
- 60 Korotchenko, ibid.
- 61 "Osnovnaya problema Ivanova – Kvashnin", *Stringer* information agency (<http://www.stringer-news.ru/Publication.mhtml?PubID=1752&Part=37>).
- 62 V Pribolyvskiy, "Ivanov Sergei Borisovich. Ministr oborony Rossiyskoy Federatsii", *Kompromat.Ru*, 23 February 2003 (<http://www.kompromat.ru/main/ivanovserg/a.htm>); "Troshev podnyal bunt", 17 December 2002, *Gazeta.Ru* ([http://www.gazeta.ru/2002/12/17/kz\\_m71725.shtml](http://www.gazeta.ru/2002/12/17/kz_m71725.shtml)); "Putin snyal generala Trosheva s dolzhnosti komanduyushchego voyskami Severo-Kavkazskogo voyennogo okruga", *Novosti Rossii*, 18 December 2002 (<http://www.newsru.com/russia/18dec2002/troshev.html>).
- 63 Pribylovskiy, ibid.
- 64 Ibid.
- 65 Ibid.
- 66 There had been a number of instances post-1992 when, out of the public light, senior Russian officers had turned down new postings/appointments. In 1994 Colonel-General E Vorob'yev refused to take over control of the Unified Group of Troops in the North Caucasus at the beginning of the first Chechen War, but none of the previous military "refuseniks" had gone public the way Troshev did ("Putin snyal ...", ibid.)
- 67 Ibid.
- 68 *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 25 December 2002.
- 69 Ibid.
- 70 There have been a number of signs of disquiet both from the men in uniform and elsewhere, to Ivanov's stewardship of the Ministry of Defence: Pribylovskiy quotes the example of a number of (mainly, but not wholly) retired officer organisations in February 2003 calling for a motion of "no-confidence" to be passed on Ivanov. Similarly, the Union of Right Forces was reported as having collected 12,000 signatures for a petition to be sent to Putin to have Ivanov dismissed (A Novikova, "12,000 signatures collected on petition for Sergei Ivanov's dismissal", translation, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 27 May 2003).
- 71 Even at that, Ivanov will only have served slightly more than 1/3 as long as the other significant War Minister/military reformer in Russia's history, D A Milyutin, in charge of Russia's War Ministry from 1861-1881 (Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya, Vol 5, 288-289, M.1978).
- 72 M Khodarenok, "The military does not like its leaders", *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 4 June 2003.
- 73 "Detali", *Nezavisimoye Voyennoye Obozreniye*, No 14 (374), 16-22 April 2002.
- 74 I Yegorov, "Reforma. Putin razdelil Ministerstvo oborony", *Gazeta*, 3 October 2003.
- 75 Ibid.
- 76 "Voyennoye stroitel'stvo. Gotovnost' k otrazheniyu zavtrashnikh ugroz", *Krasnyy Voin*, 22 November 2003.
- 77 Ibid.
- 78 Yegorov, ibid.
- 79 Ibid.
- 80 Ibid.
- 81 "Voyennoye stroitel'stvo ...", *Krasnyy Voin*, 22 November 2003.
- 82 "Glava Minoborony RF ne vidit osnovaniy dlya kadrovyykh peremen v vedomstve", *strana.RU*, 28 January 2004 (<http://www.strana.ru/print/205804.html>).
- 83 "Generalny peschanykh kar'er", *Stringer*, June 2001, 4-7; 4.
- 84 At the present moment in time, 7 regional governors are former "men in uniform", the latest being the former airborne forces Commander, Colonel-General G Shpak, elected governor of Ryazan oblast' in March 2004. A Borodyanskiy, O Sviridova, "Ryazanskiy

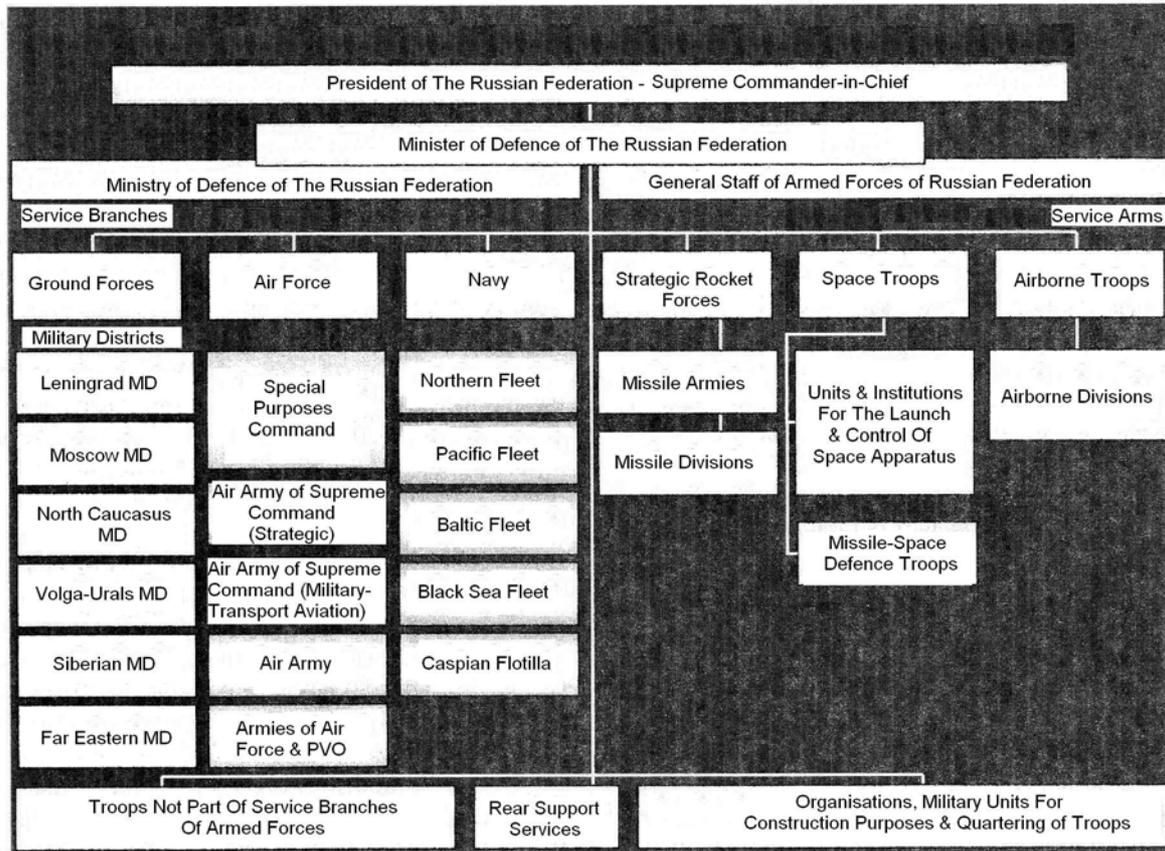
Couch for the MoD or the CGS? The Russian Ministry of Defence  
& The General Staff 2001-2004

---

proryv' generala Shpaka", *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 30 March 2004; S Migalin, "General'y shturmuyut regiony", *Nezavisimoye Voyennoye Obozreniye*, No 13 (373), 9-15 April 2004.

## Appendix 1

### Structure of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation



Source: *Vestnik Akademii Voyennykh Voisk*, No 16, 2004, p27.

## **Want to Know More ...?**

See: General A Kvashnin & General M Gareyev, "It's the Thought Process that First Went to War", *Krasnaya Zvezda*, No 81, 4 May 2000, p1, translated by Dr Steven J Main, Conflict Studies Research Centre, Advab 1122, <http://www.da.mod.uk/csrfc>

*Russian Military Reform 1992-2002*, Anne C Aldis & Roger N McDermott (Eds), Frank Cass, 2003

### **Disclaimer**

The views expressed are those of the  
Author and not necessarily those of the  
UK Ministry of Defence

ISBN 1-904423-72-8

**Published By:**

**Defence Academy of the**  
**United Kingdom**

**Conflict Studies Research Centre**

Haig Road  
Camberley  
Surrey  
GU15 4PQ  
England

Telephone: (44) 1276 412995  
Fax: (44) 1276 686880  
Email: [csrc@da.mod.uk](mailto:csrc@da.mod.uk)  
<http://www.da.mod.uk/csrc>

**ISBN 1-904423-72-8**