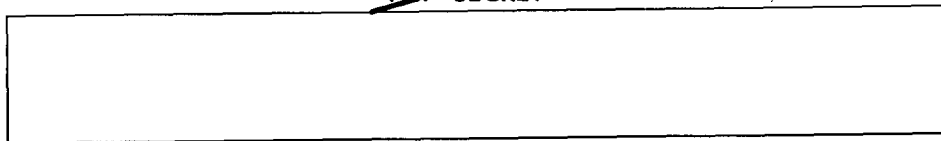


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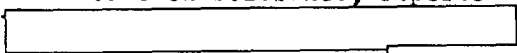
14 July 1976

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Director of Central Intelligence
FROM : William W. Wells
Deputy Director for Operations
SUBJECT : MILITARY THOUGHT (USSR): The Question
of Selecting the Axis of the Main Attack
in an Operation

1. The enclosed Intelligence Information Special Report is part of a series now in preparation based on the SECRET USSR Ministry of Defense publication Collection of Articles of the Journal 'Military Thought'. This article is a comment on a previous article concerning the selection of the axis for the main attack in an operation. It expresses disagreement with the employment of nuclear strikes on one axis while troop actions are being carried out against weak points or breaches in adjacent axes, pointing out that this method will slow down an offensive. The author emphasizes the need for proper planning to the entire depth of an offensive against the enemy's main grouping. This article appeared in Issue No. 2 (69) for 1963.



2. Because the source of this report is extremely sensitive, this document should be handled on a strict need-to-know basis within recipient agencies. For ease of reference, reports from this publication have been assigned



William W. Wells



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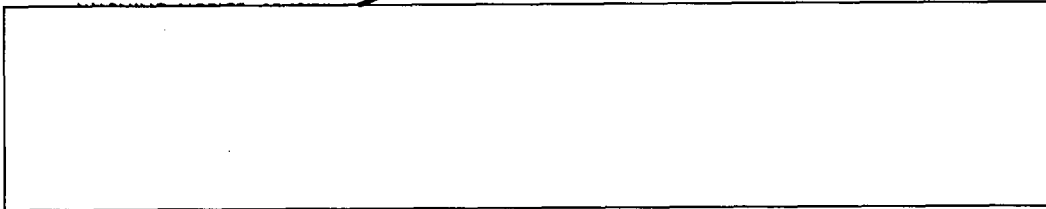
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Intelligence Information Special Report

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COUNTRY USSR



DATE OF INFO. Mid-1963

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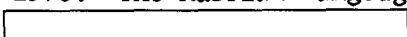
MILITARY THOUGHT (USSR): The Question of Selecting the Axis of the Main Attack in an Operation

SOURCE Documentary

Summary:

The following report is a translation from Russian of an article which appeared in Issue No. 2 (69) for 1963 of the SECRET USSR Ministry of Defense publication Collection of Articles of the Journal 'Military Thought'. The author of this article is Colonel I. Vorobyev. This article is a comment on a previous article concerning the selection of the axis for the main attack in an operation. It expresses disagreement with the employment of nuclear strikes on one axis while troop actions are being carried out against weak points or breaches in adjacent axes, pointing out that this method will slow down an offensive. The author emphasizes the need for proper planning to the entire depth of an offensive against the enemy's main grouping. End of Summary

Comment:

The SECRET version of Military Thought was published three times annually and was distributed down to the level of division commander. It reportedly ceased publication at the end of 1970. The Russian-language version of this article was disseminated as 





The Question of Selecting the Axis of the
Main Attack in an Operation

by
Colonel I. Vorobyev

This question, which is important to the theory and practice of the combat training of troops, has already been discussed in the military press, although Colonel V. Solovyev resolves it in a different manner.* The author puts forward a new principle -- "the spatial separation of nuclear weapons strikes and attacks of the ground forces" (p. 35). He attempts, as it were, to bring together two divergent points of view and concludes that it is advantageous to deliver massed nuclear strikes against the main grouping, but to target troop actions against weak points, gaps in the enemy's combat disposition, as a rule away from areas which had been subject to a massed nuclear attack. This ensures the high speed of an offensive.

We agree with the author's initial premise that the defender's main grouping usually is dispersed on a broad front and to a great depth. However, in our opinion, one should not conclude from this premise that it is advantageous for the attacker to deliver a massed nuclear strike on one axis, while at the same time concentrating the efforts of the ground forces groupings on another axis adjacent to it, because the goal of the employment of nuclear weapons and the goal of the troop actions in the offensive are identical. They are directed toward the total destruction of the main enemy grouping. It is possible to rapidly and effectively carry out the tasks of the operation only as a result of the combined employment of the means of destruction and the application of troop combat efforts which are united according to goal, place, and time.

The unity and close correlation between the employment of nuclear combat means and troop actions, of course, stem not from their equivalent roles in destroying the enemy, but, above all, from the fact that troop actions depend directly and immediately upon the reliability and completeness of the fire destruction of the defense. It is natural that the rate of advance of troops exploiting breaches formed as a result of the delivery of nuclear strikes, as well as ruptures and gaps in the defense, will be greatest namely on those axes where powerful nuclear strikes are

* Collection of Articles of the Journal 'Military Thought', No. 4 (65) for 1962.



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being delivered, and where the enemy is more disorganized, and his system of fire and his control and cooperation are disrupted.

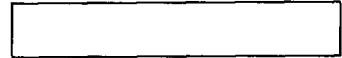
Under these circumstances one of the most important tasks of the attacking troops is to shorten the time gaps as much as possible between the moment the nuclear strikes are delivered and the time the troops move out toward the targets for destruction. But this is achieved with a movement along the shortest axes, deviations from which are possible only in order to bypass zones having high levels of radioactive contamination. Consequently, the combat efforts should not be separated in space but, on the contrary, they should be combined in location and time. It is namely with this goal in mind that airborne landing forces are dropped into areas destroyed by fire, and forward detachments and advance guards are sent out, while the tank large units operate on the axis of the main attack where they are capable of delivering swift and powerful attacks to a great depth in the enemy's defense.

If the nuclear strikes are delivered on one axis, and only the airborne landing forces are sent after them, but the attack grouping is operating on a different axis where the defense has not been sufficiently destroyed by fire, then, obviously, the rate at which the attack grouping advances will be slow. The enemy, having a certain amount of time, will be able to eliminate the aftereffects of the nuclear strike, will carry out a maneuver and put up organized resistance. As a result, the disjointedness of the efforts of the attacker plays into the hands of the defender and only impedes the achievement of high speeds in the offensive.

The author's apprehension that massive barriers and destruction will be created and vast zones of radioactive contamination will be formed in areas subjected to massed nuclear strikes on the axes of the troop offensive, is unfounded. The density of nuclear strikes cited on page 34 is not practically possible, inasmuch as such a great number of targets will not be found in an area of limited dimensions. But this is not the main thing. The selection of targets and methods for the delivery of nuclear strikes, the yields of the warheads and types of bursts, and in accordance with this, the nature of the expected destruction and contamination in the zone of the offensive -- all this is meticulously planned beforehand by the command. There is no doubt that in correctly selecting the targets of actions for the large units and units exploiting the results of nuclear strikes against the enemy's most important targets and the routes of their movement, the troops will be able to bypass zones of mass destruction.



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In our opinion, in the article, the concept concerning the weak and strong points in the enemy's defense, upon which, in the author's opinion, the selection of the axis for the main attack should depend, has not been clearly and convincingly delimited. The axis of the main attack in a modern operation is planned to its entire depth; the author, though, discusses mainly the primary place for applying the troops' efforts.

Analyzing the experience of troop exercises, it is readily noticed that the main attack is always targeted against the enemy's main grouping. In all instances, the attacker will strive to select the crucial link in the enemy's defense and, having destroyed it, will achieve the goal of the operation in the shortest possible time and with the fewest losses. It was also like this in the past. In this respect the selection of the axes for the concentration of the main efforts, in our opinion, will not undergo substantial changes. The principal difference consists only in the fact that in the past the troops most often exploited the weak points in the enemy's defense which already existed at the beginning of the offensive. Under modern conditions weak points can be created in any sector of the defense and, above all, on the most heavily reinforced sector, by delivering nuclear strikes. This makes it possible to confront the enemy's main grouping which has been subjected to the massed action of nuclear weapons, with the goal of totally destroying it along the shortest axes, without losing time on long bypasses and envelopments.

