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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

20 October 1978

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Director of Central Intelligence
FROM : John N. McMahon
Deputy Director for Operations
SUBJECT : MILITARY THOUGHT (USSR): Methods of
Conducting a Front Offensive Operation
Using Means of Mass Destruction

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". The author of this article criticizes the then-current deliberate methods of conducting front offensive operations which did not properly exploit nuclear weapons, missiles, and aviation. Recognizing that nuclear weapons are decisive, he advocates the more efficient exploitation of nuclear strikes by committing, immediately following the initial strikes, airborne landing forces to destroy the surviving weak enemy groupings left on the battlefield, coupling this with a rapid follow-up by supporting motorized rifle and tank forces which penetrate deeply into the enemy disposition. Although nuclear strikes are the essential initial element, the author glides over the restraints imposed by the radioactive contamination of the battlefield. This article appeared in Issue No. 6 (67) for 1962.

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

John N. McMahon

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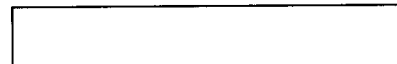
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Intelligence Information Special Report

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COUNTRY USSR



DATE OF INFO. Late 1962

DATE 20 October 1978

SUBJECT


MILITARY THOUGHT (USSR): Methods of Conducting a Front Offensive Operation Using Means of Mass Destruction

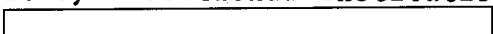
SOURCE Documentary

Summary:

The following report is a translation from Russian of an article which appeared in Issue No. 6 (67) for 1962 of the SECRET USSR Ministry of Defense publication Collection of Articles of the Journal "Military Thought". The author of this article, General-Leytenant D. Barinov, criticizes the then-current deliberate methods of conducting front offensive operations which did not properly exploit nuclear weapons, missiles, and aviation. Recognizing that nuclear weapons are decisive, he advocates the more efficient exploitation of nuclear strikes by committing, immediately following the initial strikes, airborne landing forces to destroy the surviving weak enemy groupings left on the battlefield, coupling this with a rapid follow-up by supporting motorized rifle and tank forces which penetrate deeply into the enemy disposition. Although nuclear strikes are the essential initial element, the author glides over the restraints imposed by the radioactive contamination of the battlefield.

End of Summary

 Comment:

General-Leytenant D. Barinov also contributed to "Some Problems in the Organization of Military Educational Institutions" in Issue No. 3 (64) for 1962 



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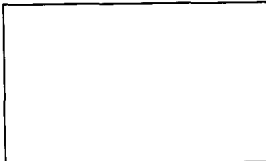
Methods of Conducting a Front Offensive Operation
Using Means of Mass Destruction

by
General-Leytenant D. BARINOV

Recently, many exercises and scientific conferences have been conducted in the troops; the periodical press has published a substantial number of articles attempting to find new methods of conducting offensive operations to a great depth at a rate of 100 kilometers or more per day. Although the general approach to organizing and conducting such operations has been worked out, a wide variety of fundamental problems have not yet been properly resolved in terms of modern conditions. There are numerous contradictory views on using tanks, employing missile units, and organizing troops.

In our view, as of the present time there have been no fundamental changes in battle as engaged in by ground forces subunits and even units, since the combat means with which they are equipped have remained the same, if somewhat modernized and improved. Ground forces subunits and units have become more mobile; their striking power has grown substantially through the use of large numbers of tanks and their fire power through the improvement of artillery. Battle has become more fluid; troop actions in battle develop along separate axes; other branch arms have begun to participate more in battle, which has made cooperation more complicated. More difficult conditions for troops conducting battle are created when they operate in zones of chemical or radioactive contamination. But on the whole, battle as engaged in by subunits and units continues to a large extent to be like the battles which were conducted during the Great Patriotic War.

A completely different picture is observed in the area of operational art. In recent years it has undergone significant changes. In our view, however, there are no grounds for resting on our achievements. What has happened is that in working out the matters of preparing and conducting front offensive operations in exercises, one observes a striving to adapt, to one degree or another, the old methods of conducting operations to



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the sharply increased capabilities of nuclear weapons, missile units, and aviation. In our view, the troops are still a long way from fully exploiting all of the capabilities of the new weapons, and as a result, considerably more than the objectively required forces, means, and time are being expended for the accomplishment of any given combat task.

Unquestionably, the role of nuclear weapons and their influence on troop actions have increased so greatly that it is these weapons which will basically decide the outcome of operations. For this to be so, however, it is necessary to exploit the effects of nuclear strikes much more efficiently than is being done at present.

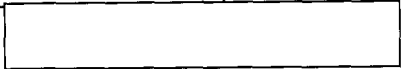
Indeed, is it possible, under conditions of the massed employment of missile/nuclear and other weapons by both sides, to conduct an offensive by the method of the successive overcoming of the enemy's defense lines? We believe not. By analyzing the views which have developed on conducting modern front offensive operations, especially in the initial period of a war, we can uncover a number of significant shortcomings.

As is known, nuclear strikes are delivered simultaneously to the full depth of the enemy's operational disposition and his actions are thereby paralyzed for a certain time, i.e., in addition to inflicting maximum damage on the enemy, favorable conditions for actions by the advancing front troops are established literally throughout the depth of his operational disposition. We have been failing to exploit these conditions and have been setting out, in the old manner, to "gnaw through" his first line with the first echelons of our armies and divisions and then building up their efforts for the purpose of negotiating subsequent lines. This method of action allows the enemy to eliminate the aftereffects of nuclear strikes and, having brought his troops to combat readiness, to offer increasing resistance on the subsequent lines. This in turn compels us to deliver repeated nuclear strikes during combat on the subsequent lines and to commit reserves in order to establish superiority in forces.

Another shortcoming in the conduct of a front offensive operation is that only limited forces conduct the battle or engagement at the beginning of the operation: the first echelons

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of the first-echelon divisions of the armies. Thus, when the front has available four armies (each comprising five divisions), in the majority of instances there will be three armies in the front's first echelon, three divisions in the first echelon of each army, and three regiments in the first echelon of each division. In all, of the 20 divisions making up the front, only three-fourths of nine divisions will participate at first in the initial engagement, while nine regiments of the first echelon divisions and 11 divisions of the second echelon, or two-thirds of the front forces, will remain idle.

The next shortcoming is that with the above-indicated procedure for the employment of front forces, it becomes possible for the enemy to deliver a retaliatory strike against the front's troops located in its operational depth, to disrupt their transportation lines, to destroy part of their nuclear attack means, to effect chemical and radioactive contamination of the terrain in the front's rear area, and with all of this not only to impede the timely commitment of the second echelons of the armies and the front to the engagement, but to disrupt it altogether.

Furthermore, during the successive seizing of the enemy defense lines, our troops will have to operate almost all of the time under conditions of continuous radioactive and chemical contamination of the terrain, while the defending enemy will be operating only partially under such conditions.

All of this shows that the methods being used to conduct front offensive operations are far from ideal and need to be revised. What should be the nature of these methods, then, in order to make possible the more complete and timely exploitation of all of the capabilities of nuclear and missile weapons?

In our view, the methods of conducting a front offensive operation must be based primarily on two conditions: the decisiveness of the operation's objectives and the superior quality of the technical equipping the front troops.

The decisiveness of the objectives of modern offensive operations is conditioned by the fact that in these operations such powerful combat means as nuclear weapons and missiles of different types are employed as well as aviation, which is today



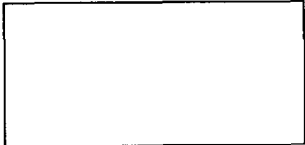


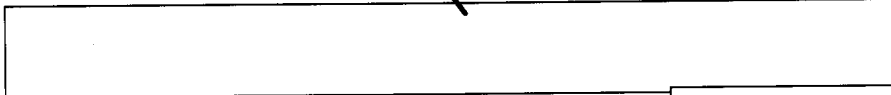
capable not only of creating favorable conditions for ground forces actions but also of accomplishing part of the tasks confronting front troops. Strikes by nuclear weapons, as is known, can be delivered simultaneously to the full depth of the impending front operation. But, in the initial period of a war, in addition to these strikes, crushing strikes will be delivered at the same time against the enemy by strategic nuclear means.

Under these conditions, and of course taking into account also the increasing defense capabilities of our probable enemies, the main task of the ground forces is to exploit with timeliness the effects of the nuclear strikes throughout the depth of the enemy's operational disposition, and also to deny him any opportunity to eliminate the aftereffects of these strikes. Immediately following the nuclear weapons strikes on the key centers of the enemy's operational disposition, the ground forces must, continuing the already-begun destruction of the enemy, commit their subunits and units to action against all enemy lines and key positions, at once seizing the full depth of his operational disposition. It is precisely this which will constitute the essence of the new method of conducting a modern offensive operation.

After the massed nuclear strikes against the enemy, the situation in the front zone will change sharply, and front troops will only have to deal with those enemy groupings which have survived the rout and are little capable of resisting. It is therefore necessary, directly following the nuclear strikes, to immediately land airborne landing forces, and amphibious landing forces on coastal axes, throughout the enemy depth; to seize the enemy's key positions; to prevent restoration of his troop control; to disrupt his effort to eliminate the effects of nuclear strikes; to paralyze any maneuvering of his troops in the zone of front actions; and to capture missile sites, nuclear munitions depots, airfields, transportation centers, and crossings over water obstacles.

After the airborne landing forces it is necessary to land stripped-down motorized rifle troops, using for this purpose transport aircraft, vertical take-off and landing aircraft, helicopters, and gliders. These troops must be landed in areas of nuclear strikes in such strength that they are in a condition, taking enemy losses into account, to successfully carry out the





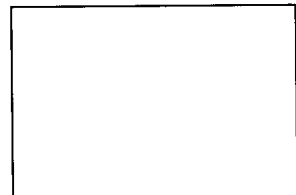
tasks confronting them. The troops to be landed should be taken from groupings set up in advance in keeping with the concept of the operation. They must be landed successively, by echelons, in the areas of combat actions within the operational depth, each time in conformity with the situation as it has developed at the moment of approach of the next echelon, which will spare them unnecessary maneuvering and gain them time for successfully accomplishing their tasks.

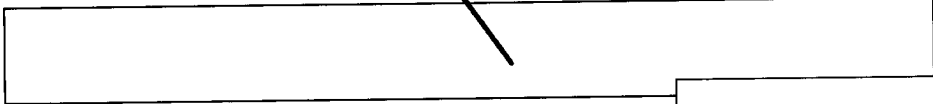
The subsequent building up of the efforts of the troops operating throughout the depth of the enemy's operational disposition will be accomplished by means of tank troops, which must cover the distance at average marching speed and get up to the areas of the new objectives, complete the rout of the opposing enemy grouping, and seize the enemy territory.

Destruction of the enemy in the tactical zone can be successfully effected by first-echelon divisions of the armies through extensive use of tactical landing forces made up of motorized rifle troops landed immediately following the nuclear strikes in order to destroy the remnants of the enemy troops in this area. The actions of the air-dropped tactical landing forces are supported simultaneously by the advance of troops from the front and the buildup of the landing forces with airlifted motorized rifle troops, and also with regiments from the first-echelon divisions, which must rapidly reach the areas where the landing forces are in action and complete the destruction of the enemy.

The capture of army lines and the destruction of the enemy there are carried out by forces of the second echelons of the first-echelon armies of the front (motorized rifle and tank divisions) and also by operational airborne troops. For this purpose, immediately following the nuclear strikes against the troops located on the army lines, airborne landing forces are landed in these areas in order to prevent the elimination of the aftereffects of the nuclear strikes, to destroy the enemy forces, and to create the conditions for the airlifting of motorized rifle troops into these areas and the moving up of tank divisions from the second echelons of the armies.

The tank divisions must be committed through the gaps which have been made, rapidly, literally at average marching speed, and





must move up into the areas where the landing forces and the airlifted motorized rifle troops are in action, joining with them to complete the destruction of the enemy on the army lines and seizing his territory.

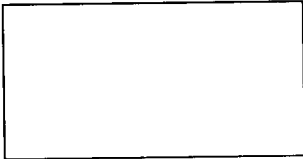
Capturing the lines of an army group and destroying the enemy there are carried out in the same sequence but by airborne troops and forces of the second-echelon armies of the front, primarily tank forces.

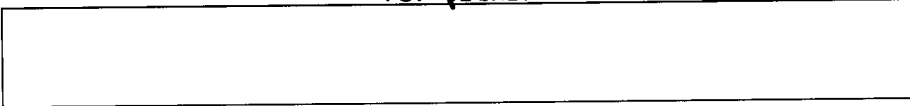
If we can succeed in simultaneously inflicting a decisive defeat on the enemy with nuclear strikes and in following them up immediately with decisive actions throughout the depth of the enemy's operational, and on individual axes even strategic, disposition by means of airborne troops and motorized rifle troops airlifted into the areas of combat actions, reinforced with tanks and missile weapons and supported by aviation, then the goal of an offensive operation can be achieved in a shorter time and with fewer losses in forces and materiel.

Using such a method of conducting operations, we guarantee our troops against enemy nuclear weapons strikes. All front troops will be in action simultaneously, thereby speeding up the accomplishment of the overall task. There will be no idle troops to serve as a target for enemy nuclear strikes. We rule out the need for troops to be in action throughout an operation under conditions of radioactive contamination -- in such a situation they will have to operate in short intervals of time only. It will no longer be necessary to commit subsequent echelons of our own troops on new lines at which the enemy could more easily build up resistance by using reserves and second echelons and deliver destructive nuclear strikes against the committed troops. Conditions are created favoring the immediate exploitation of the effects of our own nuclear strikes throughout the depth, and there is no need to allocate a great number of nuclear warheads for follow-up strikes.

Even this incomplete enumeration of the positive sides of such a method of conducting front offensive operations shows its great superiority over the methods developed earlier.

Of course this method, like any other, has its shortcomings as well as its positive sides. It can be used successfully only





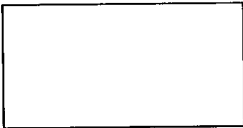
if there are reliable and complete data on the enemy grouping, particularly in the operational depth. In order to conduct an offensive operation, the front must have all of the forces and means which have been allocated for conducting the operation by the time the operation begins. A large quantity of air transport means is required, including helicopters with a heavy load-carrying capacity (40 to 50 tons) for transporting tanks. Finally, troops and staffs will require a certain amount of retraining, and their organizational structure will require revision.

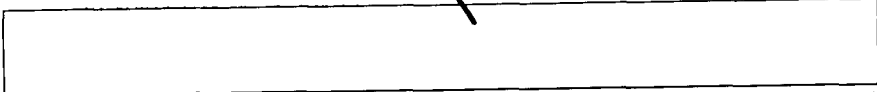
All of the enumerated difficulties are very insignificant in comparison with the advantages offered by the method discussed of conducting a front offensive operation. The main advantage, we repeat, is that it becomes possible for the troops to exploit fully and with timeliness the results of their own nuclear strikes throughout the depth of the operation. The time for the conduct of the operation is approximately halved. In the process, the operation's pace may reach literally the marching speed of tank troops. Troop losses from enemy nuclear weapons will be greatly reduced.

When a front offensive operation is carried out not by the successive overcoming of enemy-held lines but by the method of simultaneously initiating combat actions on all lines and in all enemy-occupied areas immediately following the nuclear strikes, the tasks of the front will obviously change.

In our view, the essence of the front's immediate task may be: by means of nuclear strikes against all main elements of the enemy's operational disposition, to destroy his nuclear attack means, rout his main troop groupings, paralyze his control system, and, by landing airborne landing forces in the areas of his most important key positions, keep him from eliminating the aftereffects of the nuclear strikes, restoring control, and maneuvering, and thereby create conditions for building up the efforts of the airborne landing forces with motorized rifle and tank troops.

The subsequent task will be, by exploiting the effects of the nuclear strikes and the actions by the airborne landing forces against all main lines of enemy resistance, by rapidly building up efforts with all elements of the front and army





operational disposition, and by preventing the enemy's withdrawal, to complete his destruction in the zone of front actions and seize the line or area whose capture achieves the goal of the operation.

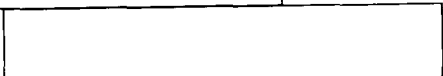
The combat strength of a front will depend strictly on the tasks which must be accomplished by the front troops. In order to determine correctly the forces and means required by a front for an operation, it is necessary to ascertain the operational disposition of the enemy's troops throughout the depth of his disposition and the strength and composition of his groupings on each line, and to determine what enemy forces will be destroyed, and to what degree, by our nuclear weapons, airborne landing forces, motorized rifle troops, and tank troops. Having determined, for each line, the sequence for the buildup of efforts, the troops to be allocated for it, and the procedure for supporting them, it will be possible to establish the total forces and means required for the operation and their most favorable grouping.

It is known, for example, that in a positional defense the enemy concentrates his main efforts in his tactical zone and immediate operational depth. In order to destroy these enemy forces, it will obviously be necessary to allocate greater forces and nuclear warheads to the first echelon of the front. As indicated above, the armies of the front's first echelon will carry out simultaneously the tasks of destroying the enemy's main grouping in his tactical zone and in the army depth. The destruction of the army group's reserves in the operational depth should be assigned to the front's second echelon in this case.

The method of conducting an offensive operation which we are considering here makes new demands on the organizational structure and armament of the troops.

Airborne troops must be so constituted as to be capable of conducting combat actions independently, in any area and under conditions of radioactive contamination, against an enemy who has sustained significant losses from our nuclear strikes but has not lost the will to resist, whose system of defense is disrupted but not totally shattered. In particular, airborne landing forces must possess combat means that enable them to engage in combat both while they are being landed (dropped) and also while





destroying the enemy on the ground and capturing his key positions. Helicopters and aircraft intended for the transport of airborne landing forces must be appropriately armed to provide troop actions with fire support in moments of need.

In our opinion, the ground forces, in their organizational structure, must consist of:

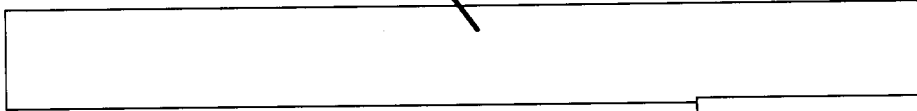
-- motorized rifle troops to be used for building up the efforts of airborne landing forces in their areas of combat actions. These troops must, for the most part, be airlifted by echelons. They do not need many heavy weapons; first, because they will be operating in circumscribed areas after nuclear strikes have been delivered and with support from missile weapons and aviation; and second, because of the difficulty of transporting heavy weapons and equipment by air;

-- mechanized troops to be used, as a rule, for actions in the first echelons of the armies. These troops must possess great maneuverability and striking force and must be capable of overcoming substantial enemy resistance. They must include a large quantity of tanks, nuclear weapons, and cross-country armored personnel carriers;

-- tank troops, which must possess exceptionally great mobility and must for this purpose be freed as much as possible from ponderous and cumbersome rear services. These troops must be capable of advancing over any terrain, rapidly crossing sectors of radioactive contamination and water obstacles, smashing or bypassing enemy strongpoints from the march, and moving up to the areas of impending combat actions at a rate of 200 to 250 kilometers or more per day, completing the destruction of the enemy which was begun by the airborne landing forces and motorized rifle troops, and developing the attack up to the line of the objective of the front operation and if necessary to a greater depth to support a strategic operation.

We have considered it our duty to share briefly these thoughts on methods of conducting modern offensive operations, thoughts which we developed to maturity in the light of the appearance of a series of articles devoted to this question and in view of the results of training exercises conducted recently.





We do not by any means claim completeness or comprehensive substantiation for our presentation of the methods for an offensive and of all the tasks which may confront front troops in an operation; we believe that this can be done only by the entire group of generals and officers of our Armed Forces.

