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The Study of Military Science in Large Units
and Units

by

Colonel V. Zemskov and
Lieutenant-Colonel P. Zaytsev

Recently the study of military science in large units and units has become noticeably more active. Officers have become more interested in it, the level of skill in scientific methods and the creative impulse has risen, and the quality of the work has improved. An especially significant improvement in military studies has been achieved in large units of the Group of Soviet Forces in Germany, and of the North Caucasian, Far Eastern, Belorussian, and the Volga military districts.

Nevertheless, on the whole, military study in large units and units of the ground troops does not meet modern requirements. The solution of many pressing tactical problems continues to lag behind the level of the operational art. One of the reasons for this, it appears to us, is the lack of necessary experience in organizing military studies at the level of the unit or large unit.

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It is well known that the organizing principle of military studies in a large unit (unit) depends on planning. But this is not being achieved skilfully everywhere. Planning often lacks aim, is not specific, and is conducted without regard to the practical tasks of the combat troop training and military education being performed by the large unit (unit).

For example, during 1959-1960, the large units had to perform important training tasks under night conditions. Yet in a number of large units the problems of night combat operations did not find their due place in the plans for military studies.

Sometimes the efforts of personnel engaged in military studies are dissipated in performing a multitude of tasks of secondary importance, and officers are overloaded with tasks on theoretical subjects which they often carry out formally and badly. Not infrequently plans are made without considering the actual capabilities of the large units (units) -- the theoretical preparedness of those who are to carry them out, the availability of source material, of possible dates of completion of tasks, etc.

Thus, in the plan for military studies made by the command of the 18th Guards Tank Division of the North Caucasian Military District, 40 tasks were contemplated. In the Ural Military District in the plan of the 126th Motorized Rifle Division, investigation into 19 different subjects was contemplated; in the 105th Motorized Rifle Regiment of this division, 11 subjects; and in the 341st Tank Regiment, 21 subjects. By the end of the year, it was only possible to complete four subjects in the division, one in the 105th Motorized Rifle Regiment, and three in the 341st Tank Regiment.

In a number of cases, military-scientific investigation is replaced by the practical solution of combat training problems envisaged by the corresponding plans. In some large units all the main steps of combat training, especially the tactical exercises, were automatically included in the plans for military studies of the units although no investigation into the subjects was done.

An adverse effect on the organization of military studies is produced by parallelism in planning, both in official channels and in the voluntary military study societies. It is true that in some large units these two plans are nominally united into one document with two independent sections; in principle, this makes no difference. This sort of planning leads to dissipation of effort, to a multiplicity and duplication of subjects, and, as a result, to the non-fulfilment of many tasks.

As a result of parallel planning, some officers regard military study as simply the voluntary carrying out of the tasks set them. On the other hand, some commanding officers try to transfer their direct responsibilities for the direction of military studies to the voluntary military study societies. Under these conditions, as a

rule, no time during working hours is allotted to officers for investigation.

This sort of planning of military studies is not conducive to their wide and purposeful development but breeds irresponsibility and leads to dissipation of energy. Therefore, in large units (units) of nearly all military districts the voluntary military study societies have either ceased to exist in fact or else exist only nominally, and the majority of officers are fully burdened with tasks received in their official line of duty. It seems to us that this is the correct way.

It is impossible to agree with those officers who consider that practical subjects are best studied in the line of duty and theoretical subjects in accordance with plans of military study societies. The study of theoretical subjects cannot be divorced from practical tasks, and all commanding officers must be directly concerned with them.

Certainly, the voluntary principle cannot be excluded from military studies. But it should appear, first of all, in the choice of subjects to be recommended and in showing initiative in bringing them forward in the selection of those who will carry out the work, and in determining the form the military studies are to take when they are compulsory for all officers.

On the whole, the planning of military studies within a large unit, as well as within a military district, should be centralized. This centralization envisages an advisable coordination of the compulsory investigation tasks prescribed by higher headquarters with the subjects recommended for the troops or put forward in the large unit. The basic part of the plan for military studies must consist of subjects which will help perform practical tasks arising during the combat training and military education of the large unit (unit).

The plan must also indicate the arrangements made for the training of officers in both theory and scientific methods -- lectures for officers, viewing of military and documentary films, informational and other reports, and discussion of work done. In addition, arrangements may be made to provide for study of the principles of

methods of military research, conferences on methods with the authors actively engaged in producing the studies, and a discussion of study outlines for the more important military studies. A summing up of the results of military studies and the discussion of the plan for the next year should also be included in the plan, which should also provide for officers' conferences to exchange experiences, and other arrangements. Finally, arrangements for work on improving efficiency and inventive work should be taken into consideration, indicating the main lines along which it is to be directed.

Plans for military studies should be specific. They should show the subjects, the purpose of the investigation and the expected result, who is to carry out the task and by what date, and how the work is to be realized. At the same time, the plans should show the general purposes and tasks for military studies for the period.

For the sake of clarity and convenience in using the plan, it is recommended that the arrangements for military studies should be set out in a definite order. The creative part (working out of subjects) may be separated from the tasks on scientific-method. It is desirable to arrange the tasks in the order in which they are to be completed or by types of military studies. In all cases, it is advantageous to group the tasks according to the echelon by which they will be carried out.

Some military study groups at headquarters of military districts suggest that the plan for a large unit should include one or two conferences on subjects of the large unit or from a list of subjects determined by the senior commander; one or two summaries of tactical exercises, firings, study problems and problems of military education; a conference or a meeting may then be called to discuss the results of these; one to three papers on the most important problems of combat training and military education, enrolling a wide circle of officers to write the various sections; the preparation of lectures, reports on military science, and communications which are subsequently read and discussed at conferences, and the writing of articles. A certain part of the work may be planned for units or the units may be brought in to carry it out. This reduces the number of subjects intended for study by officers of the large unit command.

The unit plan for military studies can include, in the main, the same arrangements as the large unit plan (except for conferences) but in smaller quantity. This plan contemplates tasks for officers at battalion, and on some practical problems on specific subjects, at company, and even platoon level.

The majority of military study groups consider that the large unit plan for military study should be drawn up for one year but that the unit plan may be worked out by training periods.

In our opinion, such a procedure of planning is advantageous. It is important, however, to include in the unit or large unit plan arrangements for training in theory and in scientific methods. Without requiring a great amount of work, they will assist the fulfilment of the basic creative part of the plan.

A considerable part of the work on its content will be complex, involving the combat activities of several arms of troops and services. The carrying out of such tasks is best entrusted to collectives of writers.

But even here, one cannot go to extremes and reject completely the individual method of working. As is well known, many of the discoveries in science, including military science, belong to individual investigative workers.

The next important step is the compilation of study outlines on the designated subjects by those who are to carry the work out.

The study outline should set out the main problems of the subject and show how the author intends to perform the tasks involved. In approving such a plan, the senior commander will be able not only to determine how the author understands a given task and which way he has adopted to perform it, but also to help him to understand all aspects of the subject. Before submitting a study outline for approval, it would be advisable to discuss it with a large number of officers.

The quality of the work on a subject depends to a considerable degree on the method of military study adopted. The most acceptable methods in a large unit (unit), inasmuch as it trains officers step

by step to solve independently major problems of military theory, are: summary of the experience from training and exercises; military study conferences (including technical), meetings, and reports; discussion of reports, papers, and articles, and development of training aids and methods. The independent creative element plays a varying role in all these methods, but in every case it is essential.

A large role in military studies for a large unit (unit) is played by summarizing the experiences gained from training. This is not badly done in the large units of the North Caucasian, Far Eastern, and some other military districts.

The work in these large units generally starts with the preparation of a plan for summarizing a training exercise and is organized in the following manner.

A group of officers is formed, with representatives of the various arms of troops (in accordance with the problems being studied). The group clarifies the problem dealing with the subject, studies the necessary literature, prepares or participates in the preparation of a task for the exercise, introducing in it the problems for investigation (what, how, and at what stage of the exercise to clarify, check, or investigate), indicating the aim and the intention of the investigation, and also what forces and means are to be used. After this, the basic methods of work are determined, and the tasks are divided among the group and among the umpires (at their briefing).

After the exercise, personal observations and reports by umpires and the officers in training, as well as summary reports, are generalized. Summarizing material after a battalion exercise takes up to 15 days, after a regimental exercise up to a month, and after a division or corps exercise up to two months.

It must be borne in mind that summarizing of the results of an exercise cannot be reduced to describing the course taken by the exercise or substantiating already well-known propositions. It must be a comprehensive, thorough, and creative analysis of the most important aspects of the exercise that answers the problems posed for investigation.

It should reflect the main points and note and develop the propositions which will help to perform the urgent practical tasks or those which have great prospects for development.

In their structure, summarizing the exercises may be compiled in a great variety of ways. As one variant, we would suggest the following report form.

The first section should be a short general description of the exercise (subject, aim, tasks, location, time, troops taking part, and details of organization), a description of the aim of study and of the tasks and the problems set for solution.

It is advisable to close the section with short and substantiated conclusions.

The second section should be a description of the course of the exercise and the resolution of the problems set. This analyzes the organization of the combat operation of the troops (the commander's decision, assignment of tasks, combat security, control of troops, etc.) and how they were carried out in the light of the tasks set for investigation.

At the end of the section, short conclusions based on the factual material should be given.

The third section should be general conclusions, setting out the results of the investigation and the theoretical propositions on each problem studied. This is the basis, the main part of the report, both in significance and size.

The summing up should be supported by the necessary charts, diagrams, tables, etc. In our opinion, it is desirable to draw up many of them during work on the report because later they often influence its content.

As a rule, the officers are partially informed of the results of the summary during the exercise critique, and in full at the theoretical or official conference. The most instructive parts of the summary, of interest also to other large units, are published in the district summary of collected materials on exchange of experience

from combat training or in the central military press.

A widespread form of military study in large units (units) is the study meeting. This deals with a narrower range of problems than a conference but sometimes may also discuss complex subjects.

The purpose of a meeting is often to reach unanimity of opinion on individual problems as a result of thorough discussion. Later, these propositions may be discussed more widely (the main report at a conference), used for further work on the subject, or, with the senior commander's permission, they may be incorporated into the methods of combat training and military education.

The preparation for and the conduct of a meeting require considerably less time than for a conference although the work methods are almost the same. But still they must not be confused. A conference is attended by a wider range of people sent from other large units, educational institutions, and subordinate and higher headquarters, and therefore the discussion of the subject will be more comprehensive.

One of the frequently used forms is the preparation of papers by combining original independent creative work with the results already achieved and described in various military publications. The methods used in the preparation of a paper differ but little from those used in writing a report -- the basic problems are defined, their formulation is put on a solid basis, and the substance of the report is set out. But, as distinct from a report, a great part is devoted to an exposition of views of the various research workers (authors) on the essence of a given subject and to an account of the details of their opinions. But the most valuable parts of a paper are the independent conclusions and suggestions made by the author.

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Another important prerequisite of success in military studies is the organization of supervision of and assistance to subordinate staffs and to those who actually carry out the work.

Experience has shown that, as yet, insufficient attention is paid to this in large units (units). Many large unit (unit) commanding officers not only do not conduct any military studies themselves, but do not direct their subordinates and have not created any definite system of supervision and assistance.

Supervision must be purposeful and specific. It should be directed toward supporting the most important measures taken, the basic problems of the subject under study, and should be carried out at the crucial periods of the work (planning, the working out of basic subjects, etc.). While doing this, it is important not merely to ascertain the state of affairs but to determine correctly how well the author has mastered his task, what are the aims set, what ways of resolving the problems have been projected, what is the quality of the work performed, and what difficulties are being met.

The controlling officer will be able to cope with his own tasks only when he can render systematic help to those who carry out the work. Supervision and assistance must be done systematically from the beginning of the work on a subject because any defects which arise during the work are difficult and sometimes impossible to eliminate.

The prerequisites for supervision and assistance are established while the military studies are still being planned. Even during the discussion of the study outline, the authors are given help in selecting ways of resolving the main problems, given advice on the use of publications, overcoming of difficulties, etc.

To achieve efficient supervision, it is advisable to have a calendar plan for working out each subject. This can be the study outline of the work which shows the dates for completion of each section or even subsection and also determines the times for making all the arrangements in connection with the work. In addition, it is desirable that the large units (units) keep a chart of supervision and assistance with carefully selected, experienced, and well trained officers posted on it. In a large unit such a chart may include the large unit commander and his deputies, the chief of staff, the chief of operations, and the chiefs of the arms of troops and services.

Experience shows that a check on the state of military studies in a unit is of most value when conducted at the same time as the check of combat training, and the results of the check are mentioned in the orders of the commanding officer of the large unit and made known to all officers.

An important role in increasing military studies is played by political organs and Party organizations. They enlist the officers to carry out high quality work, foster widespread criticism and self-criticism, and raise the level of creative activity, discipline, and executive ability. Experience shows that when military studies are constantly conducted in the sphere of influence of the Party-political apparatus, they are successful.

The correct organization of records of the work done, as well as their unbiased evaluation and accomplishment in the proper time, are of great importance. For convenience, it is advisable to have a separate file in keeping records of military study in a unit and a large unit. In a large unit, in addition to the tasks carried out by officers of the command, the main measures taken by the units are included and also studies not encompassed by the plan (review of proposed regulations and various manuals and works).

A practice to be encouraged is the submission to higher headquarters by a large unit of a record of a study carried out in a unit, together with the large unit command element's opinion of the substance of the work.

The principal methods of realization of work within a large unit (unit) may be: use of the recommendations of conferences on military studies in a troop training exercise; reading of reports, papers, lectures and information to further the theoretical and practical training of officers; and publication of works in the central and district military press and as individual pamphlets and manuals.

Some comrades suggest that to achieve better military studies the central military journals should have a special section. We cannot agree. Studies of particularly high quality can be accepted and are published as articles in all sections of the journals. At the

same time it would be advisable if the journals published materials on scientific methods and on exchange of experiences and information on military studies, as well as notes on the most important works.