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RADIO PROPAGANDA REPORT

SOVIET DEBATE OVER MILITARY DOCTRINE:
PRIMACY OF MODERNIST POSITION

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SOVIET DEBATE OVER MILITARY DOCTRINE:

PRIMACY OF MODERNIST POSITION

A major article in two parts by Marshal Sokolovskiy and Major General Cherednichenko in RED STAR on 25 and 28 August represents a strong reassertion of the primacy of the modernist school in Soviet military doctrine and strategy. Their basic propositions clarify a number of ambiguous points of doctrine discussed in the authoritative theoretical work, MILITARY STRATEGY, published in 1962 by the Ministry of Defense, to which both authors contributed. That work's basically modernist outlook was adulterated with traditionalist strictures.

The RED STAR article appears against the background of discussion in the military press since the beginning of the year on the impact of modern technology on strategy. The course of the discussion up to the publication of the Sokolovskiy-Cherednichenko article reflected a resurgence of traditionalist arguments--their thrust being that traditional methods and conventional arms retain their relevancy despite the revolution in military technology. The latest article, however, suggests that the modernists are not only holding the line in the debate but are now pressing an even more radical formulation of their position than in the past.

Sokolovskiy and Cherednichenko forcefully vindicate and elaborate the modernist position. They stress the decisive role of nuclear weapons and strategic forces in a future war, emphasize the crucial importance of war's initial phase--which, they suggest, may be measured in "minutes, hours, and days"--and unequivocally assert that nuclear war cannot be protracted. In estimating that nuclear war will be short, the authors do not broach such practical problems as the question of the pace and direction of the Soviet military buildup and the strategic force requirements necessary to wage a future war. In sum, the Sokolovskiy-Cherednichenko article would appear to lend greater credibility to Khrushchev's long-term effort to streamline the Soviet military establishment--an effort which he launched at the Supreme Soviet in January 1960.

Background of Debate Over Doctrine

Sokolovskiy and Cherednichenko begin with an open acknowledgment that Soviet military theorists are divided on the basic issues of doctrine which they discuss in their article. They say that the positions they have adopted "may or may not coincide with the views and opinions" of "other comrades." Indeed, signs of discord have

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been evident in the Soviet military press over each of the broader doctrinal questions raised in the article. This year modernist tenets, which have become standardized elements of official defense policy, have come under critical review and reevaluation. The renewed advocacy of traditional concepts suggested that a strong reaction had developed against the one-sided emphasis on rocket-nuclear strategy which has predominated official defense thinking. In fact, it seemed that traditionalist concepts had gained new currency in Soviet defense thinking.* A number of articles in the course of the discussion in the military press asserted that conventional arms and classical formulas for waging war deserve undiminished attention despite the revolution in weapons technology.

The discussion was initiated by RED STAR under the head of "The Revolution in Military Affairs" in January. The prominent military theorist Lomov offered a comprehensive statement on doctrine in a two-part article on 7 and 10 January which represented the first installment of a series of articles by various military writers and spokesmen. Lomov appeared to straddle the fence on many of the basic doctrinal questions that became the central elements in the subsequent discussion. Although he spoke of the "decisive" character of nuclear rocket weapons, the assertion was hedged by a series of qualifiers. Thus he stressed the need to prepare for a protracted war, the importance of a combined arms strategy, and the continued relevance of multimillion-man armies in future war. While Lomov gave his argument a modernist gloss, it rested mainly on traditionalist foundations. Subsequent articles in the series echoed both the modernist and traditionalist views on the issues raised by Lomov. However, prior to the Sokolovskiy-Cherednichenko article, the modernists seemed more preoccupied with defending their positions against criticism than with gaining new ground in the debate.

Comparison of RED STAR Article and MILITARY STRATEGY

A comparison of the 1962 edition of MILITARY STRATEGY with the RED STAR article provides a convenient gauge of the shift in modernist views toward a more consistent and radical formulation. While MILITARY STRATEGY is far more elaborate and extensive than the relatively concise and compact RED STAR article, such a shift nevertheless is evident when key statements on major doctrinal issues are compared. Such issues include the questions of a war's

* See Radio Propaganda Report CD.246, 11 May 1964, "Conservative Doctrines Gain New Currency in Soviet Military Discourse."

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initial phase, its duration, its destructive character and outcome, local war, and surprise attack and pre-emptive strike. Pertinent statements are excerpted and condensed below. Passages in brackets were omitted in the 1963 edition of MILITARY STRATEGY.

INITIAL PHASE

MILITARY STRATEGY

The initial period of a modern missile war will obviously be the main and decisive period and will predetermine the development and outcome of the entire war.... [The first massive missile attacks may not immediately influence the course of the war.]

RED STAR

The initial period of the war, during which the parties can use their main stocks of nuclear weapons stockpiled in peacetime, will be of decisive importance for the outcome of the entire war. It is entirely possible that the war may end at this stage.... Tasks which in the past were accomplished in months and years will be accomplished in the course of minutes, hours and several days in a rocket-nuclear war.

Sokolovskiy and Cherednichenko strongly reassert the modernist position on the critical importance of the initial phase of a future war and the corresponding need to develop an integrated strategy and unified force structure designed to gain victory in the "shortest time" and with a "minimum" expenditure of nuclear weapons. On this point the authors introduce a more precise definition of the initial phase. They say this phase can be measured in "minutes, hours, and several days" and, according to the authors, the war may in fact end in this period. This estimate echoes Khrushchev's original proposition advanced in January 1960, that the initial phase would occur not just during the "first days" but during the "first minutes." This was repeated by Khrushchev as recently as February 1963.

Although MILITARY STRATEGY spoke of the decisive importance of the initial phase, this assertion was qualified by other statements stressing that the first missile attacks may not immediately determine the outcome of a war. Correspondingly, the need to prepare for protracted war was emphasized. In effect these qualifiers tempered the references to the decisive character of nuclear weapons. They mirrored the traditionalist argument against diminishing the importance of conventional forces and arms in a future war.

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DURATION OF WAR

MILITARY STRATEGY

Be prepared to win the war in the shortest time [and with minimum losses]. At the same time, it is necessary to make serious preparations for a protracted war.

RED STAR

This is an irrevocable conclusion--nuclear war cannot be protracted. Above all, it is necessary to prepare for a short war.

Sokolovskiy and Cherednichenko carry the modernist corollary to the concept of the "decisive" initial phase to its logical conclusion. They categorically state that a nuclear war cannot be protracted. MILITARY STRATEGY presented contradictory viewpoints, reflecting an uneasy balancing of divergent professional views. It said it is necessary to prepare for either a short or a long war.

Sokolovskiy's and Cherednichenko's flat assertion that nuclear war will be short might be expected to have far-reaching practical implications in terms of force levels and structure, weapons priority, and the economic mobilization in peacetime necessary for Soviet war planning. This modernist proposition implies a radical depreciation of classical formulas for waging war and deemphasis of conventional forces and arms.

DESTRUCTIVE CHARACTER AND OUTCOME

MILITARY STRATEGY

Entire countries will be wiped from the face of the earth. This applies particularly to small countries.... The socialist camp will be the victor because of the superiority of the socialist system. But victory will not come of itself. It must be thoroughly prepared for and secured in advance.

RED STAR

Nuclear warheads and carriers make it possible to instantly destroy military targets and entire states. The outcome is difficult to foresee with absolute certainty, but it is entirely possible that even large states will cease to exist in the first few hours.

Sokolovskiy's and Cherednichenko's characterization of the destructive power of rocket-nuclear weapons appears to reflect a revised estimate

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of that power. MILITARY STRATEGY modified the estimate that "entire countries" could be destroyed with the point that the statement applied "particularly" to small and densely populated states. The inference seemed to be that countries such as the Soviet Union and the United States were excluded from this estimate. Sokolovskiy and Cherednichenko now assert that the estimate applies to "large states" as well. They leave their category of "large" states undefined and do not say whether the USSR or the United States would be among the large states vulnerable to total destruction. The new formulation, however, suggests the conclusion that the USSR and the United States are now more vulnerable--a conclusion compatible with Sokolovskiy's and Cherednichenko's view that a nuclear war could end in its initial phase and, in any case, could not be protracted.

They further underscore nuclear destructiveness by saying that in view of the power of nuclear weapons the outcome of strategic operations cannot be foreseen with certainty. Like the article as a whole, the statement is offered as a professional judgment and they do not invoke, as did MILITARY STRATEGY, the political-ideological article of faith that the socialist camp must win in a war because of the "superiority of the socialist system."

These formulations may be designed to reflect the increased Soviet, and perhaps American, nuclear capabilities in the period since the publication of MILITARY STRATEGY. In any case, the revised estimate of nuclear destructiveness buttresses the modernist focus on the firepower criterion and consequently the modernist emphasis on the primacy of rocket-nuclear strategy in military doctrine.

LOCAL WAR

MILITARY STRATEGY

Escalation is inevitable in any confrontation of nuclear powers.... The methods of waging local wars must be studied in order to prevent their expansion into worldwide conflict.

RED STAR

It is impossible to exclude the possibility of relatively protracted war. This applies to non-nuclear local war which is capable of growing into worldwide conflict. Preparation for such a contingency must not be neglected.

Here Sokolovskiy and Cherednichenko concede a place for conventional warfare in Soviet military doctrine in the special case of a local and limited war. Thus they allow the possibility of a "relatively

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protracted" non-nuclear local war and say doctrine should take this possibility into account. They note that such a war "is capable of growing into a worldwide conflict"; presumably, in the latter event, their doctrinal postulates concerning nuclear war would become operative. However, the passage is ambiguous and the whole question is disposed of in two brief sentences.

MILITARY STRATEGY also treated the question briefly but basically within the framework of the standard doctrinal tenet which categorically asserts that any direct confrontation of the nuclear powers in a local war would "inevitably" escalate into a nuclear conflict. However, even MILITARY STRATEGY evinced concern that greater attention should be given to "methods" of engaging in local wars and keeping them limited. The latter point seemed to echo sentiment within the military establishment against an all-or-nothing philosophy of nuclear war. Sokolovskiy's and Cherednichenko's reference to the possibility of "protracted" local wars suggests such sentiment has grown and has found greater receptivity in military thinking.

The new formulation would appear to allow greater leeway for Soviet military involvement in local conflict situations. The notion of greater flexibility in response might find approval in principle in both the modernist and the traditionalist camps. Indeed, it may even be read as a sop to the traditionalist viewpoint, since it gives greater life expectancy for conventional forces and arms. However, the local war doctrine in the Sokolovskiy-Cherednichenko outlook remains clearly subordinate and secondary to their nuclear-oriented strategy, and is clearly treated as an exceptional case.

The question of course arises as to where the notion of "protracted" local war would be applicable. Sokolovskiy and Cherednichenko offer no clue to their thinking on this sensitive question, but it seems unlikely on the face of it that it would apply to the European theater, where the two great military coalitions would be in direct confrontation from the outset.

SURPRISE ATTACK AND PRE-EMPTIVE STRIKE

MILITARY STRATEGY

A main task of Soviet strategy is working out means for reliably repelling a surprise attack.

RED STAR

Nuclear rocket weapons have increased the possibility of surprise attack. However, surprise attack is not fatal under present conditions.

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SURPRISE ATTACK AND PRE-EMPTIVE STRIKE

(Continued)

MILITARY STRATEGY

Breaking up the aggressive plans of the enemy by dealing him a crushing blow in time will be of decisive significance for the outcome of the entire war.

RED STAR

Possibilities of a timely detection of an impending attack are growing. Modern means of detection and warning insure a timely counterblow, repulsion of the enemy's surprise attack, and wrecking of his criminal schemes.

Sokolovskiy's and Cherednichenko's emphasis on the destructive power and speed of nuclear attacks is counterbalanced by expressions of increased confidence in Soviet retaliatory capability. Although they say nuclear rocket weapons increase the possibility of surprise attack, they assert that surprise is not fatal under present conditions and that the capability for effective counterattack is growing.

MILITARY STRATEGY, on the other hand, appeared more concerned over the threat and even the likelihood of surprise attack, enjoining Soviet military strategists to "work out means" for reliably repelling such an attack. Similarly, it stressed the necessity rather than the capacity to frustrate the enemy's "aggressive plans" and deal a counterblow "in time."

In effect, Sokolovskiy and Cherednichenko--while acknowledging the threat--depreciate the importance of surprise attack on the grounds of improved detection allowing time for effective response. The inference would seem to be that a strategy of deterrence is becoming more, not less, viable, and the factor of surprise attack less important in deciding the outcome of a nuclear war. However, Sokolovskiy's and Cherednichenko's remarks on these questions are sketchy and testify to the sensitivity of their implications for military as well as political policy.

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Sokolovskiy's and Cherednichenko's statement that their article represents their own views and is likely to encounter criticism suggests that the modernist-traditionalist debate is far from settled. However, it does appear to represent a major move by the modernists

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to force a reappraisal of the strategic assumptions of defense policy and to push military thinking in the direction of an integrated and coherent doctrine based on modernist premises. In this connection, they point to recent developments in Western military doctrine and describe how "Western military theorists" have developed the integrated strategic concept of the air-space operation. They stress the corresponding Soviet need for conducting "the actions of all forces and means according to a single plan and under a single strategic leadership."

While the article provides the fundamental framework of a clear-cut modernist approach to doctrinal problems, it leaves a number of questions undefined and does not develop the precise implications of its major propositions. Many of the ambiguities presumably will be clarified in the course of future Soviet doctrinal discussions.

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