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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

11 March 1977

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Director of Central Intelligence
FROM : William W. Wells
Deputy Director for Operations
SUBJECT : MILITARY THOUGHT (USSR): Some Questions
of the First Front Offensive Operation
in the Initial Period of a War

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 outlines a number of special features of preparing and conducting the first front offensive operation in the initial period of a war, which were discussed at the military science conference of the Carpathian Military District. These include the scope and goal of the operation, the content of the operational plan, and the procedure for carrying out the initial nuclear strike and for organizing combat against the enemy's nuclear attack means. Matters of the control and supplying of air defense troops with means, the need for new decontamination means and methods, the conduct of chemical and radiation reconnaissance, troop control measures, and rear services support of marches also were highlighted. This article appeared in Issue No. 2 (63) for 1962.

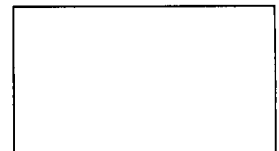
2. Because the source of this report is extremely sensitive, this document should be handled on a strict need-to-know basis within recipient agencies. For ease of reference, reports from this publication have been assigned

William W. Wells



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Intelligence Information Special Report

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COUNTRY USSR



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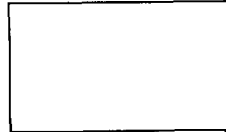
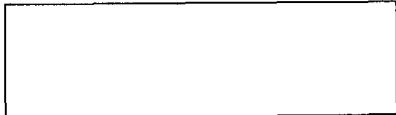
MILITARY THOUGHT (USSR): Some Questions of the First Front Offensive Operation in the Initial Period of a War

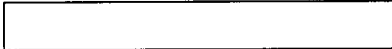
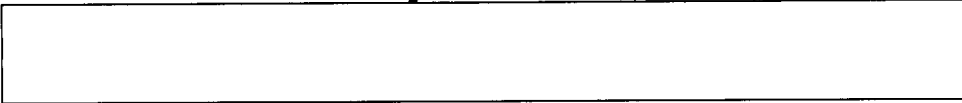
SOURCE Documentary
Summary:

The following report is a translation from Russian of an article which appeared in Issue No. 2 (63) for 1962 of the SECRET USSR Ministry of Defense publication Collection of Articles of the Journal "Military Thought". The author of this article is Colonel A. Bulatov. This article outlines a number of special features of preparing and conducting the first front offensive operation in the initial period of a war, which were discussed at the military science conference of the Carpathian Military District. These include the scope and goal of the operation, the content of the operational plan, and the procedure for carrying out the initial nuclear strike and for organizing combat against the enemy's nuclear attack means. Matters of the control and supplying of air defense troops with means, the need for new decontamination means and methods, the conduct of chemical and radiation reconnaissance, troop control measures, and rear services support of marches also were highlighted.

End of Summary

Comment:
The author also wrote "Ways of Increasing the Rates of Advance of a Combined-Arms Army" in Issue No. 1 (71) for 1964 and "Troop Marches over Large Distances" in Issue No. 5 (88) for 1962





Some Questions of the First Front Offensive Operation
in the Initial Period of a War

(Based on materials of a military science conference of
the Carpathian Military District)

by
Colonel A. Bulatov

Under present-day conditions, a correct understanding of the special features of the organization and conduct of the first offensive operations in the initial period of a war is of primary importance in the training of our command cadres and in increasing the combat readiness of the ground forces. The successful conduct of combat actions in the first operations will depend largely on how substantially the theory has been developed, to what extent the troops and command cadres have been trained for its practical execution, and to what extent the operational and strategic rear services have been prepared to support these operations.

Therefore, it is not by chance that the preparation and conduct of the first offensive operation in the initial period of a war has recently been one of the main problems in the majority of operational, operational-strategic, and special exercises which have been held. Consequently, the military science conference of the Carpathian Military District was dedicated to an examination of certain matters involved in a front operation conducted under these conditions.

The conference heard the main report of the chief of staff of the military district, General-Leytenant N. K. Volodin, and the supplementary reports of General-Leytenant Ya. D. Skrobov on the employment of rocket troops and artillery, General-Leytenant P. T. Lukashin on the special features and tasks of party-political work, and General-Leytenant V. I. Moroz on rear services support. Sixteen generals and officers participated in a discussion of the report and the supplementary reports.

In examining the special features of first front operations in the initial period of a war, the conference participants noted that these operations have to be prepared in advance during peacetime and carried out, as a rule, by those relatively limited





available forces of the border military districts and groups of forces that can be quickly brought to full combat readiness at the start of a war. The fronts will receive reinforcement only in the course of the operation, by troops arriving either from the interior of the country or through a maneuver made from other axes.

At the start of combat actions, the main forces of the belligerents will not be in direct contact, with the result that the offensive will be developed mainly from the march after the completion of marches. Consequently, the distance of the front's first-echelon large units from the state border must be such as to allow them to move quickly to the border and go over to the offensive for the purpose of exploiting most effectively the results of the initial nuclear strikes.

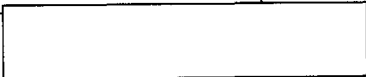
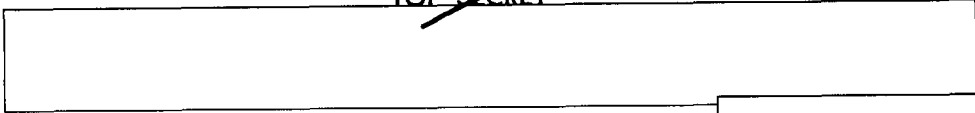
The presence of considerable zones of radioactive contamination and destruction, which are an unavoidable consequence of the massed employment of nuclear weapons, will impede substantially the movement forward and control of troops, the deployment and approach of new contingents, and the supplying of troops which are dispersed over a large area.

The first front offensive operation may begin with the belligerents relatively equal with regard to their forces and degree of readiness. Therefore, the actions of the operation will take the form of a meeting engagement of the main troop groupings of the belligerents on the most important axes.

On the whole, of decisive importance for the success of the first offensive operation will be the high combat readiness of the front troops and their ability to disrupt the enemy's attack in a timely manner, maintain their own forces intact and go over to a decisive offensive.

X The scope of the operation can be characterized by the following indices: the depth -- 600 to 1,000 kilometers; the width of the offensive zone -- 300 to 400 kilometers and more; the average rate of advance -- up to 100 kilometers a day; and the duration of the operation -- six to ten days. The front can have 15 to 25 motorized rifle and tank divisions, up to five front and army missile brigades, and one or two missile battalions. Up to 250 and more nuclear warheads can be allocated





to the front.

The goal of the front operation will be the destruction of the enemy's nuclear attack means, the defeat of his opposing ground and air groupings, the disruption of the mobilization, concentration, and deployment of his armed forces in the theater of military operations, and the seizure of vitally important areas of his territory to a depth of up to 600 to 1,000 kilometers, including the forcing out of the war of individual countries of the enemy coalition.

It was emphasized in the main report and in several speeches that the plan of the operation has to be particularly thorough in specifying: the tasks and the composition of the front troops; the procedure for moving military district (front) forces and means out from under a possible enemy surprise nuclear strike; the tasks of the rocket troops and aviation of the front in disrupting this attack and supporting the going over of the first-echelon troops to the offensive. The manner in which a possible incursion of the enemy's ground forces is to be repulsed and the methods of the troops' going over to the offensive must be worked out very carefully and in detail. The more detailed the planning of the first operation is before the start of a war, the greater will be the guarantee of its successful start and development.

The following recommendations and proposals were made in a discussion of the problems of the employment of nuclear weapons.

The commander of the front, the commander of an army, and the commander of a large unit must personally assign the tasks involved in the employment of nuclear weapons, indicating the targets for destruction, their coordinates, the yield of the nuclear warheads, the type of burst, and the time of its delivery.

The initial nuclear strike, which can be carried out in two stages, should be planned in the greatest detail. In the first stage, the enemy's means of delivering nuclear warheads will be destroyed in order to disrupt his initial strike. In the second stage, which must be conducted immediately after the first and must consist of a number of successive and massed nuclear strikes, the storage and assembly installations for nuclear





warheads and missiles must be destroyed, along with airfields, ground forces attack groupings (particularly tank groupings), command posts, and the most important installations of the enemy's rear area. The goal of the second stage is to gain fire superiority.

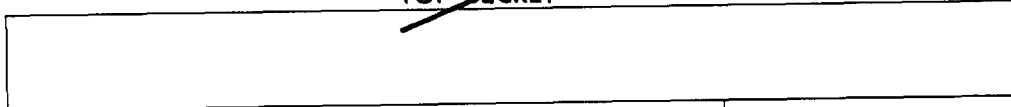
General-Leytenant of Artillery Skrobov stressed that it is most advisable to deliver the initial strike during the pre-launch preparation of the enemy's missiles, when they are completely fueled, prepared, and located on the launching sites, and when the immediate preparation for launching has been started. However, this time can be correctly determined only on the basis of the most reliable and timely reconnaissance data. He also raised a question worthy of attention and study concerning the advisability of organizing combat against the enemy's nuclear attack means based on the principle of zones of responsibility.

It is proposed to specify three zones based on the offensive zones and the range of the means of destruction. In the first zone, which has a depth of up to 20 kilometers, combat should be conducted by the missile battalions and the tube artillery of the first-echelon divisions. Army missiles, cruise missiles, fighter-bombers, and sabotage-reconnaissance groups should be allocated for combat in the second zone, at a depth of 100 to 250 kilometers. In the last zone, at a depth of 250 to 500 kilometers, combat should be conducted by all the front missiles, bomber aircraft, and sabotage-reconnaissance groups.

In a discussion of the question of setting up attack groupings in the operational disposition of the front troops, it was emphasized that planning the timely movement of troops into areas of operational assignment is very important, since, as a rule, these areas are located a considerable distance from the permanent deployment areas of the military district large units and formations. It is particularly important to comprehensively and reliably cover and support the movement forward of the troops from the operational and materiel-technical standpoint when they conduct marches over great distances.

General-Mayor A. Ye. Yankevich said it was advisable at the start of a war to resubordinate divisions that are in a state of constant readiness to the armies of the front's first echelon,





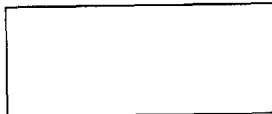
which must immediately begin to move forward into the areas of imminent combat actions. As for the divisions that are completing mobilization, they should be included in the second-echelon army or in the front reserve. If this is not done, it will be very difficult for the army commander to exercise troop control of an army that will simultaneously include large units that are in a state of full readiness and large units that are completing mobilization in the deep rear.

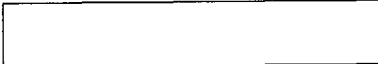
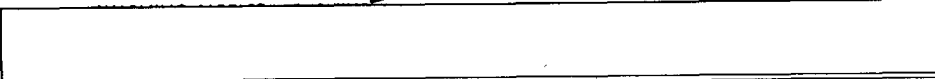
In his speech, Colonel A. M. Ambartsumyan spoke about many unresolved air defense problems often discussed at military science conferences in other military districts. He noted particularly that control of the air defense forces and means must be exercised from the front (army) air defense command post, but that as yet such an organic post has not been set up. Improvised command posts set up at exercises in no way meet the requirements confronting them. He also said that with the currently available front air defense means it is impossible to ensure the necessary cover even of all the most important installations in the front zone. Not completely resolved, in his opinion, is the matter of supplying the surface-to-air missile units with missiles and propellant during an operation.

The conference participants said that for the reliable supplying of air defense means there must be organic air defense command posts, in the military district -- with a control battalion, and in the armies -- with a control battery. Moreover, air defense staffs have to be set up in the military district and in the armies.

It should be noted that this is not the first time that recommendations like these have been made; however, to date they have either not been accepted or have been rejected without proper justification.

General-Mayor D. Ye. Rusanov, basing his view on the results of an experimental check in the military district troops, raised for discussion the matter of developing new means and putting into practice new methods of decontamination treatment for personnel, armament, and combat equipment that have entered a zone of radioactive contamination. He showed that the existing decontamination means and methods have become obsolete and do not meet the modern requirements of conducting an offensive with a





rate of 80 to 100 kilometers.

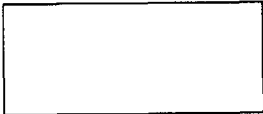
In the opinion of the conference participants, all decontamination work must fall directly to the troops, who should be supplied with a single new all-purpose solution (and not with three, as is still being done). The troops should be supplied with powerful chemical and radioactive decontamination means, and the special subunits that provide the necessary components and solutions should be brought closer to them.

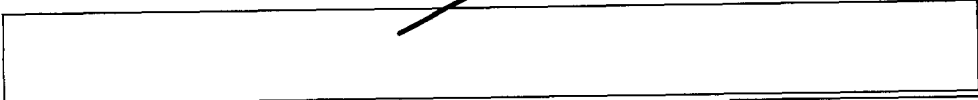
It was noted at the conference that the rapid collection, collation, and dissemination to all command levels of data about the radiation and chemical situation, as well as the forecasting of such a situation, remain virtually an unresolved problem. In connection with this, a proposal was made to seek the introduction into the troops of technical means for the automated collection, collation, and graphic representation of these data (forecast).

General Rusanov recommended that specially equipped aircraft and helicopters be more broadly employed for radiation and chemical reconnaissance. He believes that for this purpose a front requires a squadron of helicopters (aircraft), an army -- a flight, and a division -- one to two helicopters. The capabilities of these means bespeak the fact that this is the most up-to-date solution to this problem. Thus, in one hour a flight of helicopters can conduct reconnaissance of a route extending for 300 kilometers, and in three hours -- one extending for 800 kilometers. With the existing reconnaissance methods, not only one, but even five or six radiation and chemical reconnaissance battalions are insufficient for a front.

In examining the combat actions of the front troops in the first operation, General-Mayor G. M. Bagalov said that they will actually commence with the massive movements of formations, large units, and units over a distance of 1,000 kilometers and more. Thus, objective conditions are created for the occurrence of meeting engagements and battles on various scales.

In connection with this, the opinion was expressed that the conduct of a meeting engagement according to the "classical" principle -- where a small part of the forces pins down the enemy from the front, while the main forces are grouped in order to





launch an attack at the enemy's flank and rear -- cannot ensure victory under present-day conditions. Success in a meeting engagement can be achieved as a result of a preemptive nuclear strike with a simultaneous frontal attack by the troops and a rapid advance into the depth for the purpose of splitting up the main enemy grouping and inflicting its ultimate defeat.

We cannot fully agree with this approach to the solution of the problem. Even under present-day conditions, the most favorable alternative in a meeting engagement will be the delivery of attacks against the enemy's flank and rear. Everything will depend on the overall operational situation.

Much attention was given at the conference to the matter of troop control. General-Mayor F. K. Marushchak noted that now, when the radiation situation is an extremely vital operational factor, the collection and analysis of data about it must be dealt with not only within the framework of the chemical or medical services, but also on a broader plane. The combined-arms staff must constantly know the radiation situation, which is visually represented on special screen devices.

Needing improvement, in his opinion, are the organizational structure of the field headquarters, the equipping of the staffs, and the staff transport means. Because they are so unwieldy, these transport means do not ensure for the commander and the staff quick relocation and the control of large units during movement, not to speak of the capability of carrying out maneuvering and the necessary conditions for rest and work, especially in inclement weather or during winter. The entire work of the staffs is carried out in primitively equipped tents. The control posts take a long time to be set up, and the tents are difficult to camouflage and are completely without protective features.

In the view of the conference participants, a correct solution to these problems is possible under conditions where there is the centralized development of a single system of vehicles and means of minor mechanization and automation, and where the equipping of front, army, and division staffs can ensure favorable conditions for the work of the control posts under any situational conditions, in place or during movement.



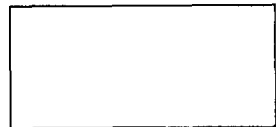


There was also a broad exchange of opinions on the matter of rear services support. In a supplementary report and in speeches, attention was given to the fact that the high rate of advance and the need for carrying out marches over great distances have sharply increased the average day's expenditure among the troops of materiel, particularly fuel. The established mobile reserves of a division can ensure the conduct of combat actions for only two days; now as before, however, these actions require fuel and all necessities for no fewer than five days. Therefore, the norms for the mobile reserves and their distribution should be reviewed at the same time that the matter of the necessary transportation is being worked out. All of this also applies to the reserves in a combined-arms army.

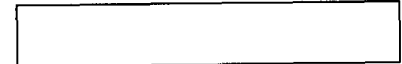
General-Mayor P. S. Bilaonov observed that in the system of the tactical rear services the weak link continues to be the organization and carrying out of the refueling of armored vehicles during the course of an operation, and particularly during prolonged marches. In his opinion, in order to resolve this problem, it is necessary to raise the question of setting up base depots in the territory of the socialist countries.

The conference participants also spoke of the need for a design change in the fuel supply vehicles, so that their cross-country capability would approach that of tanks.

About the conference as a whole, it should be said that too many matters were included in the main report, and that some of them lent themselves to agreement rather than to challenge. Consequently, there was no broad discussion of the report. There was an insufficient number of questions raised on the employment of nuclear weapons and rocket troops and of their control in the course of the first offensive operation.

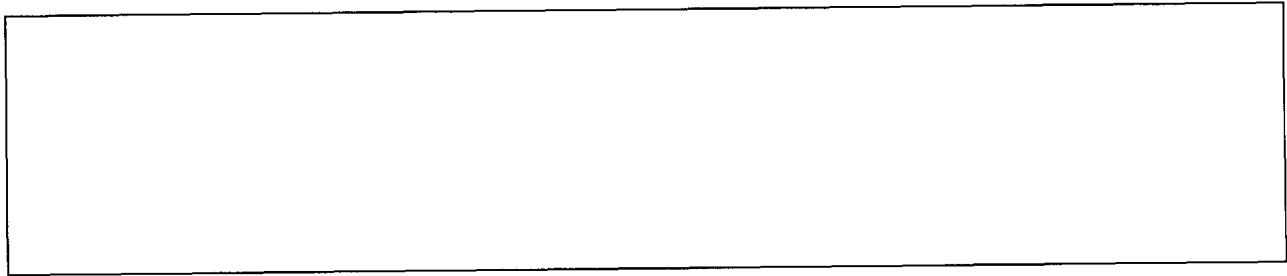


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From a methodological point of view, it would have been more correct to devote more time to the statements of the conference participants than to the report, the supplementary reports, and the concluding remarks.



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