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THEORY OF THE OPERATION IN DEPTH AND TRENDS IN ITS DEVELOPMENT

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[Article, title as above, by Col L. I. Voloshin, Candidate of Military Sciences]

[Text] At all stages of organizational development of the Soviet Armed Forces our party has devoted close attention to development of military science as one of the most important factors in increasing their combat might.

During the years of civil war, and especially during the period of peacetime construction, life advanced a number of problems connected with establishment of an expedient system of army and navy organizational development, reorganization of **military leadership** agencies, and elaboration of new forms and modes of conduct of operations, which had to be rethought and theoretically reelaborated.

Military science was faced with particularly complex tasks in the 1930's, when the threat of another world war became sharply more acute, and there occurred attempts by world reaction to unleash aggression by fascist Germany and militarist Japan against the Soviet Union.

Decisive influence on the development of Soviet military science was exerted by the character of the Civil War, which was distinguished by decisive objectives and by employment of vigorous forms of struggle and high mobility combat operations. An important role in the formation of military-theoretical thought was played by scientific writings by M. V. Frunze entitled "Unified Military Doctrine and the Red Army" and "The Front and Rear Areas in the War of the Future." These studies further developed Lenin's theses on the character of a future war and theoretically substantiated the major problems of readying the country for defense and organizational development of the army and navy.

M. V. Frunze, while not denying the possibility of lightning attacks, assumed that a war would most probably be of a protracted nature. A high degree of troop mobility in the conduct of operations will be combined in such a war with static forms of combat in certain sectors.

[Note: Passages enclosed in slantlines printed in boldface.]

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Презисор
to M. V. Frunze
COP? ?

The points stated by M. V. Frunze exerted enormous influence on the development of Soviet military science. They found reflection in official documents: in the 1925 Field Service Regulations, in the manual entitled "High Command," and in the field manuals of the infantry and other arms. These documents promoted to a substantial degree the establishment of a unity of views on many questions pertaining to preparation for and conduct of the engagement and operation. At the end of the 1920's a general theory of operations was elaborated, which included questions pertaining to operational employment of all ground forces and air arms existing at that time. Elaboration of the theory of the operation in depth constituted the most important achievement of Soviet military-theoretical thought in the period between wars.

* * *

Soviet military science, taking into account achievements in the development of armament and combat equipment of the armies of the principal capitalist countries as well as prospects of rearmament of the Red Army, provided in the form of a theory of the operation in depth a model for solving the problem of swift and resolute development of an offensive to operational depth.

This was a fundamentally new theory of conduct of the offensive operation, which made it possible to discard methods of slow, gradual surmounting of enemy defensive positions and to shift to more decisive and high-mobility forms of combat.

The problem of swift and deep development of operations was resolved not in an isolated fashion but in a close interlink with elaboration of such vital problems as the organizational structure of troops, their technical equipping and training, and determination of the character of the future war, operation, and engagement.

An important role in resolving these problems, which were important for strengthening the nation's defense capability, was played by the prewar five-year plans, successful accomplishment of which transformed our country from an economically backward land into an advanced, powerful industrial nation, which made it possible immeasurably to increase its military might. New branches of industry were established, branches with great output capacity: an aviation industry, tank industry, and automotive industry.

By the end of the Second Five-Year Plan the Red Army already possessed a solid material-technical foundation. The industry of the Soviet Union was capable of producing all modern armaments, which were equal or even superior in specifications and performance capabilities to those employed by the armies of the capitalist nations. Rapid equipping of the army and

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navy with new types of weapons and combat equipment sharply increased the firepower and maneuver capabilities of all military units. Under the influence of scientific and technological advances there occurred improvement in the organizational structure of combined units and units, and airborne troops were established and successfully developed. All this created favorable conditions for extensive military-theoretical research on the problems of war.



Not universally held - some Soviet theorists believed mass battles / losses might be avoided. See change Zhukov

Soviet military science saw a future war as an armed struggle of enormous armies, in which the belligerents would pursue decisive objectives -- total defeat of the adversary. It was believed that war would assume a broad spatial scale and would be characterized by great intensity. It would be protracted, consisting of an entire system of strategic operations.

The development of new arms and combat equipment and the establishment of well-trained mass armies substantially increased the capabilities of defense. Combining powerful weaponry and natural defensive positions, fortification structures and obstacles, troops could establish a continuous defensive frontage and not only hold occupied positions and areas but also inflict heavy casualties on the adversary. Under these conditions it was necessary for the attacking force correctly to resolve problems of penetrating the enemy's defense and pushing the advance deep.

The theory of sequential offensive operations of the 1920's, based on the experience of World War I, was obsolete and failed to meet the demands of a future war and new troop capabilities. It was necessary to elaborate a totally new theory of the offensive operation, to find new forms and methods of warfare which would make it possible to penetrate a fortified defense and to develop the advance to depth at a rapid pace, with the objective of achieving strategic success.



self-perpetuating

Soviet military science believed that in order to accomplish such complex tasks it was necessary to provide the delivery of attacks of enormous penetrating force to the entire depth of the operational formation of the enemy's defense. This could be achieved only by means of troops which were dispositioned in depth and operating in close coordination with one another, combining their own actions with artillery and airstrikes on enemy targets deep in the defense, as well as the delivery of airborne assault forces. This form of combat actions received the designation operation in depth.

Distance? Tactical depth as opposed to operational

The origination and development of theory of the operation in depth are connected with elaboration of theory of the engagement in depth, the principles of which were expounded at the end of the 1920's in the writings of Soviet military theorists M. N. Tukhachevskiy, V. K. Triandafillov, A. I. Yegorov, G. S. Isserson, et al.

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✓ The primary basis for elaboration of this theory was development of powerful and mobile weaponry and improvement (taking into account the practical adoption of new weapons and combat equipment in line units) of the organizational structure of combined units and operational formations, which obtained the capability not only to neutralize and penetrate the enemy's defense to full tactical depth and to hit his immediate reserves, but also to exploit tactical into operational success.

The operation in depth, the final step in elaboration of the theory of which was publication in 1936 of the new Field Service Regulations, included several stages: penetration of the tactical defense; tactical exploitation stage; operational exploitation stage. ✓

The principal feature of penetration in the operation in depth, in contrast to linear forms of combat, specifying gradual pushing back of the adversary, consisted in hitting the enemy in depth, in simultaneous neutralization, annihilation, pinning down, encirclement and total defeat of the enemy's main force. It would be performed by mutually coordinating infantry, artillery, tank and aircraft, simultaneously hitting the enemy's battle-field dispositions to full depth. With a sudden, deep and powerful attack the troops would smash through the defense and would endeavor to pour through the breach to operational depth. Coordinated action of troops would be organized thereby and maintained for the benefit of the infantry.

Toward the end of subsequent exploitation of the advance and increase in the maneuverability of combat actions, mobile troops would be engaged and tactical airborne assaults mounted. For this purpose the support echelons of armies and fronts would contain motorized-mechanized or mounted-mechanized combined units as so-called mobile groups. Mobile groups were considered one of the most important elements in the deployment of troops of the army and front and a decisive means resulting in considerable depth and scope to an operation, as well as a high rate of advance. *

Operational
levels
of command


The operation in depth also demanded deployment in depth of army and front troops. The tactical order of battle of the battle group included a penetration echelon, penetration exploitation echelon (mobile troops), an air group, and an airborne group. Assault armies, well equipped with combat hardware, transport vehicles and communications gear, were to be employed on the main axis. Gaining of air supremacy, cutting off the combat area from an inflow of enemy reserves, and prevention of flow of supplies to the defending enemy troops were also considered important conditions for achieving success in the operation in depth.

A special role in accomplishing these missions was assigned to aviation. Attacking the withdrawing adversary, bridges and river crossing points, defensive structures at intermediate positions, reserves advancing from depth and in assembly areas, aircraft helped achieve a high rate of advance,

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prevented the enemy from breaking contact from the pursuing combined units, disorganized the enemy's ranks, and isolated the combat zone from an inflow of fresh manpower, which in the final analysis predetermined the enemy's annihilation piecemeal.

Theory of the offensive operation in depth advanced a new mode of combat actions, the essence of which consisted in uniting the efforts of the tactically non-interlinked penetration echelon, exploitation echelon, assault, holding and other forces into a single attack mechanism, ensuring the enemy's defeat to the entire operational depth of his dispositions.

Corresponding forms of maneuver were also determined taking into account the mobile character of offensive operations: the frontal assault, the attack on converging axes; a combined attack (a number of splitting attacks of various force along a broad frontage); wide envelopment; encirclement.

While giving priority to the attack, this theory also devoted certain attention to development of tactical and operational forms of defense. Defense was assessed as a mode of actions employed for the purpose of economizing in manpower, gaining time, and altering the relative strength in manpower and weapons in one's own favor. It played the role of an instrument in operational support and preparation for the attack.

But not strategic


Such prominent Soviet military leaders as M. N. Tukhachevskiy, A. I. Yegorov, I. P. Uborevich, I. E. Yakir and Ya. I. Alksnis devoted considerable attention to further elaboration of this theory and comprehensive practical verification of its points in war games, field exercises, and troop maneuvers. It was reflected not only in the Field Service Regulations but also in numerous written studies, in the periodical press and in speeches by top-echelon Soviet Army personnel.

As in Gantsov



Thus elaboration of the /fundamentals of theory of the operation in depth/, which specifies simultaneous neutralization of the enemy's defense, delivery of deep, devastating attacks on all elements of his tactical order of battle (due to which conditions were created for swift advance to great depth and tactical exploitation), was a qualitatively new stage in development of Soviet art of warfare and a major achievement of this art. For the first time there was noted a tendency toward an increase in the scope of future operations and an increase in troop mobility and maneuverability.

On the whole theoretical elaboration of the major questions pertaining to preparation and conduct of operations in the prewar period made it possible to arm our cadres with advanced military knowledge and to begin purposeful preparation of the army and navy to repel aggression.

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The principal points of theory of the operation and engagement in depth found practical application and further development in the operations of the Great Patriotic War.

Development of the art of penetration took place under conditions of continuous improvement of the enemy's defense. His defense, beginning in the summer of 1943 and running up to war's end, was characterized by a high degree of stability and persistence on the part of the troops, vigor and mobility of actions. Penetration of such a defense demanded a great deal of skill on the part of Soviet commanders and troops. Of great significance under these conditions was selection of the most effective methods of penetrating the defense and forms of operational maneuver.

The following would be mounted, depending on the operation plan: a frontal assault aimed at deep penetration of the defense and at splitting up the opposing force; frontal assault with subsequent envelopment of enemy forces in order to encircle the adversary, either independently or in coordination with adjacent units. Frontal assaults aimed at splitting up the enemy force and destroying it piecemeal. "Salient Thrust" = "Crushing Blow"

The defending force would be subjected to simultaneous heavy delivery of artillery fire and airstrikes to the entire depth of his dispositions. The adversary would be neutralized with the greatest density in the first defensive zone. Following softening-up by artillery and airstrikes, rifle units and combined units would shift to the attack. Infantry-support tanks and self-propelled guns would advance in the battle formations of the rifle subunits.

The advance would be continuously supported by artillery fire and airstrikes. Aircraft and long-range artillery would hit the enemy's reserves at tactical and operational depth, immobilizing and disorganizing them. Swift penetration of the defense would be achieved as a result of close coordination of fire and attack.

Break Through
OPS

"The principal areas for improving the art of penetration of the defense at this time were, first of all, a decrease in the number of breakthrough sectors and their width: a front would most frequently penetrate the enemy's defense in one or two, and less frequently in three sectors. Second, a decisive massing of men and weapons in breakthrough sectors by weakening other sectors, which made it possible, with a slight overall superiority, and sometime with equal forces, to establish the requisite (two-threefold or more) superiority. Third, improvement in the art of deploying battle groups with the aim of maximum utilization of their combat capabilities."¹

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More than 50% of rifle combined units were concentrated in breakthrough sectors, up to 60-80% of artillery and mortars, and 80-100% of tanks and aircraft. All this ensured establishment of the requisite superiority over the adversary.

Mobile army and front groups would be engaged for exploitation (tank armies, tank, mechanized and cavalry corps, mounted-mechanized groups), and combat actions would be shifted to operational depth. Achievement of swiftness in penetration of the defense and a high rate of advance were secured by mounting powerful attacks in narrow sectors of the front, with subsequent widening of the breach toward the flanks and advancement to depth without a halt.



The increased firepower, mobility and striking power of ground troops predetermined successful penetration of a fortified defense at a comparatively rapid pace and to considerable depth.

The tactical order of battle was continuously improved in order to maintain superiority over the enemy and to build up efforts in the course of operations. In the first period of the war, for example, fronts frequently maintained a single-echelon operational formation, understrength reserve, and an insufficient number of aircraft. Beginning in mid-1943 the fronts began establishing stronger forward and support echelons, powerful exploitation echelons (army and front mobile groups), and substantial reserves of all arms.

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A deep tactical order of battle and consequently deep operation exploitation at a rapid pace was promoted by a continuous increase in the quantity and improvement in the quality of combat equipment being supplied to the troops, and improvement in the modes of its employment.

Types?

In spite of the persisting difficulties, through the heroic efforts of the entire people, guided by the Communist Party, by the middle of 1942 a smoothly running and rapidly growing war economy had been established in our country. Geared over to a war footing, the nation's economy was supplying the battle front with everything needed for the war effort.

During the war years the Soviet Union produced twice as much weapons and military equipment and of better quality than fascist Germany. Soviet industry produced (from 1 July 1941 through 1 September 1945) 134,100 airplanes, 102,800 tanks and self-propelled guns, 825,200 artillery pieces and mortars.² And this in turn ensured an increased rate of advance and depth of combat missions of units, combined units and formations.

In the first period of the war, for example, the depth of the army offensive operation was only 50-90 km, while in subsequent periods it increased to 100-150 km and more. At the same time tactical densities per kilometer

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of breakthrough sector increased: infantry -- up to 7.6 battalions; artillery pieces and mortars -- 180 (not including rocket artillery); tanks and self-propelled guns -- more than 20.³

Artillery constituted the principal means of fire neutralization of the enemy. Enhancement of its role was inseparably linked with the art of massing forces on selected axes, while elaboration of the theory and practice of the support fire plan for the attack proceeded from theory of the operation in depth. Reliable neutralization of the defense during the period of deep artillery softening-up bombardment, continuous artillery support of the assault phase and close artillery support of deep advancing troops transformed the attack into a unified process of advance by attacking troops under continuous artillery fire cover.

3 Phases

The air offensive also became further development of the points of theory of the operation in depth. From sporadic strikes by small groups of aircraft there was a transition to continuous depth-dispositioned actions by large air forces working in close coordination with ground troops.

Of course under present-day conditions the volume of tasks in offensive operations has increased sharply, while the modes of their execution by artillery and aircraft have become more complex. However, experience in the organization and conduct of offensive artillery and air actions obtained during the war years retains its significance in large measure, especially in combat operations without the employment of nuclear weapons.



Attainment of operation objectives was determined to a significant degree by prompt buildup of efforts by our forces, particularly tank combined units and formations. One of the most important problems in accomplishing this task was determination of the time and mode of engagement of tank armies, which comprised the principal striking force of fronts.

TA Mech
army
designators

It was believed that it was expedient to engage them after penetration of the tactical defense zone. Experience showed, however, that combined-arms armies of the front forward echelon could not in a number of cases independently accomplish the task of penetration at a rapid pace. Therefore, in order to deprive the enemy of the capability to bring up reserves, to occupy deep fortified positions and thus to exert considerable influence on the course of the front operation, the forward echelons of tank armies would be engaged to complete penetration of the tactical defense zone. In operations beginning in the second half of 1944 (Belorussian, Iasi-Kishinev, Vistula-Oder) tank armies as a rule would be engaged following penetration of the adversary's tactical defense zone.

This was dictated first and foremost by an increase in the striking power of combined-arms armies -- the forward echelon of the front. They would be reinforced with a large quantity of artillery, infantry-support tanks,

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independent tank and mechanized corps, which made it possible successfully to penetrate the enemy's defense. Under these conditions engagement of tank armies would be executed at operational depth, which ensured favorable conditions for exploitation at a rapid pace and achievement of the operation end objective. *

If we consider that in a number of operations tank armies were successfully utilized in the forward echelon to penetrate the defense on independent axes, we can state that during the Great Patriotic War the Soviet command solved a totally new problem of operational art -- preparation for and conduct of an offensive operation by a tank army.

Experience in organization and conduct of such operations is of great value for operational training of tank and combined-arms combined units and their staffs under present-day conditions.

As a result of rapid penetration of the enemy's defense, favorable conditions were created for swift pursuit of the adversary, employment of decisive forms of maneuver at operational depth with the objective of wiping out operational reserves, taking intermediate objectives without a halt, crossing rivers, cutting off avenues of withdrawal and encircling large enemy forces.

Encirclement and annihilation of large forces became the principal form of conduct of Soviet offensive operations. Theory of the operation in depth became enriched with the practical experience of encirclement and annihilation of the enemy with the forces of one or several fronts. Encirclement was accomplished both at tactical, close operational, and considerable operational depth.

Soviet operational art was also enriched with the practical experience of /organization and conduct of depth-sequential front and army offensive operations./ In most cases completion of one offensive operation would create the conditions for mounting a subsequent operation without a pause. This was promoted to a substantial degree by firm and continuous troop control in the course of the entire operation. Precisely under conditions of a rapidly changing situation and the sharply marked maneuver character of troop combat actions, particularly mobile troops, prompt acquisition and processing of data on situation changes by staffs of all echelons enabled the front (army) command to reach a suitable decision and skillfully to execute it.

A most important indicator of improvement in the art of preparing for and mounting front and army offensive operations during the war years was a steady increase in the scope of these operations.

In the third period of the war front operations were conducted to a depth of 400-600 km, with an average daily rate of advance of up to 25-30 km and

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check against
other sources

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more, and army operations -- to 100-180 km. These figures significantly exceeded the standard figures elaborated on the basis of theory of the operation in depth in the prewar years. An increase in the scale of operations was a consequence of increase in the quantity of combat equipment participating in operations, continuous increase in firepower, concentrated employment of armored and mechanized troops, and continuous improvement in the combat skill of troops and staffs as well as their ability to conduct mobile actions.

Soviet operational art in the Great Patriotic War proved to be the most advanced art of that time. It was superior to the art of preparing for and mounting operations by the German-fascist command. Theory of the offensive operation in depth, elaborated by Soviet military science in the prewar years, found application in many operations of the Soviet Armed Forces.

One can state with full justification that the most important achievements of Soviet art of warfare include elaboration and successful practical execution of a new form of strategic offensive -- operations by front groups, mounted for the purpose of achieving a specified strategic objective by the coordinated efforts of several fronts jointly with formations and combined units of other Armed Forces branches.

This was a totally new phenomenon in the art of warfare.

The Great Patriotic War made major adjustments in theory of the operation in depth, leaving the general idea, but radically altering the content of establishment of battle groups and the tactical order of battle, organization of penetration of the enemy's defense, and offensive exploitation. ✓

* * *

All weaponry continued rapidly developing in the postwar period and continued to be supplied to the combat units in requisite quantities.

Theory of the offensive engagement and operation were developing during the initial postwar years taking into account acquired experience, on a new technological foundation. It retained for the most part those same characteristic features of the attack, but improved modes of combat appeared.

Soviet military theory held that the front (army) offensive operation can begin under the following conditions: penetration of a fortified defense; penetration of fortified areas; penetration of a hastily occupied defense; encounter engagement.

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Offensive operations with penetration of a fortified defense were acknowledged to be the most typical type of operation and the most complex kind of offensive action. They consisted in forming breaches in the adversary's defense by destroying men and equipment, as well as capturing fortifications to the entire tactical depth with simultaneous widening of penetration toward the flank and further deep development of penetration. Only after penetration of the enemy's tactical defense and crushing of the closest operational reserves did troops obtain sufficient freedom of action for exploitation, splitting up and encircling enemy forces.

Independent of the conditions of initiation of the offensive operation, it was based on the idea of encircling the enemy and simultaneously annihilating him. Only a decisive offensive with encirclement of large enemy forces leads to annihilation and capture of the enemy and creates conditions for swiftly seizing strategic or operational objectives and positions.

Required for successful penetration was massive utilization on selected axes of all types of combat equipment, and particularly artillery and tanks, simultaneously hitting the enemy to the entire depth of his tactical order of battle.

It was believed that the quantitative indices of personnel and weapons employed in this last war for mounting large offensive operations had retained their significance. It was demanded that forces established for mounting attacks possess adequate strength to smash any enemy resistance and to ensure the crushing of approaching enemy reserves and successful advance of troops to the entire depth of the operation. Proceeding from this, average tactical densities of personnel and weapons in a breakthrough sector of 1 kilometer of frontage were determined as follows: infantry -- 3-4 battalions; 180-220 artillery pieces and mortars (excluding antitank artillery) for the period of preparatory bombardment; 25-30 infantry-supporting tanks and self-propelled guns (for the attack-echelon combined units); 4-6 combat engineer companies.

Postwar estimates

Decisiveness of objectives, participation in operations of large masses of ground troops equipped with diversified combat equipment, large air forces, airborne troops, and naval forces on coastal axes, a large spatial scale, intensity and continuous nature of combat operations, as well as a high degree of mobility were held to be characteristic features of the offensive operation.

On the whole Soviet military-theoretical thought following the war correctly determined the character of the offensive in combat operations without employment of nuclear weapons. The offensive was viewed as the classic form of penetration of a fortified defense, when a strategic front of both sides had already been established, when all or the bulk of armed

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forces were already deployed and could be utilized for mounting operations. This thesis was subsequently refined further, when nuclear weapons were adopted.

Nuclear weapons were viewed as the principal means of destroying the enemy (his nuclear weapons, troop deployments, air and naval forces, and other important targets); completion of the crushing of enemy forces was assigned to ground troops.

An endeavor to take into consideration the experience of the Great Patriotic War applicable to the conditions of nuclear war predominated in theory of the offensive operation.

Subsequently extensive equipping of the armed forces branches with nuclear weapons led to a change in their role.

Principal attention in this period was focused on problems of preparing for and conducting offensive operations under conditions of employment of nuclear weapons. The general points of theory of the operation in depth, pertaining to the character of offensive operations, their objectives and spatial scale, modes of preparation, conduct and support, as well as questions pertaining to utilization of personnel and weapons in the attack received further development.

Employment of nuclear weapons and a substantial increase in troop mobility and fighting power gave offensive operations an even more mobile, dynamic and decisive character, increasing their spatial scale and shortening their duration. Views were expressed in the armies of capitalist countries that the offensive, due to a lack of continuous fronts, will be mounted on separate axes, with a substantial separation of the most combat-efficient operational forces, particularly tank, from the main forces.

Massed nuclear strikes, maneuver of personnel and weapons parallel with and perpendicular to the front, and swift troop actions following nuclear strikes are acquiring decisive significance. Offensive actions will be distinguished by intensive combat effort to seize and hold the initiative, by a diversity of employed methods of defeating the adversary, and will be waged under conditions of considerable radioactive contamination, flooding and physical destruction.

✓ At the same time it was noted that in spite of the decisive role of nuclear weapons in operations, success can be achieved only with unification of the efforts of all ground forces arms, as well as the units and combined units of other armed forces branches operating in coordination with them. Solution of the problem of mounting deep strikes experienced new development. An increase in the depth of the enemy's defensive tactical order of

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battle and the fact that major targets were located at a great distance from the line of contact dictated the necessity of increasing the depth of attacks mounted by the advancing troops. Increased firepower and considerable weapons range, high mobility and striking power made it possible to mount an offensive to great depth and at a rapid pace. It became possible simultaneously to hit all enemy targets at operational depth with nuclear weapons, with the results of these strikes exploited by ground troops and airborne assault forces.

It was believed that the offensive operation should constitute an aggregate of battles and engagements, coordinated in objective, place and time, conducted on a specified territory by ground troops and air forces in coordination with the troops of other armed forces branches. All troop actions should be carried out according to a unified plan and be directed toward the earliest possible defeat of the opposing forces.

strat. op

The offensive operation could include first and subsequent operations of forward-echelon troops; advance and engagement of support-echelon troops; combat actions by air forces, units and combined units of the various arms and special troops, as well as reserves. First and subsequent nuclear strikes constituted a most important component part of this operation under conditions of employment of nuclear weapons.

The problem of the tactical order of battle in an offensive operation underwent further development. It began including not only the forward and support echelons but also groupings of arms and branches, as well as reserves of all types.

In order to achieve swift defeat of opposing forces and rapid advance to operational depth, there was to be a strong attack echelon, containing the greater part of total manpower and weapons.

→ 1st strat echelon - OR its 1st echelon?

The support echelon was designated for building up troop efforts and exploiting the offensive success of the forward echelon on the main axis; for replacing some forward-echelon units and combined units which have sustained heavy casualties; mounting of strikes on new axes; crushing enemy reserves and repulsing counterthrusts (counterattacks); for completing defeat of the enemy remaining on the flanks and to the rear of the advancing troops, plus performance of a number of other missions.

Depending on the prevailing situation, the tactical order of battle could include the support echelon or reserves, or both simultaneously.

Probably the former

It was acknowledged that any mode of offensive operation should be based on a combination of nuclear strikes with swift advance by the troops. In the armies of the capitalist nations it was believed that decisive defeat of the enemy can be achieved as a result of mounting nuclear strikes and

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decisive attack by troops along the shortest axes, which would make it possible to split up the defending forces and to destroy them piecemeal.

The question of selection of main axis of advance, which under conditions of nuclear war can run not only into the weak but also strong points in the defense, also received fuller substantiation. The selected axis should ensure advantageous conditions for engagement of friendly troops, effective employment of weapons, swift breaking up of the enemy's defense and the stability of his main forces, and prompt execution of assigned missions.

The following principles form the basis of planning, organization and conduct of the offensive operation: establishment of superiority over the adversary on the main axis; preemptive actions in mounting attacks and deploying troops; securement of reliable delivery of effective fire on the entire defending force; swift advance to depth and widening of the breakthrough sector toward the flanks; continuous buildup of efforts on the major axes; extensive maneuver of men and weapons; splitting up of the enemy forces and their annihilation piecemeal.

It was believed that the lack of a continuous defense, developing opportunities to open up breaches in the enemy's tactical order of battle, can enable the attacking force at the very beginning of the operation to advance in march columns at a rapid pace. For swift advance to operational depth it is essential to utilize primarily tank troops from the forward echelon, as well as support-echelon forces.

Considerable attention was devoted to the matter of increasing the rate of advance.

It was assumed that under conditions of nuclear war a number of operational-tactical measures are essential in order to achieve a high rate of advance. They included the following: delivery of decisive nuclear fire on the adversary; prompt and effective utilization of the results of this delivery of fire; selection of the most expedient forms of employing troops and modes of their accomplishing operational-tactical missions; achievement of superiority in troop mobility in the course of an operation; skilled organization of all types of support.

Extensive employment of forward detachments, airborne assaults, strong tank forces, bold maneuver, and prompt buildup of efforts were specified for increasing the rate of advance. A special role is assigned to the element of surprise and beating the enemy in mounting attacks.

Questions pertaining to combatting antitank weapons and ensuring uninterrupted control obtained further development in theory of the offensive operation. A new question was also reflected in it -- combat against air-mobile troops.

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The problem of combatting enemy antitank weapons was to be resolved as follows: first of all it was necessary to learn how to hit antitank weapons with fire from all types of weapons at the disposal of the advancing troops and to thwart control of antitank guided missiles. In addition it was necessary to increase the survivability of friendly tanks and other armored targets both by improving the tactics of their employment and by introducing additional devices decreasing the vulnerability of armored targets.

Following were considered the most expedient means of ensuring uninterrupted control: improvement in organization of troop control and the system of control facilities and communications centers; improvement of work methods of commanders and staffs; planning and execution of measures to protect control facilities from mass destruction weapons; securing of stable operation of radio electronic equipment under conditions of heavy jamming; advance elaboration of measures to restore disrupted control.

Resolution of the problem of combatting enemy airmobile troops is one of the most vital tasks of theory of the offensive operation. Combat against airmobile troops should be waged at the tactical echelon, since air defense weapons capable of engaging low-flying targets are concentrated here. Antitank weapons and guns mounted on armored vehicles can be employed against airmobile troops. But short-range missile and conventional artillery systems are considered to be the principal weapons for engaging them.

Other questions pertaining to the offensive operation have also experienced further development: destruction of the enemy's operational reserves and repelling of his counterthrusts, troop actions in areas of contamination and physical destruction, river-crossing operations, employing of tactical and operational airborne assaults, etc.

In view of preparations for nuclear war by imperialism as well as by the leaders in Peking, Soviet military doctrine proceeds from the position that a potential future war will be nuclear. Therefore all problems of the offensive operation were examined applicable to nuclear war.

In the course of a war with employment of nuclear weapons, however, combat operations on separate axes can be conducted only by conventional weapons. In connection with this considerable attention was also focused on offensive actions without the employment of nuclear weapons. ✓

Resolved at this level were problems of selection of main axis of advance, establishment of decisive superiority in personnel and weapons on selected axes, particularly fire superiority, determination of the tactical order of battle, modes of conduct of offensive operations, operations planning, organization and maintenance of continuous interaction and control, etc.

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It was noted that the principal condition for a successful offensive without the employment of nuclear weapons is the establishment of superiority over the adversary in tanks, artillery and aircraft on the main axes of advance.

Selection of main axis of advance should ensure successful penetration of the tactical defense zone, swift advance of troops into areas where the most important enemy installations are deployed (offensive nuclear weapons, control facilities, airfields, etc), into the flank and rear of the main enemy force with the objective of destroying it.

It was emphasized that the tactical order of battle can include the same elements as when attacking with the employment of nuclear weapons, but it is essential to establish a stronger forward echelon, whereby support echelons and reserves can be brought somewhat closer to the forward echelon, which will ensure their faster engagement and will reduce the depth of the tactical order of battle.

Various modes of conduct of offensive operations under these conditions were also examined. They could include sequential massed artillery and airstrikes to the entire depth of the enemy's defense in combination with a swift troop advance. It was noted that it is essential to knock out of action at the very outset of an operation the enemy's offensive nuclear weapons and aircraft, to pin down his reserves, to disrupt control, and in the course of the offensive continuously to build up attacks, primarily by engaging support echelons and reserves.

Thus as the scientific and technological revolution advances Armed Forces technical equipment, organizational structure of troops and modes of conduct of combat operations continue to improve.

Views on the character of conduct of military actions and organization of operations radically changed with the adoption of nuclear missile weapons. During troop training it was taken into consideration that the new weapons had significantly expanded the framework of operations and had increased the significance of morale-political and psychological qualities of personnel.

The principal mission of Ground Troops armed with operational-tactical and tactical nuclear missile weapons was the destruction of offensive nuclear weapons and other enemy targets, and the crushing of his remaining forces. Full exploitation of the results of nuclear strikes for swift accomplishment of assigned missions became a totally new element in their actions. The principal role in achieving operation objectives was assigned to operational-tactical missile and air forces, as well as tank, motorized infantry and airborne troops.

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Training of personnel was organized on the basis that in present-day operations an offensive will be characterized by an absence of continuous fronts and linearity in troop actions. Combat operations may develop simultaneously over large areas parallel with and perpendicular to the front.

Troops were trained to mount an offensive on a number of separate axes with the objective of splitting up the opposing enemy force and destroying it piecemeal. In all instances, however, the main efforts of the advancing troops were concentrated on the principal axes, where massed nuclear missile strikes would be delivered. Zones of advance became considerably broader than in the past, which made it possible extensively to maneuver men and weapons.

Considerable attention was focused on mounting high-mobility combat operations. This was based on the mass equipping of troops with tanks, infantry combat vehicles, armored personnel carriers, and other highly mobile equipment. In the course of an operation considerable importance would be attached to the employment of tactical and operational airborne assaults, tactical aviation, air defense forces and weapons, special troops, the conduct of protective measures against mass destruction weapons, etc.

In connection with a radical change in the nature of the engagement and operation, sharp and rapid situation changes are inevitable, which has increased the significance of the independence of units and combined units, the initiative of commanders of all echelons, and has demanded daringly bold troop actions, swift and deep penetrations, and extensive employment of close and deep envelopments.

And although the term "operation (engagement) in depth" has not been employed in official documents since the 1960's, the general principles of this theory have not lost their significance and are continuing to be improved on a contemporary material foundation of warfare. (V)

FOOTNOTES

1. A. M. Mayorov, "Penetrating a Defense: the Theory and Practice of World Wars," VOYENNAYA MYSL', No 5, 1978, page 84.
2. See "Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya" [Soviet Military Encyclopedia], Voenizdat, 1976, page 66.
3. "Armeyskiye operatsii" [Army Operations], Voenizdat, 1977, pp 10-54.

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