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The Problem of the Organizational Structure  
of Front and Army Field Commands

by

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Recently, in the pages of the Special Collection of Articles of the Journal "Military Thought", consideration has been given widely to the problem of the organizational structure of operational headquarters. On this point a number of authors have properly pointed out that the existing organizational structure and equipment of front and army field commands require radical reexamination, as they are inconsistent with the changed nature of modern operations and the demands made on troop control. We are fully in agreement with this view.

Under modern conditions, control points (punkt upravleniya), as the organs for directing combat operations, are one of the important objectives for enemy nuclear strikes. This is especially true of the major operational headquarters - those of fronts and armies.

For this reason the most important condition for ensuring firm and uninterrupted troop control is, in our opinion, an increase in the viability, mobility, and maneuverability of headquarters. This can be attained provided the headquarters have few personnel and are well equipped with the latest technical means of control, and also with staff cars having good cross-country ability and suited for the work. Only under these conditions will a headquarters be able to move rapidly behind the troops, and more frequently change its location, and thus sharply reduce the possibility of its discovery by the enemy and destruction by nuclear weapons.


As already noted in the press, the front and army field commands in existence at the present time in accordance with the provisional TO&E, are too unwieldy, insufficiently mobile,



and inadequately supplied with means of control and movement. By virtue of this, as has been shown by the experience of exercises in postwar years, the headquarters of a front is able to move not more than once in two or three days, and an army headquarters, once a day. It is entirely obvious that with modern tempos of attack of 100 km and more per day, such a situation is fraught with the danger of loss of troop control and may lead to failure of the operation.

Before taking a look at the organizational structure of the control organs, let us dwell briefly on the new technical means of troop control, by which we mean first of all the means of "elementary mechanization" ("malaya mekhanizatsiya"). In our opinion it is necessary to introduce more widely into all headquarters selector communications, communications scrambling devices, radio-commutation, photocopying devices, electronic-electric screens and plotting boards (these last particularly in the headquarters of missile troops and artillery and of chiefs of PVO troops), and it is also necessary to improve the sets of various stamps, etc. It is especially necessary to create models of staff cars and of field equipment for the work of headquarters. All this will play a positive role in increasing the operational efficiency of headquarters work.

As a positive example one may even cite the use in one of the exercises of the Carpathian Military District, in the spring of 1961, of the mobile photo-laboratory of an airborne army, for the reproduction of small graphic documents and diagrams. The laboratory crew of three men, headed by an officer, reproduced in a very short time hundreds of various diagrams, graphs, designs and schedules, substituting for the labor of no less than 30 officers and draftsmen. Positive results have also been achieved by the use of a field cartographic unit for the reproduction of documents supplemented by maps. Despite the duration and imperfection of the technological process, because of the improved organization of the work, the time for the issuance of the documents was significantly decreased. In one of



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the divisional exercises in the Carpathian Military District, a field cartographic unit, staffed by a small group of officers, NCO's and enlisted men, reproduced hundreds of graphic documents, a thing which was not within the capabilities of the entire district headquarters.

Passing on to the problem of the organizational structure of control points, we believe that the existing division of them into forward command posts (PKP), command posts (KP) and rear control points (TPU) is correct in principle, since this does increase the viability and operational efficiency of headquarters to a considerable degree. Such a system, however, does not fully guarantee the firm and uninterrupted direction of the combat operations of troops, especially of missile troops and the forces and means of PVO and of aviation. Such a system does not permit the effecting of coordination of the control points in case one of them is put out of action, and it leads to parallelism in the work and to duplication of one another.

The experience of exercises underscores the views expressed in previous articles of the Special Collection to the effect that the forward command post of a front or army, by virtue of its small staff and inadequate equipment of control means, cannot fully substitute for a KP when the latter is put out of action. In fact, how can one speak of such interchangeability of a PKP and KP when, for example, the missile troop and artillery chiefs of a front or army are at the PKP, and have the basic means for controlling missile troops at the KP and do control them through their headquarters, which is also located at the KP. Such a situation can occur also for the chief of the PVO troops of a front or for the commander of an airborne army, where the basic means of control are located at the command post of the front or airborne army.

Besides this, it is from the command post that the basic communications are maintained for coordination and communications with higher headquarters. Together with this, the attachment of almost all the responsible persons, the best and most highly trained generals and officers, and

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also a considerable part of the control means, to the forward command post, seriously weakens the command post, which, in case the PKP is put out of action, will experience great difficulties in troop control.

Therefore, in our view the personnel and equipment of control points must be such that in case one of them is put out of action, another can substitute fully for it.

The organizational structure which we are proposing for a front field command (Diagram No. 1) basically comes to the following.

A command post and an alternate command post (ZKP) are created within the front, which are capable of independently carrying out full and purposeful direction of troops. In addition, a rear control point is set up which will carry out the functions of missile, material-technical and medical support of operations, and in case of necessity may even temporarily assume control of the troops.

The command post and alternate command post of a front command are made up of personnel of directorates and departments of all arms of troops (or services) at reduced strength, which must ensure the direction of all arms of troops, as well as the organization and maintenance of uninterrupted cooperation among them.

In order to guarantee stability of troop control, each KP and ZKP must be provided with identical communications regiments, the forces and means of which will permit the organization of communications in two positions. The rear control point is provided with a communications battalion and a separate communications company of the missile rear. The makeup of the remaining communications units may be the same as that stipulated by the provisional TO&E.

Correspondingly the communications within a front are also organized into a KP, ZKP, and TPU.

Thus, all the control points of a front are equipped

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with autonomous communications, thus guaranteeing their independence and reliable communications with the troops and among themselves.

This system of organizing troop control into a KP, ZKP, and TPU was tested in the operational-rear services exercise in the Carpathian Military District in July 1961 under the direction of the Commander-in-Chief of Ground Troops, Marshal of the Soviet Union V.I. Chuykov, and produced positive results.

As has been shown by the experience of this exercise, it is advisable to locate the ZKP 40 to 50 km from the KP, to the side or in front of it, and, in the interests of security, for a specified period of time complete radio silence is observed in it, and strict limitation of messages over technical means of communication. The ZKP receives all information on troop positions and combat operations from the command post by "VCh" telephone, by telegraph with a communications scrambling device, or by mobile means. During this period, part of the officers of the ZKP may be used for work with the troops.

If the KP should be put out of action, the alternate command post is automatically transformed into the command post and completely takes over troop control. During shifts of the KP, the control of troops may temporarily rest with the ZKP.

Because of the importance of intelligence in modern operations, all means of it are concentrated in the hands of the chief of intelligence of a front, in order to ensure the purposeful use of these means for the prompt and full acquisition of information on the enemy, and above all on his means of nuclear attack.

Missile, material-technical, and medical support, as already pointed out, is effected from the rear control point of the front. The building up to strength and training of the reserves are directed from here, for which purpose the TPU will have a deputy troop commander of the front

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for combat training with a directorate of organization and replacements and a department of combat training.

In connection with the fact that problems of missile support have acquired exceptionally great significance and are one of the main tasks of the rear, it is proposed to introduce the position of deputy chief of the rear area of a front for missile support, subordinate to whom would be the directorate of missile and artillery armament and the missile fuels department.

As for tank-technical and motor-tractor support, the experience of the last war and of postwar exercises has shown that it is most convenient to solve these problems from the command post of the front, since it is from here that the planning of the operation is carried out, within which the problems of the use of armored and motor transport troops occupy a large place. Therefore, with the aim of increasing operational efficiency in the solution of these problems, it is more expedient to put the departments for armor and motor-tractor equipment in the command post, subordinating them to the deputy troop commander of the front for technical matters. Changes in the title of this position are dictated by considerations of eliminating varying interpretations of the problem.

In our opinion the positive aspects of the proposed organizational structure of a front field command are:

--achievement of interchangeability of control points, increase in their viability and stability, and ensuring uninterrupted troop control;

--decrease in the personnel of the field command of a front by one sixth in comparison with the provisional TO&E in force; the attainment of a greater reduction in the personnel of a field command obviously is not possible, since the means of automation and mechanization of control procedures are actually still only being developed and have not been tested in troop exercises; with the introduction of these means into troop units, the personnel of a front

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field command can be further reduced by about one third;

--increase in the mobility of control points and in their capacity for rapidly changing their location, thus increasing the operational efficiency and flexibility of troop control.

The organizational structure of the field command of a combined-arms or a tank army can be analogous to that proposed for a front field command. Other forms, however, are also possible, one of which we have presented in Diagram No. 2. In essence it consists of creating two equal control points (the first and the second) in an army field command, which are capable of independently planning and carrying out operational troop control. A rear control point is also set up.

The basic directing nucleus of an army field command is the operations center. It includes the chief of staff, the chiefs of the arms of troops and of special troops (missile troops and artillery, engineer and chemical troops, PVO and communications), the chief of the operations department, the chief of intelligence, the deputy army commander for the rear, and five officers (three from the operations department, one for the rear, and one for the armored and motor-tractor service).

The operations center, which is headed by the army commander, will be located at one of the control points, and will direct the troops on the main axis, and the second control point will at the same time direct the troops operating on separate axes or cut off from the main forces. Part of the officers of the second control point can also be used to carry out occasional assignments in the troop units.

When necessary, an operations center headed by the commanding officer can quickly be transformed into the second control point. When one of the points is put out of action, complete direction of troop operations can be assumed by the second control point.

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The rear control point carries out all the functions inherent in the missile, material-technical, and medical support of the troops of an army. If the first and second control points are put out of action, the TPU may temporarily assume troop control. With this aim, officer-operators from the basic arms of troops are included in its makeup, and communications and cipher sections are set up.

All three control points ensure autonomous communications with the troops and among themselves.

The method of organizing the control points of a combined-arms or tank army obviously has advantages over the existing organizational structure and is more responsive to modern requirements.

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DIAGRAM 2

BASIC ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF A FIELD COMMAND OF A COMBINED-ARMS (TANK) ARMY

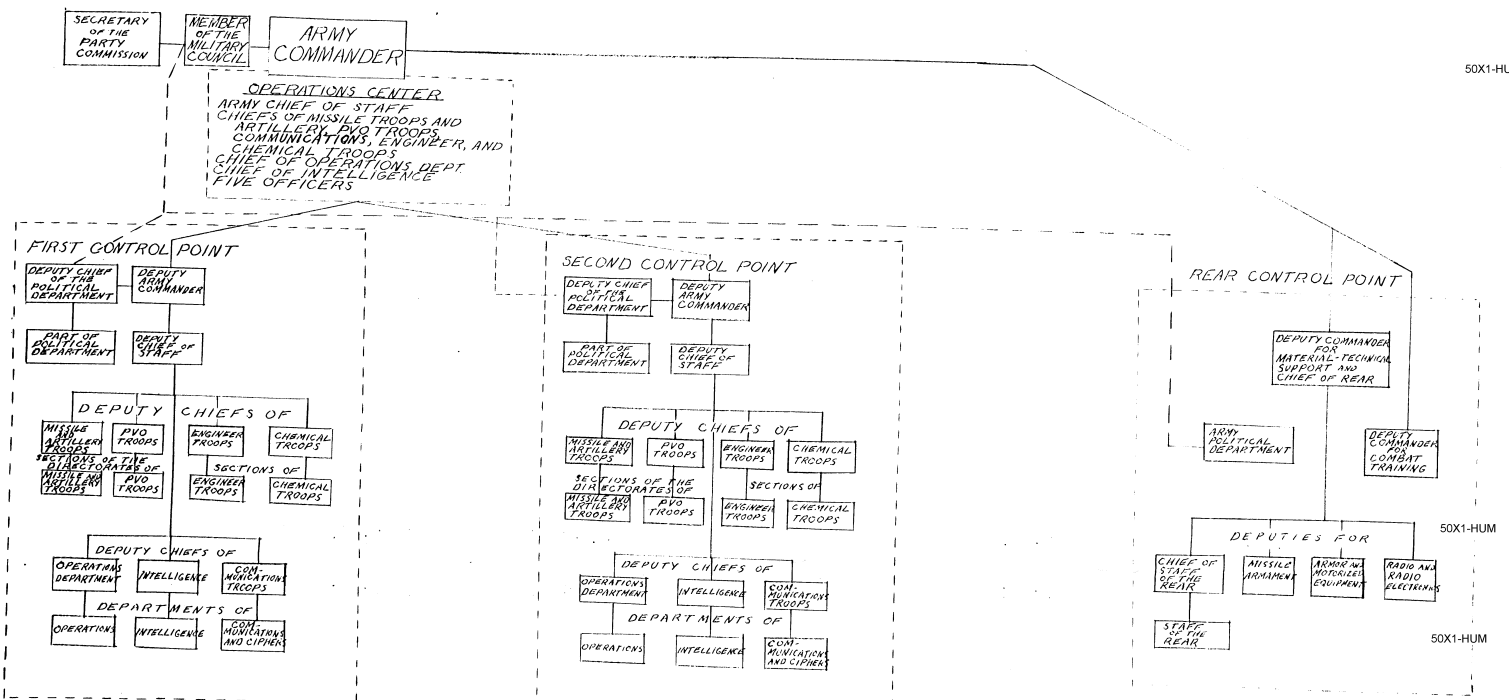


DIAGRAM 1

BASIC ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF A FRONT FIELD COMMAND

