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SPECIAL REPORT

on Communist Propaganda

DEBATE OVER ROLE OF MILITARY
IN NEW SOVIET COMMAND STRUCTURE

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DEBATE OVER ROLE OF MILITARY
IN NEW SOVIET COMMAND STRUCTURE

Signs that the Soviet regime is in the process of creating new institutions for national security have been accompanied by a debate in the military press over the role and representation of the military leadership in the new command structure. An assumption that existing control procedures are inadequate, and an awareness that the fact of collective leadership places difficulties in the way of institutionalizing command and control arrangements at the highest level, have underlain this debate. An article in RED STAR on 5 January by Maj. Gen. V. Zemskov disclosed that the regime is currently in the process of creating special military-political organs for the control of the country and armed forces. While failing to specify the command structure of the new agency for national defense leadership, Zemskov nonetheless pointed to precedents in Soviet history as well as postwar Western practices in support of the view that supreme authority over the armed forces falls "completely within the competence of the political leaders."

Tacitly taking issue with Zemskov's view, Lt. Gen. I. Zavyalov, writing in RED STAR on 31 March, argued that the requirements of Soviet military doctrine and the complexity of modern warfare imposed a need for "unity" of political and military leadership in a "collective organ" of national security leadership. The Zemskov and Zavyalov articles come against the background of persistent military-political tensions since the beginning of 1965 over the general question of the respective roles of the military and political leaders in the determination of national security issues.

1965-66: COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP AGGRAVATES CHRONIC TENSIONS

Khrushchev's ouster and the criticism of his "voluntaristic" policies by his successors provided a unique opportunity for the military to air its longstanding grievances against political intervention in the sphere of defense. Writing in RED STAR on 4 February 1965, Marshal Zakharov, Chief of the General Staff, seemed to exploit the

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new leadership's much publicized incantations on the return to "scientific" methods of leadership by stressing that such an approach was "fully applicable" to the solution of military problems. Zakharov's professional bias was revealed in his sharp criticism of the "great damage" inflicted on defense policy by Stalin's rejection of professional advice from "prominent military theoreticians and practitioners" and his transparent attack on the "very expensive" and "irreparable" damage done by Khrushchev's intrusions into military policy. Writing at about the same time in the IZVESTIYA supplement NEDELYA, Zakharov's deputy, Col. Gen. S. Shtemenko, seconded his superior's criticism of the "cult" and avowed that "recommendations" by the supreme military command were being given "due consideration" in leadership deliberations.

While these military arguments for a greater voice in the decision-making process seemed responsive to the division of authority among Khrushchev's successors, the political leadership reacted with predictable dispatch. A series of articles in the military press and elsewhere during the first half of 1965 reaffirmed the party's authority over all matters of military endeavor. One such article by Colonel V. Karamyshev in RED STAR on 12 February 1965 rebutted Zakharov's contention that the military was responsible for the "scientific" determination of defense policy. "Only" the party, claimed Karamyshev, possessed the necessary leadership qualities to insure a "strictly scientific approach" to the solution of military issues. Consistent with his stress on the party leadership's ultimate authority over all matters relating to the national security, Karamyshev recalled the CPSU program formulation that party leadership is the "foundation of foundations" of military construction. Similarly, he brought up the concept of the "collective" nature of the armed forces one-man-command principle--a concept which the military has long regarded as one fostered by the party to fetter the initiative of its leaders.

The question of formalizing the procedures for command and control of the armed forces was raised for the first time in available military literature after Khrushchev's ouster by Col. Gen. N. Lomov, a prominent military theorist and long-standing lobbyist for military causes. In an article in the January 1966 issue of the restricted Ministry of Defense publication MILITARY THOUGHT, Lomov called for the creation of a "single military-political organ" which would "unite" the political and strategic leadership is wartime as well as "in times of peace." He argued--as military spokesmen had before--that the complexity of modern warfare and the new weapons developed as a result of the technological revolution had raised the premium on professional military expertise in

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any command arrangement over the armed forces. Although Lomov conceded that "history knows no cases" of the transference of political control to other hands, "specifically to a military command," he argued that "recommendations" of the higher military command as a "highly qualified adviser" on military problems "cannot be ignored by the deciding political levels."

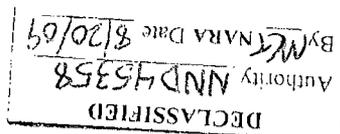
Despite the disavowal that the military sought anything more than an advisory role on national security questions, Lomov gratuitously noted a "trend"--which he attributed to "capitalist" countries--toward enhancing the "independence" of the military command. He also pointed out that this tendency toward concentrating "all power in the hands of the higher military command" was often accompanied by an "elimination" of the "interference" of the political leaders in the execution of purely military policies.

The implication that the Soviet military regarded a large measure of autonomy as indispensable to its functions was conveyed in Lomov's assertion that the successful implementation of "practical" tasks connected with "military construction" in the USSR required a "definite degree of independence" for the military leadership. Further, Lomov indicated that this stipulation was imperative in any "arrangement" designed for the overall strategic and political control of the armed forces. He reaffirmed his position in an article in *KOMMUNIST OF THE ARMED FORCES*, No. 22, in late 1966. Citing the formulation in the CPSU Program that the principle of party leadership of the armed forces is the "foundation of foundations" of military construction, Lomov added the caveat that "unity of command on a party basis" is a "most important principle" of military construction.

1967: RED STAR ARTICLES DIVERGE OVER ISSUE OF MILITARY ROLE

In a RED STAR article on 5 January, Maj. Gen. V. Zemskov, a long-standing, articulate spokesman for regime interests, disclosed that in the event of war supreme governmental authority would be vested in special "military-political organs" which "are already now being created." Although Zemskov acknowledged the increased demands on professional military competence posed by modern warfare, he argued that leadership "cannot be left in the hands of the military command alone" and that the political leadership must "more actively" involve itself in the solution of "purely" military issues. Despite his failure to identify the locus of supreme authority or specify the command structure in the new organs, Zemskov's discussion indicated that he personally favored

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an agency patterned on something similar to the State Defense Committee of World War Two--an institution consisting solely of representatives of the political leadership headed by Stalin.

Zemskov's position was compatible with the treatment of the "probable" higher "agency of command" contained in the book "Military Strategy," published under the editorship of Marshal Sokolovskiy. Although that publication treated the creation of such a governmental body in a tentative way, it did note that if such an organ were created it might be delegated the "same powers held by the State Defense Committee" during the war. "Military Strategy" also termed the creation of a "single higher political agency" an "essential condition" for the conduct of a future war.

Zemskov's role as a regime spokesman is apparent from his previous sharp criticism of military efforts to enhance the higher command's interests at the expense of the political leadership. As co-author of a critical review of the first edition (1962) of "Military Strategy," Zemskov attacked the authors of the Sokolovskiy volume for their misinterpretation of the respective roles of politics and strategy in determining state defense policy. "It is the prerogative of the Communist Party and the Soviet Government, and not of the military leadership," he said.

Whatever the motivations underlying Zemskov's disclosure regarding the creation of the new organs, a RED STAR article several months later implied that the military leadership was pressing its case for formal representation. In a major two-part article in RED STAR on 30 and 31 March, prominent military theorist Lt. Gen. I. Zavyalov contended that the requirements of Soviet military doctrine imposed the need for a "collective organ" of national defense leadership premised on the "unity" of political and military leadership. The impression that Zavyalov was staking out a claim for a military share in the decision-making process was heightened in his discussion of the authorship of the Soviet military doctrine which, he alleged, "required" military-political collaboration on national security questions. In an effort to legitimize the military's credentials in the realm of decision-making, Zavyalov revived the tendentious line that the military as well as political leaders were responsible for having "worked out" the doctrine.

Rebutting Zavyalov's views, an article by regime spokesman Col. A. Babin in RED STAR on 6 April--entitled "The Party Is the Leader of the USSR Armed Forces"--reaffirmed the party's primacy in "all" fields of military endeavor. Citing the CPSU Program formulation on the party's preeminence in military affairs as an "immutable"

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principle of Soviet military construction, Babin asserted that the regime's defense policies are being implemented on the "precise basis" of "general directives" issued by the party through the CPSU Central Committee and "under its control." As far as authorship of the military doctrine was concerned, Babin indicated that it was vested in the party and was merely one of the ways in which political leadership of military affairs was manifested.

As a warning to potentially dissident elements in the military, Babin related the programmatic formulations on party supremacy adopted over the past decade to the decisions of the October 1957 CPSU plenum--decisions that terminated the military's high-water mark of influence in the postwar period.

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