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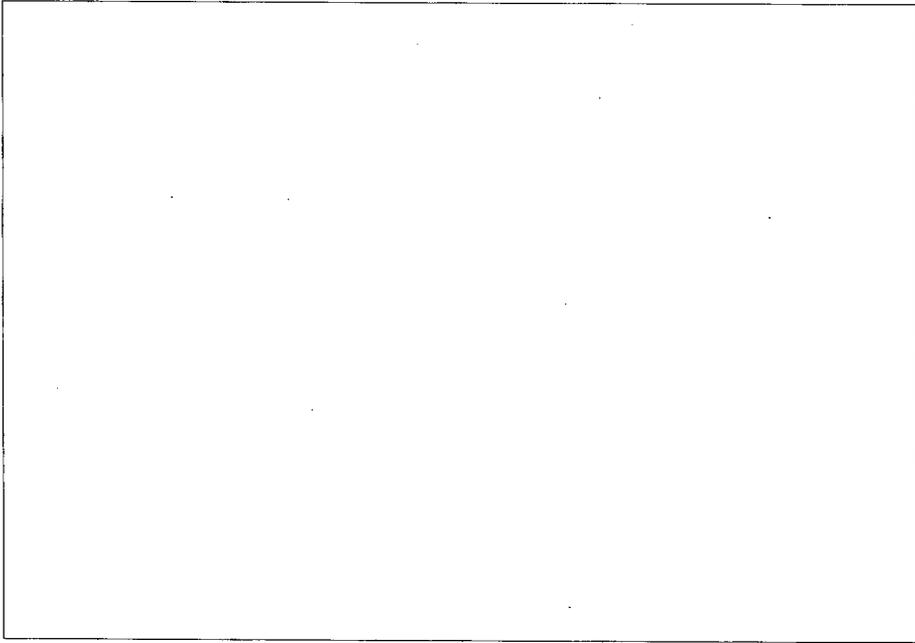
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*Controversy Over the Role of the Soviet General Staff:
Indications and Issues*

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
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RESEARCH PAPER

Controversy Over the Role
of the Soviet General Staff:
Indications and Issues

Summary

Two recent articles in the Soviet press by Army General V. G. Kulikov, chief of the General Staff, contain strong hints of an ongoing controversy over the role of the General Staff in the USSR's strategic leadership. The controversy may be related to changes in the responsibilities of the General Staff, to its relationship to other elements of the armed forces, and to its influence in the high-level military decision-making process.

The principal theme of the articles--published in *Pravda* and the *Military Historical Journal*--is that control of the armed forces should remain centralized in the General Staff. These articles emphatically restate propositions which seemed to have become accepted in recent years, implying that some are still a source of contention within the armed forces. For example, Kulikov stresses the importance of establishing a system of strategic leadership before a war, even though other evidence suggests that a supreme command was formalized in the late sixties.

Kulikov's assessment of the relationship of the General Staff and the supreme command may reflect some institutional tension generated by the creation of a supreme command and the expansion of the General Staff's

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responsibilities. He appears to be reminding doubters that the General Staff is indeed the central executive for operational planning and control.

His treatment of the General Staff's responsibilities indicates that its role in relation to nonoperational matters may also have been altered. The creation of two new directorates in the Ministry of Defense--one for weapons procurement and another reportedly for resource allocation and force planning--points in this direction. Nevertheless, the General Staff retains some influence in those matters and, in spite of the impact the new directorates may eventually have on SALT matters, the General Staff clearly remains the principal focus for SALT within the armed forces.

Finally, Kulikov's advocacy of the General Staff's central role may reflect personal rivalries over who will be the next Minister of Defense. Such rivalries could be one incentive behind Kulikov's attempts to publicize the importance of the General Staff's responsibilities and, implicitly, his own role in the country's strategic leadership.

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Introduction

Army General Viktor G. Kulikov, chief of the General Staff, in two recent articles in the Soviet open press appears to be defending the role of the General Staff in peace and war. That Kulikov has found it necessary to restate publicly the traditional and current functions of the General Staff suggests that there may be some internal controversy over its place in the country's strategic leadership. The controversy could relate to a realignment of the General Staff's responsibilities or to its position and influence vis-a-vis the military services in the military decisionmaking and resource allocation process. In proclaiming the interests of the General Staff, General Kulikov provides insight into current Soviet thinking on the organization of the country's strategic leadership and its forms for control of military operations and defense planning.

This paper analyzes the articles and assesses the possible areas of controversy in light of other evidence, principally unclassified documents.

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The Articles

Review of Shaposhnikov Memoirs

The first of Army General Kulikov's recent press articles is a review of the memoirs of the late Marshal B. M. Shaposhnikov, a former chief of the General Staff.* The memoirs were published together with lengthy extracts from Shaposhnikov's three-volume commentary on the role of a general staff --*The Brain of the Army*-- which appeared in the years 1927-29. Reviews of publications like this one, which are of primary interest to the military historian, would normally appear in *Red Star*, the military newspaper, but Kulikov's piece came out in *Pravda* (13 November 1974). Its lead sentence claims that the memoirs "had become the subject of fixed attention of Soviet society, especially the military reader." The principal message of the review is that the highly centralized control of the armed forces should remain in the General Staff.



Army General V. G. Kulikov,
First Deputy Minister of Defense
and chief of General Staff

The review provides a vehicle for Kulikov to discuss the requirements of contemporary strategic leadership and, in particular, the role of the General Staff. He endorses Shaposhnikov's views on the need for a unified political and military leadership and cites the

* Shaposhnikov served intermittently as chief of the General Staff and its predecessor, the Red Army Staff, for a total of seven years between 1928 and 1942. Kulikov is the third General Staff chief to associate himself with Shaposhnikov's memoirs. The book's introduction was signed by two former chiefs--Marshals A. M. Vasilevskiy and M. V. Zakharov--on 3 January 1972, just 28 days before Zakharov died.

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Soviet World War II high command arrangements as confirmation that the theory is correct. The introduction to the book praises Shaposhnikov as "a consistent adherent of consolidating the management of the armed forces in the General Staff" and for "laying the foundation of centralized leadership of the Red Army in the staff [and] gradually transforming it into a real General Staff." Kulikov uses the review to expand upon Shaposhnikov's ideas of the central place of the General Staff in the high command and to assert that modern developments in weaponry and technology have significantly increased the staff's importance in the country's defense.

Kulikov on World War II Strategic Leadership

The second article by Kulikov, published in the June 1975 issue of the *Military Historical Journal*, reiterates this theme. While ostensibly discussing Soviet strategic leadership in World War II, Kulikov frequently highlights lessons from the war applicable to the present.

Kulikov is uncharacteristically brief in paying the required tribute to the Communist Party before launching directly into a description of the system of strategic command which guided the Soviet war effort. While making it clear that overall political guidance of the military effort remained with the Party leadership, he emphasizes the role of the unified political-military strategic command in which all authority was concentrated in the State Defense Committee (GKO) and strategic leadership was accomplished by the Stavka (General Headquarters) of the Supreme High Command, both of which were chaired by Stalin. The General Staff, he points out, was routinely consulted by the Stavka before decisions were reached and provided all necessary planning and operational assistance to this body. Kulikov praises the system but notes the problems caused by having to create it after the war began. He emphasizes the need to establish it "in all details ahead of time, before the start of a war."

He then elaborates on the central roles of the Stavka and the General Staff as the highest forms of strategic military leadership--the Stavka as an element

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of *command*, and the General Staff as an element of *planning* and *operational control*. He maintains, as he did in his earlier article, that under contemporary conditions a further increase in the General Staff's role can be expected. Kulikov explains this as a logical phase in the development of the military art and, in this manner, links his case with a central thesis which has pervaded Soviet military and political-military literature since 1965.*

Kulikov also discusses what he calls the intermediate levels of strategic and operational-strategic command--specifically the "strategic axis" (*strategicheskoye napravleniye*) and the theater of military operations.** After some discussion of both the strengths and weaknesses of such commands, he acknowledges their utility, perhaps in a different form, in a future conflict. The article emphasizes the need for central command and control organs and stresses the critical role of a Stavka and the General Staff. He concludes by reaffirming that the experience of World War II "confirmed the correctness of our accepted views on the organization and nature of tasks of strategic leadership in the armed forces," leaving little doubt that, despite the historical context of the article, he is writing about the present strategic leadership of the Soviet armed forces.

* In that year, writers at the Lenin Military-Political Academy described innovations in troop control as the third stage of the military-industrial revolution of modern times. Since that time, not only has the theme been frequently repeated, but continuous research effort has been directed toward improving troop control.

** Three headquarters of strategic axes were formed in 1941 as an intermediate echelon between the Stavka and the front. They were disbanded in 1942. In late 1944 a Soviet theater command was established in the Far East. It commanded the Manchurian campaign in 1945 and was not disbanded until 1953.

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The Issues

The use of historical analogy to address contentious subjects has long been a feature of Soviet internal debate, and the relevance of historical discussions to current topics is usually clear to the informed Soviet reader. The Kulikov articles are notable for their reiteration of propositions which seemed to have been accepted in recent years. The explicit nature and constancy of Kulikov's themes and the vehemence with which they are advanced imply that at least some of these issues are still a source of contention within the Soviet armed forces.

Unified Political-Military Strategic Leadership

Kulikov's focus on the necessity of a unified political-military strategic leadership is consistent in the two articles. In the first, he cites approvingly Shaposhnikov's dictum that a "modern war" can be conducted successfully only when such unity of leadership prevails. The second article strongly endorses the World War II system of strategic leadership in terms which leave no doubt that it is also an endorsement for the present.

Kulikov's emphasis on the need to establish such a system and to coordinate it "in all details ahead of time, before the start of a war," is puzzling, however. A similar issue, with the same line of reasoning, was raised in the mid-sixties. Following a flurry of articles on the subject the issue seemed to have been resolved when, in October 1967, Defense Minister Grechko published an article which also outlined earlier forms of strategic leadership and claimed that the current problem was being settled along Leninist principles and on the basis of World War II experience. Since then there have been numerous articles and memoirs praising the success of the GKO-Stavka-General Staff system developed during the war. It was therefore believed that the Soviets had opted for a similar system of command to be held at the ready for any future crisis. Furthermore, [redacted] documentary evidence indicate that such a command has existed, at least in contingency form, for the past several years. One possibility is that a command system was decided upon in the late sixties but never fully implemented.

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The political sensitivity of this issue in an era in which the political leadership is stressing collectivity probably has led to some strain on military command and control arrangements. Articles published in 1966 and 1967 stressed the need for a decisionmaking apparatus commensurate with the needs of the modern nuclear missile age. They discussed the need for an institutionalized command system to integrate political and military aspects of decisionmaking and seemed to suggest a need for a supreme commander in chief to whom the military high command could turn as the ultimate source of authority in an emergency.

There can be little doubt that at least the military aspects of the recommended command system were implemented in the late sixties, but the issue of a supreme commander in chief may not have been resolved on the political plane. Unlike his predecessors, Brezhnev has never been publicly identified in that role. Several sources have named him as the predesignated wartime supreme commander in chief, however, and it appears that the military forces look to Brezhnev as their presumed commander. If Kulikov is now urging the creation of a peacetime command structure, complete with a supreme commander in chief so named, his timing is poor. With Brezhnev's health in question and the 25th Party Congress set for next February, it is unlikely that other leaders would be willing to take such a step.

An alternative explanation--one which we think is more likely--is closely connected with the central theme of Shaposhnikov's works and Kulikov's articles. All stress the essential and increasing role of the General Staff as the central element for planning and operational control of the armed forces. Kulikov's remarks establish the relevance of Shaposhnikov's thesis to modern times and emphasize the staff's close relationship to the supreme command, both before and during a war. He thus links the effectiveness of Soviet strategic leadership in peace and war with a strong General Staff. The issue of a unified political-military leadership may well have been resolved, as we thought, in the late sixties. Kulikov may be reminding both political and military readers it is essential that the military elements of the supreme command--especially its central executive, the General Staff--remain intact at a time

when succession to the top leadership posts is looming on the horizon. This would minimize the effect on strategic command of any problems encountered on the political plane. What may now be in question are the relationships between the Ministry of Defense and the General Staff, between the General Staff and the main staffs of the services, and between the General Staff and intermediate levels of command (i.e. theater commands).

The General Staff as Executive Agent
of the Supreme Command

In describing the General Staff's position in the World War II strategic leadership Kulikov emphasizes that it served as the central military executive of the highest command organ--the Stavka. His stress on this theme is curious in light of the firm evidence that the General Staff has, in fact, achieved the central role he advocates.

Kulikov notes that "only the Stavka of the Supreme High Command issued directives to the troops," but that the Stavka "did not make a single decision of any importance without first hearing the opinion of the General Staff." He also recalls that the staff converted the decisions into practical instructions, prepared directives for the troops, and controlled their execution.

The central role of the General Staff, however, was probably eroded somewhat during the early Khrushchev era. Still chafing at what he regarded as interference by the General Staff in operations at the front during World War II, Khrushchev, a former political commissar, actively sought to reduce the staff's stature. Moreover, development of strategic missiles led to a new concept of military operations. Khrushchev and several military theoreticians of the period posited that any future war might last only a few hours or days. Under this concept, the need for a central organ such as the General Staff to control the operations of all the armed services was considerably lessened. For Khrushchev, the most urgent necessity was control of the Strategic Rocket Forces. During the early days of the SRF's existence, control over that force was probably exercised directly by higher authority, possibly by Khrushchev himself.

After Khrushchev was removed from power in 1964, his successors eschewed reliance on a single massive nuclear war scenario and have supported the expansion of conventional forces to complement the growing Soviet strategic arsenal. In accepting the possibility that a war might begin with an indeterminate nonnuclear phase, Soviet strategists recognized the crucial importance of the transition to nuclear war and the need for centralized control of all operational forces to meet any contingency. Since Khrushchev's departure this control has been returned to the General Staff, which has brought all major field commands under its direct operational authority.

Kulikov reiterates this theme and emphasizes that the central role of the General Staff has become even more important as technological advances and new weapons have radically changed the character of modern war. His outline of the General Staff's functions indicates the scope of its current peacetime responsibilities:

The General Staff thoroughly analyzes and evaluates the unfolding military-political situation, defines developmental tendencies in the ways of conducting war and the means of applying them, organizes the preparation of the armed forces, and ensures their high combat readiness to repulse any aggression.

The General Staff and Service Commanders

Conflicts between the General Staff and the services over control of forces are nothing new, but old problems may have been exacerbated by the creation of a supreme command and the concurrent enlargement of the General Staff's role in direct control of forces.

The Supreme High Command includes the chiefs of the services in addition to political and other military figures. Even though they are members of this joint command which operates through the General Staff, they are commanders in their own right and have staffs and communication networks. They routinely communicate with their subordinates and exercise various degrees of control over their day-to-day operations. In his articles Kulikov could be reacting to some attempt to reduce the central role of the General Staff as an operational control executive, or he may merely be

reminding the military readership that there has been no change. We tend to accept the latter explanation.

Kulikov has consistently shown a sensitivity to any question of the General Staff's authority and in conversations with US attaches has seemed to overreact when the matter has been mentioned. In one such conversation Kulikov asserted that he could give a direct order to any of the operational commands of the Soviet armed forces. On another occasion, he went out of his way to point out that Soviet representatives at the Incidents at Sea Talks were operating under General Staff instructions. He stated that, while he usually tried to work through the Main Naval Staff, he wanted to make it clear that the General Staff had the last word.

The General Staff and Field Commands

General Kulikov makes references to creative and flexible planning, to encouragement of initiative in subordinate staffs, and to the role of theater commands. These seem to address the old but persistent issue of centralized versus decentralized command. An allusion by Kulikov to "intermediary organs of strategic leadership" is the first public statement by a Soviet leader that current military planning considers the option of creating theater-level commands.

In discussing the strengths and weaknesses of theater-level commands during World War II, Kulikov states: "In a future war intermediary organs of strategic leadership can apparently find some application, even though they will *not always* be represented in a form such as commands of strategic axes or theaters of military operations." (Emphasis added.) Such wording implies, of course, that they *sometimes* will be. Soviet military writings for many years have included a discussion of "theaters of war" and "theaters of military operations," but it has remained unclear whether theater-level control would be exercised by a formal theater command or by some element of a Moscow-based authority deployed forward temporarily for a specific operation.

During World War II the Supreme High Command regularly dispatched its representatives to the front, where they virtually assumed command of operations of single fronts or groups of fronts. Some front commanders and staffs developed a deep resentment of what they saw as the tutelage of "commanders" and staffs from Moscow who descended upon them and appeared to usurp their prerogatives. Some of this resentment surfaced after the war in the memoirs of former field commanders and their political officers, including Khrushchev. The latter, for example, was still bridleing at the General Staff long after his forced retirement and accusing its wartime leaders of attempting to cover up their mistakes.

Developing the optimum level of centralized authority consistent with the requirements of survivability and continuity of operations on the nuclear battlefield has become a central problem of Soviet military theory. New weapon systems, developing technologies, and moves toward the realization of a Soviet-dominated, but multinational, Warsaw Pact command structure have elevated the issue of theater commands to a major organizational dilemma for the Soviet high command. Kulikov's remarks evidence a sensitivity to this issue in both its present and historical contexts. He emphasizes the need for continuous and flexible central strategic planning while admitting that "a future war undoubtedly cannot avoid leading to the manifestation of radically new organizational forms of troop command."

Placing the Strategic Rocket Forces, Long Range Aviation, Navy, and Air Defense field commands under the General Staff reflected the Staff's increasing control responsibilities. That increase, however, expanded the scope of its direct authority beyond what would seem to be the optimum span of control. Possibly to cope with this problem, some measures have been taken since the late sixties to enhance operational coordination among the armed forces of the Warsaw Pact. Among these is the creation in 1969 of a Committee of Defense Ministers, a Military Council, and a Technical Committee, and the expansion of the Warsaw Pact Staff.

The General Staff and the Ministry of Defense

Kulikov's treatment of various aspects of the General Staff's responsibilities also indicates that its role in relation to nonoperational matters--and therefore to the Ministry of Defense--may be changing or in question. His claims to a General Staff role in nonoperational defense planning (e.g., weapon development and procurement) seem to betray a concern on his part for a possible erosion of the General Staff's authority in these matters.

In his review of Shaposhnikov's memoirs, Kulikov asserts that modern developments in weaponry and technology have significantly increased the General Staff's importance in the country's defense. He also notes that the General Staff "uses mathematical methods and automation to aid in solving complicated problems" and "organizes the preparation of the armed forces" for war. He addresses these same themes in the article on World War II strategic leadership. Kulikov states that the General Staff "participated in the preparation of proposals and statements of requirements for production of military equipment and weapons, and in calculating and planning troop supply, operational-strategic transportation, and communications security."

The General Staff has in fact had a central role in budgetary, weapons development, organizational, and mobilization matters for many years. Recent organizational changes in the Ministry of Defense, however, have almost certainly had an impact on several aspects of the staff's responsibilities. The appointment of two former General Staff officers to posts as Deputy Ministers of Defense suggests that some functions have been removed from the General Staff and placed directly under Minister of Defense Grechko.

Colonel General N. N. Alekseyev fills a newly created post as Deputy Minister of Defense for Armaments, suggesting that the principal responsibility for weapons development has been placed directly under the Minister. Alekseyev had previously served in the General Staff in a position long associated with

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Col. Gen. Engr. N. N. Alekseyev,
Deputy Minister of Defense
for Armaments



Army Gen. N. V. Ogarkov,
Deputy Minister of Defense
(reportedly for resource allocation
and force planning)

weapons development.* The reason for this change, which took place in 1970, is not readily apparent. It is not without precedent, however, since primary responsibility for weapons development resided in the Ministry of Defense, outside the General Staff, before and during World War II and throughout the fifties.

In all likelihood, the complexity of weapon technologies, the magnitude of the Soviet research and development effort, and the interaction of the Defense Ministry with military industrial concerns placed an excessive burden on the General Staff--especially after its responsibilities were enlarged in the late sixties. Alekseyev's new directorate may have removed much of the routine work from the General Staff, but if it continues to coordinate budget and arms procurement requests--and the evidence suggests that it does--the staff will continue to influence weapons development. General Kulikov makes reference to the General Staff's

* Alekseyev, while on the General Staff, was also a military representative on the Soviet SALT delegation.

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wartime role in weapons development, and he notes that the staff "defines developmental tendencies in the ways of conducting war and the means of applying them." He also emphasizes that all organizations of strategic leadership "planned and strictly coordinated their work with the General Staff." These statements indicate that the staff does, in fact, retain some responsibility for weapons development. Just how much responsibility and influence it retains may be a matter of contention.

The appointment of Army General N. V. Ogarkov* to another newly established Deputy Minister of Defense position could indicate a change in the General Staff's role in the preparation of the defense budget. His directorate is said to assess the effectiveness of various military programs and make recommendations for allocation of resources among the services. Therefore, the creation of this directorate could foreshadow further strains on the General Staff's relationships with the services as well as other elements of the Ministry of Defense.

The General Staff has been responsible for drafting the plan which guides the entire Soviet defense effort and provides for all aspects of Ministry of Defense operations, including weapons development, military construction, procurement of weapons and equipment, and manpower. Kulikov's remarks on the General Staff's use of "mathematical methods and automation" and its responsibilities for organizing the preparation of the armed forces for war seem to be still another defense of traditional responsibilities. He points out that the General Staff also uses modern analytical methods to solve problems, he stresses the need for continuous planning, and he emphasizes that mistakes are paid for dearly. Taken together with his remarks concerning the necessary role of the General Staff as the central military planning organ of the supreme command, Kulikov appears to be arguing against

* Ogarkov previously served as a first deputy chief of the General Staff and at one time was the senior military representative on the Soviet SALT delegation.

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the development of alternative centers for peacetime defense planning.

Ogarkov's directorate, depending on its competence, could conceivably develop into a rival of the General Staff in providing analysis to support defense planning. If Ogarkov is in fact responsible for this type of analysis, his group would probably be involved in decisions on matters formerly within the purview of the General Staff alone. Thus, the new department could rival the General Staff by analyzing program effectiveness and becoming an institutional critic of programs managed by the staff. Moreover, Ogarkov's group, outside the immediate supervision of the General Staff, could exacerbate interservice rivalries at a time when the staff's responsibilities for multiservice operational control seem to be increasing.

There is ample evidence of Soviet concern for systems analysis and for a "systems approach" to solving the complex problems inherent in a large military establishment rapidly assimilating modern technology. While a separate department may help the Soviets address those problems, there can be no doubt that the General Staff wants to retain its role as the Ministry's central planning organization.

The General Staff and SALT

Kulikov may also be sensitive about the General Staff's role in the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks. He recalls, for example, that during World War II one of the tasks of the General Staff was to prepare "materials for many intergovernmental meetings and conferences." Both Alekseyev and Ogarkov were SALT delegates while assigned to the General Staff. Both have now been appointed Deputy Ministers of Defense and have responsibilities which bear directly on further strategic arms limitations matters. Both could emerge as bureaucratic rivals to the General Staff on SALT.

Nevertheless, there is strong evidence that the primary responsibility for SALT matters within the Ministry of Defense remains in the General Staff.

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A Soviet official has stated that the technical aspects of Soviet SALT positions were determined by the General Staff. He emphasized that the staff made all recommendations for Politburo approval regarding numbers and technical stipulations. General Staff officers continue to serve as the principal military delegates and play a central role in advising the political leadership when SALT matters are discussed at summit meetings.

The General Staff's Responsibilities for
Organization and Mobilization

The General Staff's responsibilities for organization and mobilization, a matter of bureaucratic controversy within the Ministry of Defense in the past, are treated in an equivocal manner by Kulikov. Yet two former chiefs of the General Staff and a present first deputy chief of the General Staff have strongly argued in the past three years that these responsibilities belong in the Staff. Army General S. M. Shtemenko, a serving first deputy, goes so far as to say:

No major staff, and particularly the General Staff, can get by without an organ which works out organizational questions. Neither in peacetime nor in wartime, however, is any staff given the right to make any organizational changes in troop units. Only the General Staff has that right, and the work of improving troop organization is carried on continuously without interruption.*

Marshals M. V. Zakharov and A. M. Vasilevskiy, both former chiefs of the General Staff, in their introduction to Shaposhnikov's memoirs, approvingly describe his struggle--which lasted more than a year in the 1928-30 period--to place the mobilization function under the General Staff instead of under a separate directorate of the Ministry of Defense.

* Shtemenko, S. M., Army General. *The General Staff in the War Years - Second Book*. Moscow, Military Publishing House, 1973. Signed to press 18 July 1973. The first chapter of this book is devoted to the General Staff's Organization-Mobilization Directorate and appears to be totally out of context with the rest of the book, which was ostensibly written to describe the staff's role in "the liberation mission of the Soviet Army in Europe." Shtemenko seems to have had an axe to grind at the time of writing.

Kulikov, however, does not specifically mention the organization-mobilization function in his review. In the article on strategic leadership in World War II, he merely notes that this function was removed from the General Staff in 1941 without mentioning that organizational responsibilities were returned in 1943 and that mobilization responsibilities were regained sometime after the war. His casual treatment of an issue deemed so important to other authors is puzzling. Although the importance of organizational matters is emphasized by Kulikov in several passages of his latest article, he makes no attempt to claim that responsibility for the General Staff. This suggests that the issue has been decided, though whether in the General Staff's favor is unclear.

A Reflection of Personal Rivalries?

Developments relating to the General Staff over the past several months may reflect personal rivalries within the Soviet high command. Many of the recent appointments to key positions in the armed forces have gone to individuals who at one time or another were associated with General Kulikov. Moreover, Kulikov is a strong candidate to become Defense Minister when Marshal Grechko, who is 72 years old, retires.

The appointment of the relatively unknown Kulikov as chief of the General Staff may have been intended to prevent the kind of trouble experienced earlier, when the prestige of former chiefs like Sokolovskiy and Zakharov allowed them to rival the Minister of Defense as authoritative military spokesmen. Kulikov's star has risen rapidly nevertheless, and he has demonstrated the capability to take maximum advantage of opportunities. He has now emerged as a proponent of the staff's lofty traditional claims. Thus, Kulikov may have co-opted the very base of power he was to reduce. If this is so, it would put Kulikov in the vanguard of "professionalism," leaving Grechko, and possibly First Deputy Defense Minister Yakubovskiy, with the stigma of being "political soldiers." He would thus advance his own attractiveness in the eyes of the Soviet military to succeed Grechko as Minister of Defense while strengthening the hand of the General Staff. He must be careful, however, not to alienate the political

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Marshal I. I. Yakubovskiy,
First Deputy Minister of
Defense and commander in
chief of Warsaw Pact Forces



Marshal A. A. Grechko,
Minister of Defense



Army Gen. V. F. Tolubko,
Deputy Minister of Defense
and commander in chief of
Strategic Rocket Forces

leadership--traditionally watchful for military usurpers--or his prospects will be markedly dimmed.

Two other candidates represent interests which could be interpreted as allied with some of the issues relating to the General Staff's authority. Marshal Yakubovskiy, 63, is regarded by Western analysts as the candidate most likely to succeed Grechko should he leave the scene in the next year or two. As commander in chief of Warsaw Pact forces--essentially the western theater area--he could be an advocate of the "intermediary organs of strategic leadership" which Kulikov admits "can apparently find some application."

The other highly regarded candidate to succeed Grechko is Army General Tolubko, commander in chief of the Strategic Rocket Forces. A combined-arms officer, he has broad command experience in both strategic and general purpose forces and has spent 10 of the past 15 years in Moscow among the high command. Tolubko, at 61, is possibly more of a threat to the candidacy of Kulikov, whose relative youth--he is 54--and relatively short tenure in Moscow may be regarded as detriments. Tolubko, moreover, as a service chief, represents an institutional interest which may sometimes be at odds with the General Staff. Additionally, the Strategic Rocket Forces were the big loser in the mid-sixties when the General Staff's responsibilities for operational control were in-

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creased. At the time, Tolubko was serving as first deputy commander in chief of the SRF. Tolubko is also on close personal, and presumably professional, terms with Ogarkov, the new Deputy Minister of Defense whose department could develop as a rival to the General Staff in some nonoperational matters.

Despite the possibilities for personal rivalries, we have no direct evidence that they actually exist. Such rivalries could, however, be one incentive behind Kulikov's attempts to publicize the importance of the General Staff's responsibilities and, implicitly, his own role in the country's strategic leadership.

