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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

3 January 1978

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Director of Central Intelligence
FROM : Theodore G. Shackley
Acting Deputy Director for Operations
SUBJECT : MILITARY THOUGHT (USSR): The Matter of
Military Science Conferences

1. The enclosed Intelligence Information Special Report is part of a series now in preparation based on the SECRET USSR Ministry of Defense publication Collection of Articles of the Journal 'Military Thought'. This article begins with some general observations regarding the contribution made by military science conferences in solving many problems and practical matters of military art, and proceeds to a discussion of the actual preparation and conduct of these conferences, citing examples from various conferences held in 1966 and 1967. Here, matters such as the selection of a topic, the time of year for holding a conference and its length, as well as the selection of participants are treated. The author also discusses the value of holding joint conferences of military districts and military academies. This article appeared in Issue 1 (83) for 1968.

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

Theodore G. Shackley

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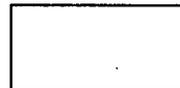
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Intelligence Information Special Report

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COUNTRY USSR

DATE OF INFO. Early 1968

DATE

3 January 1978

SUBJECT

MILITARY THOUGHT (USSR): The Matter of Military Science Conferences

SOURCE Documentary

Summary:

The following report is a translation from Russian of an article which appeared in Issue 1 (83) for 1968 of the SECRET USSR Ministry of Defense publication Collection of Articles of the Journal "Military Thought". The author of this article is Colonel General L. Skorobogatkin. This article begins with some general observations regarding the contribution made by military science conferences in solving many problems and practical matters of military art, and proceeds to a discussion of the actual preparation and conduct of these conferences, citing examples from various conferences held in 1966 and 1967. Here, matters such as the selection of a topic, the time of year for holding a conference and its length, as well as the selection of participants are treated. The author also discusses the value of holding joint conferences of military districts and military academies.

End of Summary

Comment:

The SECRET version of Military Thought was published three times annually and was distributed down to the level of division commander. It reportedly ceased publication at the end of 1970.

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The Matter of Military Science Conferences

by

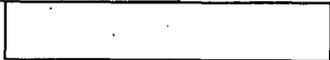
Colonel General K. SKOROBOGATKIN

Military science conferences held in the Armed Forces constitute one of the basic forms of military science work. In recent years the conferences have contributed to the solution of many military-theoretical problems, as well as of questions involved in building the Armed Forces and training troops.

In 1968, the Minister of Defense, Marshal of the Soviet Union A. A. GRECHKO, laid down important, specific tasks relating to operational training and combat training, and to the study, in the process of military science work, of a number of complex matters of military art. Among them were:

- further seeking ways of increasing and maintaining a high level of combat readiness of the armed forces to deliver powerful, surprise nuclear strikes against the enemy, to repel his strikes, and to go over to decisive operations;
- finding more effective types of highly mobile operations aimed at destroying the enemy when employing only conventional means of destruction;
- improving the methods of conducting meeting battles and engagements;
- improving the methods of moving large units that are in a state of high combat readiness over great distances from the interior of the country;
- further exploring the matters of the battle for air superiority and of destroying enemy missile submarines and aircraft carriers;
- working out problems of protection against weapons of mass destruction;
- making a comprehensive study of the matters of organizing and conducting defensive battles and operations under the diverse conditions of the initiation of combat actions;
- preparing scientifically based requirements for the organizational structure of the large units and formations of all branches of the armed forces and for their weapons systems, in light of the need to increase the

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combat capabilities of the forces during the non-nuclear period;
-- analyzing the problems involved in the morale and psychological training of the armed forces; determining the most advantageous forms and methods of training and educating personnel; and many others.

Effective theoretical analysis of new problems and individual matters is possible only if the quality of military science work is improved in every possible way.

3 The practice of military science work conducted in the armed forces in recent years has shown that in the solution of many problem matters and practical matters of military art and of other branches of military science, a major role is played by military science conferences held in the main staffs of the branches of the armed forces, at military academies, and in operational staffs and large units.

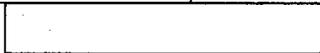
A Formations and large units have engaged in this important form of military science work on a particularly large scale. For example, in 1965 870 military science conferences were held, of which 740 were in large units and military schools. In addition, 1,060 scientific and technical conferences and more than 1,800 military science meetings were prepared and held in large units and units. In 1966, in only four military districts (the Baltic, Leningrad, Belorussian and Carpathian) 629 military science and scientific and technical conferences and scientific meetings were held. At least as many were held in 1967 also.

5 Many generals, admirals and officers have taken an active part in the preparation of the conferences and in the discussions of the questions presented at them. This indicates that this form of military science work is one involving truly mass participation. It makes it possible to involve in military-theoretical research a wide cross-section of military personnel, practical workers, and theoreticians concerned with military affairs. This ensures that the solution to many problems of military art and questions relating to the training and education of troops under modern conditions will be highly effective and scientifically based.

Experience shows that well-prepared and methodically conducted military science conferences and meetings contribute to the rapid assimilation of the new into the practice of operational training and combat training, an increase in the combat effectiveness and combat readiness of the troops, the development of a common approach to the matters of military art being discussed, and to an improvement in the military-theoretical knowledge of generals, admirals, and officers.



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From an analysis of the materials of military science conferences it is apparent that the staffs of the military districts, groups of forces, formations, and large units have by and large mastered this form of military science work. There have been, however, serious shortcomings in the methods of preparing for and conducting a number of conferences. The most prevalent of these is the low military theoretical level of the reports; new questions either are not raised in them or are not clearly presented. As a result the conferences have not been producing any scientific results. For example, the problems involved in increasing the combat readiness of troops have been discussed at many conferences, but the discussions came down mainly to methods of speeding up the system of warning, while the problems involved in bringing large units and units up to full combat readiness in a shorter space of time, and in improving control of the units during an advance, were hardly discussed at all and no recommendations were made regarding them.

These are a few observations of a general nature. Let us examine the key aspects of the subject in somewhat greater detail.

The preparation of a military science conference begins with the selection of the topic. The timeliness of the contemplated topic, the advisability of discussing it, and the extent to which its basic questions have already been studied at the given moment, are taken into consideration. This is usually derived from combat and operational training tasks.

In the last three years operational topics were those most frequently discussed at military science conferences in military districts and in groups of forces. Of course, they are the most important topics in scientific work, but it seems to us that in a number of cases it would have been advisable to submit for discussion other problems of military art as well. For example, the problems involved in the morale and psychological training of troops under modern conditions were examined in the Odessa Military District in 1966. New experience in the work of commanding officers was synthesized and problems involved in the morale and psychological training and education of personnel were studied in greater depth. The military science conference held in the Chief Directorate of Combat Training of the Ground Forces in 1966 dealt with a similar topic. Programs, instructional handbooks, and developments and improvements in the materiel resources of training centers and classes were based on its materials. The topic "Protecting the Troops from Weapons of Mass Destruction", which was discussed in the M. V. Frunze Military Academy, was unquestionably timely and useful, and attracted a great deal of attention.



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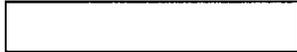
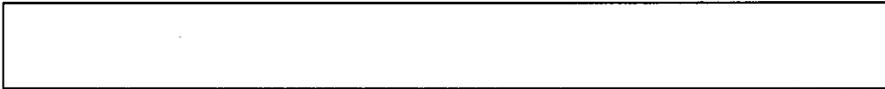
After the topic has been selected the purpose of the military science conference must be defined. As a rule, it will be either to study the nature of the tasks and the types of troop operations under different situational conditions, and to work out, based on what has been learned, proposals and recommendations to be tested in practice, or to synthesize the experience and summarize the results of scientific research on a certain problem, so that it may be incorporated into actual operational and combat training. In either case the purpose must be clear and attainable.

The time when a military science conference is held greatly affects its quality and should be selected so that the purpose of the conference reflects to the greatest possible degree the specific tasks of the troops and the actual opportunities of the speakers and participants to prepare for it. In practice, unfortunately, in a number of military districts and groups of forces the conferences have been timed for the end of the year, and more than 75 percent of them were held in November or December. Obviously the conclusions and recommendations resulting from these conferences cannot be fully relevant to the tasks assigned to the troops for the next year of training and their implementation does not always produce the anticipated results or becomes quite difficult. A factor that must be considered is that at the end of the year various tests and final meetings are being held, and plans are being worked out for the next year of training. The command personnel of military districts and the commanders of large units most often take their leave during this period. As a result, many generals and officers have often been unable to take part in the work of a conference or prepare for it properly, and the absence of command personnel considerably reduced the effectiveness of the conference.

From this the conclusion suggests itself that in most cases it is advisable to hold military science conferences among the troops at the beginning or first half of the training year, coordinating them with the goals and tasks of operational and combat training. In those cases where the results of military science work on a certain problem are being summed up, the conferences may take place at a different, more convenient time.

Not only the time but also the length of a military science conference should be discussed. Experience has shown that those that lasted one day, and some which lasted only a few hours, did not fully achieve their purpose. The time limitation made it impossible for the participants to present and substantiate their opinions and proposals thoroughly, particularly when it came to broad problem questions. It also cut down on the number of speakers, and therefore was not conducive to the development of a wide-ranging, creative discussion. The director did not have time to

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prepare a comprehensive concluding statement. Instead of the scientific findings being summarized, there was merely a statement that it would be desirable to continue research on the given problem. As an example, a conference held in 1967 in one of the military districts on the topic "The Commitment of a Front to an Engagement for the Purpose of Repelling a Counterattack by a Large Enemy Grouping and Developing an Offensive During a Strategic Operation in a Theater of Military Operations" lasted only five hours. The scientific value of the conference was not great. This example is not unique.

We believe that at least two days must be allotted to military science conferences, particularly those held in the staffs of military districts, groups of forces, and air defense and naval districts, where complex operational or wide-ranging topics are usually discussed. This would make it possible to examine the basic issues of the topic in greater detail and to summarize the results of the work.

The recent tendency in staffs of military districts to hold military science meetings instead of military science conferences cannot be considered correct. As we know, military science meetings are usually convened on narrow, specialized subjects, have a limited number of participants, and are mainly of a practical nature. While not denying the usefulness of such meetings in solving individual problems and occasionally special problems, we believe that the potentialities of this form of military science work are limited, and that the method of conducting it does not permit adequate discussion of complex wide-ranging topics.

The main report is of great importance to the work of a military science conference. If it is well prepared and contains scientific arguments for the proposals and recommendations advanced, it generates a creative atmosphere and stimulates officers and generals to participate. Therefore the most careful attention should be given to the drafting of the report. Above all it should contain a precise formulation of the questions on which it is desirable to hold a discussion and reach a decision. The speaker should closely relate theory to practice, provide an in-depth, scientific substantiation of the questions, proposals, and recommendations presented, and support them with convincing facts drawn from the experience of wars and current combat training. A report of this kind would unquestionably stimulate the thinking of the participants and give rise to a wide-ranging exchange of opinions.

Unfortunately, the military-theoretical level of some reports is still low, and their contents frequently consist of a boring repetition of



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generally known propositions. All this is not conducive either to a lively discussion or to the development of scientific recommendations.

Drafting the report is a complex matter requiring in-depth and comprehensive knowledge and a great deal of time. It is therefore most advisable that it be prepared by a group of highly trained generals and officers, with the assistance of various specialists.

To ensure a high level of participation in the conference (and, as a result, its overall productivity), the theses of the reports should be circulated one to 1.5 months in advance. By so doing the participants will be able to make a careful study of the basic topics at their leisure, and to thoroughly prepare themselves for their own speech, in order to make their contribution to the solution of the problems being discussed. It is sometimes useful to name the speakers in advance and assign them a category of questions.

It frequently happens that not only the participants, but the General Staff as well, receive the theses of the main report only a few days before the beginning of the conference. This gives them no opportunity to analyze the report in time and state the necessary recommendations and requests as to its contents. It has also been observed that when they are unprepared, the participants often substitute for scientific theoretical statements information on the state of political affairs in their service or branch arm, which occasionally may even be unrelated to the topic under discussion. In such cases attention is focused primarily on table of organization problems, coupled with recommendations to increase the number of personnel and the appropriations of funds.

The decision as to who the participants are to be is of great importance to the achievement of the goals of a conference. The answer to this question usually depends on the topic, goal, and scope of the conference, but in all cases the participation of a wide circle of generals, admirals, and officers from the appropriate branches of the armed forces, branch arms, and services is essential. Nevertheless, certain staffs of military districts do not always require the command personnel of the formations, large units, and military schools under their jurisdiction to attend the conferences. This adversely affects the results of the discussion of the topic, particularly the promptness with which the recommendations and proposals are incorporated into the training and education of personnel.

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The experience gained from the preparation for and conduct of certain military science conferences in the years 1966-1967 deserves consideration.

In 1966 a number of operational and combat training measures were implemented in the Southern Group of Forces: at assemblies of the command personnel of the Group, lectures were given and a staff game on the topic of the forthcoming conference was played on maps; certain propositions were worked out at command-staff exercises; conferences were held in large units on individual aspects of the topic. All this served as a good, practical foundation for conducting the military science conference in the group on a high scientific theoretical level.

Careful preparation was responsible for the success of the 1966 conference held in the Red Banner Transcaucasus Military District: three months prior to it, the theses of the main report were sent to all participants and it was decided which questions would best be raised from the floor. Naturally the discussion of the report proceeded efficiently, and specific, scientifically based proposals were made.

A large amount of preparatory work also went into the military science conference held in the Odessa Military District in 1967 on problems of organizing and conducting a front offensive operation using conventional means of destruction and subsequently employing nuclear weapons. In view of the timeliness of the topic for the armed forces, the theses of the main report were sent in advance to military districts, fleets, many central institutions of the Ministry of Defense, and to military academies. This ensured a lively discussion on the part of the participants and made possible a thorough examination of many facets of the given topic.

The practice of having the military districts and military academies jointly prepare for and conduct military science conferences should be endorsed and expanded. This makes it possible to study in depth the theoretical foundations of the topic and to relate them to the operational and combat training experience of the troops. We know that theoretical research among the troops can be of practical use if it is scientifically based and is thoroughly tested. Moreover, the working contacts of troops and staffs with the higher educational institutions enhances the theoretical training of military generals and officers, and the teaching staff of the academies is enriched by the experience of the troops.

The materials from joint conferences usually are of great scientific value and are useful to the troops. These may include, for example, the basic materials from the military science conference held by the Military

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Academy of Armored Troops i/n Marshal of the Soviet Union R. Ya. Malinovskiy in 1965 jointly with the field headquarters of the 5th Guards Tank Army on the topic of "The Problems of Constantly Maintaining the Combat Effectiveness of the Troops of a Tank Army During an Offensive Operation Conducted in the Depth of a Theater of Military Operations", and the materials from the joint conference held by the same academy with the field headquarters of the 7th Tank Army on the topic "Problems in Achieving High Rates of Advance During a Tank Army Offensive Operation Throughout the Depth of a Theater of Military Operations".

As experience has convincingly shown, it is necessary and advisable for the forces and the military academies to hold similar joint conferences.

The method of conducting military science conferences is of great importance. Depending on the topic and the number and complexity of the questions to be discussed, the method selected usually is that of holding either plenary meetings only, or a combination of plenary and sectional meetings. In the former case those attending are familiar with all the work of the conference and are able to participate in the discussion of the main report and the co-reports. This, however, requires a considerable amount of time. Consequently, it is advisable to use the method of holding plenary meetings only when the number of questions on which it is necessary to ascertain the opinion of many generals and officers is small. In the latter case, the reports and co-reports are also heard in plenary meetings, but they are discussed in the sections. The general proposals and recommendations worked out in the sections are submitted to the plenary meeting for final decision. This method makes it possible to consider a wide range of problems in a relatively short period of time and it is usually advisable to use it when discussing broad, wide-ranging topics. It enables a large number of participants to contribute.

The discussion of the questions presented will be fruitful if a purposeful atmosphere is created, imbued with a spirit of creativity and innovation. Each participant should feel that his statement will be listened to attentively, that his suggestions will be studied, and that everything possible will be done to find the best possible resolution of the given problem. There should also be a better balance between participation in scientific work by young officers who have received their higher command and engineer-technical education in recent years, and the speeches of generals and officers who have their wide experience in the Great Patriotic War and combat and operational training during the postwar period to offer.

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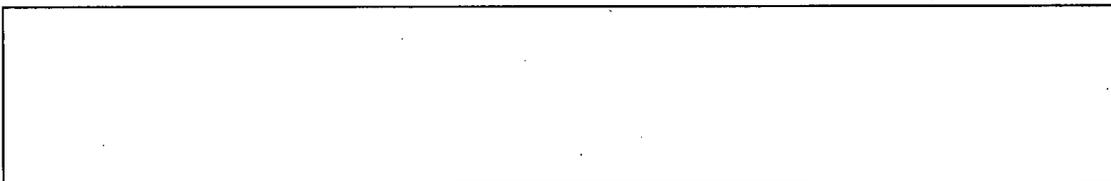
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Military science conferences should not be turned into working meetings or conducted according to the methods typical of them. If a theoretical discussion of a topic at a given conference is interrupted by remarks, rejoinders, and questions, it will be most difficult to arrive at a scientific solution to the problem presented. Scientific results can be attained only if there is free, creative, and purposeful discussion of the questions on the agenda.

The director should state in conclusion which questions have been successfully resolved and which problems remain unresolved, and should scientifically analyze and sum up the results of the study of the given topic.

A conference leaves behind valuable material, reflecting the experience and knowledge of a large, creative collective. It certainly should be summarized and disseminated to the appropriate staffs and institutions. Conference materials are usually of great value to scientific workers: they help them to accumulate the essential information without which further scientific research cannot be pursued.

The recommendations set forth in this article on the preparation for and the conduct of military science conferences will, in our opinion, help to improve the scientific results of conferences and will enable generals, admirals, and officers to participate more actively and creatively in working out scientific problems.



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