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IRONBARK

The Meeting Engagement in the Initial Period of a War

by

Lieutenant-General of the Reserves

L. Skvirskiy

At the present time, as is generally known, the mobile conditions of military operations, stemming from the very nature of nuclear/missile warfare, are becoming more sharply outlined. Under these conditions, meeting engagements and battles, quite obviously, are becoming almost the predominant type of troop combat operations. But it is right here that one discovers that the theory and practice of preparation and conduct of a meeting engagement have been poorly worked out by us. One does not have to look far for examples. It is sufficient to consider the course of operational-strategic exercises of recent years, and to study the theoretical works (including those published in 1960) on the problems of the art of operations in order to be convinced of this.

Strange as it seems, at the present time we do not have an officially determined definition of the term "meeting engagement". The Field Service Regulations, published in 1959, state that "a meeting engagement is a type of offensive combat in which both sides strive to attain a goal by offensive operations". The concept of a meeting engagement does not fit within the framework of this definition. Are the definitions of a meeting engagement which are found in the theoretical works acceptable, and do they correspond, in principle, to the new nature of nuclear/missile warfare?

To answer these questions, let us examine some of the definitions. In one of the Collections of Works of the General Staff Academy it is stated that "a meeting engagement can be described as the sum total of combat operations of the troops of operational formations and large units conducted under such conditions when during an operation both sides are striving simultaneously to execute operational tasks by conducting

IRONBARK

offensive operations along the same axes".

The authors' collective of the Military Academy i/n M. V. Frunze, maintains in one of its works that "the desire of both opponents to perform their tasks by using offensive operations will lead inevitably to a series of meeting battles and engagements during an offensive operation".

Marshal of the Armored Troops, P. A. Rotmistrov, points out that "a meeting engagement represents the sum total of simultaneous or consecutive battles during which both opponents strive to attain their objectives by an offensive".

In the pages of our journal Colonel S. N. Kozlov writes: "One must understand a meeting engagement as the clash of the operational groupings of the sides which are mutually striving to achieve their operational aims primarily by means of an offensive."¹

Apparently, foreign armies have studied this problem even less than we because foreign literature (we are speaking here only about that which is known to us) has thrown very little light on the theory and practice of a meeting engagement. From official American sources² it is known that the meeting engagement pertains to offensive operations under mobile conditions and is defined as a clash of formations and large units of the opposing sides which in the majority of instances are not completely deployed and are striving to perform their tasks by offensive operations on the very same axes.

It is easy to observe that all these definitions are similar. The difference is that some authors consider that supposedly the meeting engagement begins from the march and others that it begins only during the conduct of an operation.

1. Collection of Articles of the Journal "Military Thought", Issue 1 (32), 1957, p. 37.

2. U.S. Army Field Manual FM 100-5, Moscow, Voenizdat, 1955.

IRONBARK

The basic principle that in a meeting engagement both sides attack each other from opposite directions is held by all authors. At first glance it seems that this principle is correct and corresponds completely to modern conditions. Moreover, even in the past the essence of a meeting engagement was understood in a similar manner. This can be seen from Andogskiy's monograph The Meeting Engagement, published in 1918, from Triandafillov's work The Nature of Operations of Modern Armies, or from prewar articles by Varfolomeyev, Shilovskiy, Isserson, and others on the subject of the meeting engagement.

Actually, however, it pains us to state that as a result of precisely such an understanding of the essence of the meeting engagement, at operational-tactical exercises conducted in recent years against a background of the initial period of a nuclear/missile war, the same unfortunate errors have been repeated. The two sides usually draw their main groupings into protracted meeting combat operations instead of using the results of nuclear/missile strikes, open or poorly covered flanks, and often areas not occupied by anyone and then swiftly advancing to the operational depth.

It seems to us that the definitions cited above of the meeting engagement on which our command cadres and operational staffs are educated even today guide them to an obligatory deployment of the operational groupings of the two sides in a meeting engagement and to the participation of as large a number as possible of divisions in these clashes. As a result, in practice one observes that the main forces are drawn away from the performance of the basic tasks of a modern offensive operation in order to participate in a tank engagement or in the destruction of several advancing enemy divisions.

It is obvious that the definitions which have been cited of a meeting engagement are not calculated for the conditions of nuclear/missile warfare. For more than five years now we have admitted that meeting engagements will begin and develop much more often than before and that they will become a normal

IRONBARK

phenomenon, taking precedence over the remaining types of troop combat operations. And yet in defining the term "meeting engagement" we still use anachronisms. Right now when the goal of any offensive operation by ground troops is the destruction of enemy nuclear/missile weapons and aircraft, and the capture of important operational-strategic areas, the troops must not be oriented to the idea that a meeting engagement is nothing but the sum total of meeting battles or the offensive actions of the operational groupings of the two sides.

We suggest the following definition. A meeting engagement consists of meeting nuclear/missile strikes and swift offensive thrusts of the operational groupings of both sides during which each side uses the results of its nuclear/missile strikes to perform important operational-strategic tasks in the given theater of military operations (TVD) or along the operational axis.

Because to attain victory it is necessary to destroy the enemy's means of mass destruction, the main factor in the suggested definition of the meeting engagement are the nuclear/missile strikes of both sides. Successful results of these strikes can inflict a maximum loss on the enemy and force him to abandon the offensive, even long before the direct clash of the forward detachments. This comprises the basic distinguishing feature of the meeting engagement of the future. The given definition does not refute but rather stresses the possibility of a clash between large units of the strike groupings of the opponents. The encounters will occur most frequently when at the very outset of the engagement the nuclear/missile strikes do not produce a radical change in the balance of forces and, thus, in the situation as a whole. When we speak of swift offensive operations, we give preference to the troop maneuver immediately following nuclear strikes, that is, an advance primarily at the speed of a march, and not to deployment and attack.

A modern meeting engagement does not necessarily start with combat between reconnaissance subunits, forward detachments,

IRONBARK

and advance guards as before, although all these organs must be detached and are actively engaged, but, as a rule, by meeting nuclear/missile and aviation strikes. Here, deployment of the majority of large units and units of the opponents and a direct encounter between them may not even take place. It is interesting to clarify whether a meeting engagement takes place in this instance. We answer this question in the affirmative. A meeting engagement occurs because the basic fire and strike forces and weapons of both sides participate in it. It is not at all obligatory to deploy large formations and large units for an engagement or battle. If the nuclear/missile weapons of the opponents entered the operation and performed their missions, then it is up to the armies and divisions of the front to execute a swift thrust against the enemy flank and rear in order to use the results of nuclear/missile strikes, and to complete the enemy's destruction. In our opinion, only during this maneuver it may possibly become necessary to deploy part of the forces to attack from the march and destroy the enemy. Such an outcome of a meeting engagement will be most typical although in the past most frequently one of the sides passed to the defensive.

* * *

The capabilities of the nuclear/missile weapons are so great that they have led to a rejection of position defense (pozitsionnaya oborona) and consequently have canceled the need for a deliberate breakthrough. Massed nuclear/missile strikes delivered simultaneously along the entire depth of the operational-strategic formation of the enemy create conditions for the beginning of a meeting engagement. An increase in firepower, the strike force, and in the mobility of modern troops is conducive to the beginning of meeting battles and engagements and to a significant degree guarantees freedom in the selection of maneuver for each side.

Now there is every reason to consider that not only offensive operations but also modern defensive ones, by the

IRONBARK

aim of the troop operation, have mainly an active nature by their form. In other words, the fundamental change in the method of waging defense is objectively creating favorable conditions for the beginning of a meeting engagement which will occur much more often than before.

The goal of a meeting engagement is the destruction of the specific advancing enemy grouping and the seizure of the important operational-strategic area being covered by it in the least amount of time. This is achieved mainly by massed nuclear/missile strikes and a skillful maneuver by the strike grouping. The destruction of one definite opposing enemy grouping on the way to achieving the general goal of the whole operation makes a meeting engagement a very important part of the offensive operation of a front or army and not at all an "episode".

Meeting engagements during the initial period of a war are distinguished by some special features. The first of these is that these engagements most likely will be conducted by strong groupings intended to wage offensive operations and created even before the beginning of the war. This gives one a basis to suppose that an offensive operation will begin with meeting engagements which will have a decisive nature, and their results can have a significant influence on the whole subsequent course of armed combat in the theater of military operations. On some axes, after having destroyed the enemy with nuclear/missile strikes in the border zone during the first hours and days of the war, our troops will quickly carry the combat operations to the operational depth, but on other axes these engagements may be dragged out or even proceed unfavorably for our troops.

The second special feature of meeting engagements is that to achieve a superiority in the balance of forces and a change in the situation in our favor, there will have to be additional efforts by nuclear/missile weapons and aircraft and, possibly, a regrouping of part of the forces and weapons of the front. The meeting engagements conducted according to a single plan simultaneously or consecutively

IRONBARK

on several axes in the zone of the offensive of the front with unavoidable large gaps between operational formations and large units will demand great efforts and mobility in supporting troop combat operations which are coordinated according to their time, space, and aim, and undoubtedly they will be conducted most often on the scale of a front.

The statement that the scale of a meeting engagement is limited to an army is current even now although historical experience and the practice of recent operational-strategic exercises do not confirm this. Quite the opposite, the theory and practice of today and historical experience show quite obviously that the scope of a meeting engagement has expanded. These engagements may be by a front as well as by an army. It is important to stress also the increase in the spatial scope of a meeting engagement -- the width of the zone and particularly of the depth of conducting combat operations. Although formerly the depth of a meeting engagement was determined by the operational formation of a given specific grouping and was measured usually by the location of the second echelons and reserves, at present it is determined by the distance of the missile troop groupings.

The fast speed of an offensive during a meeting engagement is assuming special meaning now when the time for delivering strikes and other operations is calculated in hours and minutes.

It is quite clear that it is difficult to make fixed estimates regarding speed in a meeting engagement. However, experience gained from exercises indicates that speeds of 100 km and over in a 24 hour period are feasible for modern troops. The decisive defeat of the enemy by nuclear/missile weapons and the high mobility of formations and large units permit a meeting engagement to be waged at the fastest speeds. To a considerable degree, the latter depend on reliable aerial cover and, primarily, on combatting successfully the enemy's missile weapons. Here, one should bear in mind that destruction and obstacles resulting from the use of nuclear weapons and especially areas with high levels of radiation can slow down the troop progress.

IRONBARK

As for the time factor, it should be expected that the periods of time during which a meeting encounter may start, proceed, and reach an end will be shortened considerably.

Another special feature is that meeting engagements may take place not only at the beginning of an operation but also during the fulfilment of an immediate or subsequent mission of the front, in the process of destroying the first enemy operational echelon, or during a swift advance into the operational depth, i.e., under the most diverse conditions. This will consist of nuclear/missile surprise counterstrikes (vstrechnyy udar) and encounters between the forward moving groupings of both sides making up the complement of the front (armies) and the enemy operational reserves approaching from the depth.

One can easily be convinced of this after studying the materials based on our operational-strategic exercises in 1959 to 1960 and the exercises of NATO troops of recent years. According to the known views of the enemy regarding the early operations during the initial period of a war, following sudden massed nuclear strikes strong troop groupings will be moved forward from the depth in order to deliver strikes in a meeting engagement.

This happens firstly because, in contrast to the past, the advancing side will have to deal not only with the defender but primarily with the enemy advancing to meet him; secondly, the methods of operations of even the enemy on the defense are now mainly offensive ones; and finally, thirdly, due to the use of nuclear/missile weapons conditions are created which give rise to meeting engagements.

All this leads us to the thought of a new phenomenon in the art of operations -- a meeting operation (vstrechnaya operatsiya). This problem was examined back in 1957 on the pages of Voyennaya Mysl in an article by Colonel S.N. Kozlov. Previously, however, for some reason it was considered impossible to plan meeting operations in advance, and the problem passed into oblivion.

IRONBARK

Although previously the side which suffered defeat in a meeting engagement and passed to the defense could count on being able to halt the enemy advance at least temporarily, now it cannot hope to create a stable front. The side which emerged victorious in the first meeting engagement can operate so skillfully and swiftly that it will not give the other side a chance to collect itself and will penetrate into its operational depth before the defeated enemy ³ words missing/ access. If he is successful in quickly organizing a defense on a certain axis, then he may be destroyed by nuclear weapons.

We are far from thinking that all the aims of a modern offensive operation of a front will be achieved by victory (if, of course, one considers that in the main theater of military operations they may be at a depth of 1000 km and more). Evaluating realistically the ways to develop the first offensive operation, it is easy to become convinced that after victory in the first major meeting engagement the troops will have several meetings with the enemy in the depth. The enemy will strive to deliver destruction, change the balance of forces in his favor, and thus seize the initiative by using strikes by nuclear/missile weapons, aircraft, by shifting reserves to the theater of military operations, and by counterstrikes by the surviving forces and weapons. The result will be that the troops of the front which were rushing into the enemy's operational depth will conduct their own combat operations in a sharp and dynamic situation which demands the constant forestalling of the enemy in the use of nuclear/missile weapons, in seizing advantageous areas and important water lines, in deploying part of his forces, and in the constant movement forward of the main forces to occupy vitally important enemy areas to prevent his organizing resistance.

All that has been said convinces us of the advisability of distinguishing a meeting offensive operation from the established and conventional understanding connected with an offensive against a defending enemy and with a breakthrough of the defense. Obviously, such an operation in

IRONBARK

the main theater of military operations will be more typical for the initial period of a war. Now reality itself and the practice of operational-strategic exercises demand a scientific working out of the theory of a meeting offensive operation.

Such problems as how to choose nuclear/missile weapons, how to choose the axis for the main strike, the role of superiority of forces and weapons over the enemy, the preparation for a meeting engagement, the creation of troop groupings, and the bases of control are also of definite interest for the practice of operational training.

The use of nuclear/missile weapons makes it possible to perform the basic tasks and to influence the whole course of a meeting engagement by a maneuver of even single or tens of nuclear warheads without having to resort to a maneuver by a large amount of artillery, tanks, aircraft, or formations and large units as was the case previously. The necessary amount of nuclear/missile weapons will depend on the total aim of the operation and the aim of the specific meeting engagement on the given strategic axis, on the tasks being fulfilled by the missile troops of strategic designation in the zone of the frontal offensive or on the axis of the army's operations, and on the results achieved by them.

The greatest effectiveness in the use of nuclear weapons can be achieved in the first sudden massed nuclear strike against the most important enemy objectives and groupings, primarily against his nuclear weapons. This principle was advanced in the directives on operational training during recent years. Incidentally, at the large exercise in 1960, the "southern" forces planned to deliver the first nuclear strike by 44 nuclear warheads of which only 14 were used against the enemy's weapons of mass destruction, 24 against troop groupings, and 6 against enemy control points and radiotechnical means. The unsoundness of such a use of nuclear weapons was confirmed rather quickly. The absence of trustworthy reconnaissance data

IRONBARK

before the beginning of combat operations and an incomplete disclosure of the enemy's plan led to the result for the "south" that 80 percent of all the warheads designated for the first nuclear strike against the enemy fell wide of the mark.

This is not an accidental phenomenon. If an analysis is made of effectiveness in the use of nuclear weapons in the 1958 to 1960 exercises, it will be found that at each of them there was permitted a large percentage of waste in the use of nuclear weapons. Apparently here we encounter difficulties in preparing for the first meeting offensive operation when neither side is free to choose the methods and means of conducting reconnaissance. It is especially important in the advance planning for and during a meeting engagement that reconnaissance makes it possible for the front and army command to deliver accurate and preemptive nuclear strikes.

The basic criterion in selecting objectives to be hit by nuclear strikes should be their importance and the degree of effect they may have on the course of a meeting engagement. It is appropriate to mention here that in several instances unsuccessful maneuvering operations during the 1959 to 1960 exercises are explained by unskillful use of nuclear weapons during the engagement. In our opinion, the most advantageous use of nuclear weapons should be during the deployment of enemy groupings in a meeting engagement. Successful massed nuclear strikes against enemy large units and the destruction of his nuclear/missile weapons at this moment may sharply change the balance of forces and the entire situation.

The organization of a massed nuclear strike delivery may be carried out at the beginning of a meeting engagement more often on a front level, and during the engagement on an army level, especially if one considers the considerable independence of the latter. However, we must bear in mind that it is considerably more difficult to organize and deliver a massed nuclear strike during a meeting engagement

IRONBARK

2 tank armies. The greater part of the General Headquarters reserves was in the process of formation. At the end of May, in connection with the sharply worsening situation, the rapid formation was begun of 10 reserve combined-arms armies.

The combat operations on the Soviet-German front which were developing in May and June 1942 in the Crimea, and before Kharkov and Lyuban, ended unsuccessfully for our troops. One of the major reasons for this was the scattering of the strategic reserves without a sufficiently decisive concentration of them on only one axis considered by the Supreme High Command to be the main one.

The unsuccessful outcome of the combat operations of May and June 1942 and the shift of our troops to the strategic defense once again demanded a radical re-examination of the timing and the purposes for committing strategic reserves to battle. Instead of being used to develop an offensive, they were being used for defensive operations. In addition to this, the serious situation which had taken shape compelled the committing to battle of the majority of the newly formed units (combined-arms reserve armies and tank corps) before they were adequately knit together and trained.

The main events of the summer-fall campaign of 1942 developed on the southwestern axis, where the main mass of the General Headquarters reserves was also being used. Eight of the 10 newly formed reserve armies, almost all the tank corps, the main mass of the tank brigades, and the artillery regiments were moved here. Six combined-arms armies and two tank armies, which had been newly formed in June to October 1942, were also used on this axis. In the period from May to October 1942, a total of about 160 divisions, about 70 rifle brigades, and 14 tank and 5 mechanized corps were committed to battle from the General Headquarters reserve. Of these, more than 100 rifle divisions, more than 30 rifle brigades, 12 tank and 5 mechanized, corps were on the southwestern axis.

IRONBARK

axes leading to these centers. Despite Colonel Mikitenko's statement, we consider that it is not at all necessary for the axis of operations of the main grouping of front or army ground troops to be directly dependent on the axis on which the nuclear weapons are concentrated.¹ /The footnote is missing/.

For example, it cannot be considered normal to direct the main efforts of tank armies of a front to the side, let us say, of a mountainous area for the sole reason that the main strike by missile troops is directed there against the enemy's nuclear weapons. It is also impossible to use the basic mass of nuclear weapons against a weak enemy grouping just because the main forces of a front or army are operating on this axis. This leads to a waste of nuclear weapons. Thus, at the operational game in January 1961 both sides concentrated up to 80 percent of the nuclear warheads expended on the axes of the offensive by their basic groupings although these strikes were not delivered against the main enemy forces. As a result, the troops of both sides did not fulfil even their immediate tasks although they fired about 300 nuclear warheads during the three days.

It is obvious that in a meeting engagement the basic efforts of the nuclear/missile weapons of a front and of armies will be directed against the main enemy forces on axes which make it possible to come out in the shortest possible time in the rear areas and flanks of his basic groupings and toward vitally important areas. The art of leading troops, apparently, will be most clearly expressed when the enemy nuclear weapons and divisions are destroyed by massed nuclear/missile strikes and by our smaller forces connected from the front, but the main forces will be directed around or across the existing gaps in the enemy's operational formation at speeds approaching those of a march. This will be possible if a grouping of front (army) troops which is stronger in its fire, strike, and maneuvering capabilities begins to operate in the meeting engagement on the axis of the main strike and if this grouping is able to conduct a successful offensive in a broad zone which ensures it the needed area for dispersion and mobility.

IRONBARK

Success in a meeting engagement does not depend on concentrating a large number of troops but on superiority of nuclear weapons and on their skillful use. In this connection, the problem about the role of superiority in forces and weapons on the axis of the main strike in a meeting engagement must be resolved primarily in favor of nuclear/missile weapons. A surprise nuclear strike against the basic enemy grouping in a matter of minutes may change the balance of forces and weapons.

It is appropriate to stress here that modern reconnaissance means exclude the possibility of a sudden beginning of a meeting engagement of operational formations not only at the beginning but also during the whole offensive operation. Here one sees still one more important distinctive trait of a meeting engagement which has lost its uncertainty and quality of chance. In the past these were typical for this type of operation.

* * *

As is shown by experience, the planning and preparation of a meeting engagement in the initial period of a war is carried out during the preparation for the first offensive operation because the meeting engagement comprises its main and most crucial part. The following have considerable bearing on its preparation: more rigid conditions of secrecy and security during peacetime, the absence of a set date for beginning the operation, restrictions in conducting reconnaissance activities, and the organization of final operational troop formations.

In addition to the general preparation, while preparing to carry out the first operation it will be necessary to resolve also some specific problems inherent in the organization of a meeting engagement. Among these, first of all, are continuous reconnaissance and study of the enemy, determining the plan of the first meeting engagement in relation to the overall plan for the operation, determining the timing, the methods, and means of informing the troops of the tasks, and setting up launch sites and siting areas for missile troops

IRONBARK

and airfields to base aircraft, taking into account the conduct of the impending meeting engagement. The disposition of troops is so organized that during their advance it would be possible in a short period of time to set up the needed grouping to conduct a meeting engagement. Setting up control points and communication centers and systems, organizing reliable and timely warning, as well as screening the troops and objectives of the front (armies) by the antiair defense (PVO) weapons of the country and the army troops' PVO, carrying out preparation of the terrain by engineer means, and the accumulation and distribution of supplies are all carried out subject to the accepted plan for the operation and the meeting engagement.

Operational training of the command and staffs and combat training of the troops are improved along specific lines but under conditions of keeping secret the real operational plans. All these preparatory measures are directly related to the first meeting engagement and demand centralized leadership and planned execution despite the opinions of some comrades who generally doubt the possibility of preparing for a meeting engagement in peacetime. The preparation of the first offensive operation cannot be detached or examined apart from its decisive act -- the first meeting engagement. Of course, several measures will be carried out over a rather prolonged period of time and will undergo many changes; however, the execution of the basic ones must conform to the requirements of ensuring constant troop combat readiness. Therein lies the peculiarity of the preparation for a meeting engagement in peacetime.

One should dwell in more detail on the contents of and the conditions under which a decision is made by the commander of the front troops. In several recent exercises and war games a wrong approach to making a decision was observed, and its contents did not correspond to the requirements of the present. In our opinion, this occurred through the lack of thorough knowledge of combat equipment, foresight, and correct operational calculations which would ensure a valid evaluation of a situation and the making of a confident operational decision.

IRONBARK

On the basis of intelligence data during peacetime, it is necessary to scrutinize the plans and concept of the enemy, be well versed in the capabilities of his nuclear/missile weapons, and foresee the quantitative and qualitative changes which may occur in his groupings, in the near future and during a more prolonged period of time. For instance, at the present time an infantry division of the US Army has an "Honest John" battery, and in a year there will be two or three of them. Moreover, the type of missiles, apparently, will become different and more improved.

One must also consider the state of our troops at the present time and their capabilities in the future, the nature of operational training, and how it will change. All these circumstances force us to work out a decision for the first meeting engagement of the initial period of a war, and this decision must meet the modern conditions of the situation and must contain elements of foresight for the near future. This decision must be free from preconceptions and must leave room for corrections to be introduced into it in accordance with the changes which occur.

In the decision about the meeting engagement, on the basis of thorough analysis and calculations one must determine the enemy's plan and grouping, primarily the location of his weapons of nuclear attack; the possible radiation situation; and the complement, state, and general task of our own troops and those of our neighbors, and the concept of our own decision. On the basis of the decision, one must fix the axis of the main strike and the main efforts of nuclear/missile weapons as well as the expected result from the nuclear strikes. The commander of the front troops and the commander of the army determine the tasks of nuclear/missile weapons for the whole depth of the meeting engagement and by days allot nuclear warheads according to the tasks and among formations and large units, and they indicate the tasks for front and army weapons and the procedure for controlling large units and units of missile troops.

Missile troops must receive in advance the needed data

IRONBARK

on objectives to be destroyed by nuclear weapons and must draw up tables and programs for launching missiles. Here formations and large units make provisions for variations in troop operations according to axes and times for fulfilling their tasks in coordination with missile troops, aircraft, and airborne forces, for routes of movement, and orientation areas for adjustment (regulirovaniye) and, rarely, lines of probable deployment. Later the tasks are determined for the airborne forces, areas are indicated for their landing (dropping), the tasks of aircraft and arms of troops are indicated, and finally measures to ensure the meeting engagement and the organization of troop control are indicated.

In determining the tasks for armies and divisions, particularly for those assigned for operations in front and separated from the main forces, in some instances it will be advisable not to cut the zone of the offensive but to indicate the directions of the strikes, which enemy troop grouping to destroy, and which areas or objectives to seize and by what time.

Variations in the decision of the front troop commander for the destruction of the enemy during a meeting engagement in the border zone must be made known to the commanders of armies and to the commanding officers of large units in advance.

Particular attention must be given to organizing combat reconnaissance of the enemy's weapons of nuclear attack before the very beginning of the first meeting engagement, to covering one's own troops from the air, to protecting them from the weapons of mass destruction, and also to carrying out effective radio countermeasures. It is very important to foresee the radiation situation which may arise as a result of the use of nuclear warheads by both sides and to work out variations of the plan for troop operations with a thorough and detailed calculation of this factor.

The preparation for the subsequent meeting engagement during the first offensive front operation apparently will

IRONBARK

begin during the execution of the preceding; one or during a swift advance of the main forces of the front and armies into the operational depth immediately after receiving the intelligence data about the advance of the enemy reserves, and it will be carried out in a minimum amount of time.

The decision to annihilate the advancing enemy grouping is made and relayed to the subordinates in advance so that the troops will have a chance to execute a maneuver corresponding to the given mission and goal of the forthcoming meeting engagement, to deliver nuclear/missile and aircraft strikes against enemy groupings, and to forestall their deployment. Making such a decision should take literally no more than a few hours, and in this the commander and the chief of staff will work jointly. The execution of the adopted decision must be based on the highest degree of creative initiative and independence of commanding officers on all levels.

The grouping of the troops of the front and the armies will depend mainly on the tasks being executed by the missile troops of strategic designation for the front. The possibility of simultaneously destroying the resisting enemy along the entire depth of his operational formation makes it possible to perform the tasks in a meeting engagement in a single echelon operational formation. Such a formation ensures the most correct use of nuclear/missile weapons, aircraft, airborne forces, and the tank and mechanized troops of the front and army for the most effective exploitation of the results of nuclear/missile strikes.

It is obvious that the efforts of the front troops during a meeting engagement can be intensified by the delivery of nuclear/missile strikes followed by a swift advance of tank and motorized rifle divisions or by combat operations of airborne forces. Reserve divisions, capable of advancing along a wide front will be found more frequently within an operational formation (on the basis of the experience of operational exercises -- four to six divisions in the front and one to two divisions in the army) than as second echelons in the form of large operational formations. Conditions requiring the formation of troop

IRONBARK

groupings of the front and the armies for the first and subsequent meeting engagements may vary considerably. In some instances troop groupings are organized during the process of bringing up large units from disposition areas to the axes designated to them, in others by bringing up the troops from concentration areas upon combat alert. It becomes especially important to maintain the constant increased combat readiness of the troops and their ability to start combat operations immediately upon combat alert. The troops must be able to cross or bypass areas of destruction and zones of radioactive contamination and must be excellently prepared for a swift forward movement at a speed of 100 km a day and more.

When a meeting engagement is organized during an operation, the forming of troop groupings of the front and the armies will be determined by the operational situation of the troops and the actual circumstances. However, it can be assumed that under these conditions it will be necessary to execute a maneuver first of all by the trajectories of large units and units of missile troops; also to effect some regrouping of the large units of ground troops, and to commit to battle large units of reserves or of the second echelon if the latter is designated.

During the preparation for a meeting engagement considerable importance is attached to the timely organization and support of the march of large units. Under modern conditions, the process of moving the troops forward is complicated by the increased depth of the march columns of the large units. To retain freedom of mobility, one must move as far as possible by a broader front, and this favors the rapid execution of the march and deployment of troops. In this instance, it is easier to organize the antiatomic defense of troops and to conceal them from enemy reconnaissance. Units and large units become less vulnerable to air strikes. A broad front of movement creates great possibilities to seize and bypass the enemy's flanks.

Considering the density of the road network in the main

IRONBARK

theater of military operations and the demands for anti-atomic defense of troops on the march, it has been presupposed that three or four roads for a modern motorized rifle or tank division can be guaranteed without particular difficulty. In the practice of exercises of recent years, a division was allotted no more than two routes although it was known that the depth of a division's column with measures to safeguard it on two routes reached about 100 km. Incidentally, in leading a division along three and four routes, the depth of its columns will be accordingly 70 and 50 km. Here, if the situation permits, tank large units and units should be led along separate routes or cross-country routes (kolonnyy put). Such a movement forward by a tank division has been confirmed in the exercise conducted in September 1959 in the Ukraine where the tank division moved forward from the concentration area by four routes. The advisable combination of width of front in moving troops forward with echeloning them in depth should guarantee a timely accumulation of forces able to destroy an enemy grouping in the entire depth of its operational formation.

The coordination of troops in the first meeting engagement was expressed most clearly in the decision adopted on the basis of calculations worked out in detail. Obviously, the most tense and crucial moment in organizing coordination will be before the very beginning of the meeting engagement when in limited amounts of time and sometimes even during the movement forward of troops the command must define in greater detail the tasks of formations and large units and the periods of their fulfilment which were established earlier. For this, during peacetime one must be tireless in working out in practice the methods for organizing coordination in various and most critical variations and bringing great improvement in the level of the skills of generals and senior officers. The main task consists of ensuring the coordinated use of nuclear weapons in combination with other weapons of combat, achieving the greatest effectiveness of nuclear strikes, and using their results by troops during the engagement.

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In the process of working out this coordination, it is important to achieve harmony of missile troops, of formations and large units of ground troops and aviation, arms of troops, and special troops. Simultaneously there must be worked out practical methods to reestablish coordination which has been destroyed during the engagement. The practice of operational training in peacetime, particularly work on organizing coordination at exercises, must have as its goal on the one hand the checking of individual problems and calculations which are close to the real solution at a meeting offensive operation and its first meeting engagement and, on the other hand, teaching commanders, commanding officers, and staffs both in theory and practice the methods of making the needed calculations and the specific solution of all problems of coordination, mainly on the map. In our opinion, as a result of such a study, during peacetime it is quite possible to work out the most approximate variations of troop coordination for the first day and in general terms for the subsequent period of the first meeting engagement.

The reader may have noticed that so far nothing has been said about the plan of the operation. Actually, we do not consider it necessary to develop separately a plan for a meeting offensive operation because the decision expressed on the map and based on the necessary calculations is, in itself, the plan. Neither is there any need to repeat the decision in other documents, in particular in the plan to use nuclear weapons and in other plans to employ arms of troops, because the above matter comprises the essence of the commander's decision for a meeting engagement.

Troop control in a meeting engagement during the initial period of a war must be such as to ensure efficient and maximal use of all the forces and weapons of the front and the army to seize the initiative in a short period of time and to achieve the ultimate goal of the engagement. The nature of a meeting engagement decisively demands a skillful combination of centralized and decentralized methods of troop control. It is important for the commander of an army

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and the commanding officer of a large unit to know the plan of the senior commanding officer and how he expects the meeting engagement to develop so that they will act with initiative and freely in accordance with the developing situation in order to fulfil promptly their task within the limits of the front or army operation. In our opinion, decentralization of control creates highly favorable conditions for exhibiting initiative.

Under modern conditions the control of troops participating in a meeting engagement will become considerably more complicated. We should even admit the possibility that control points will be put out of action more frequently. To ensure uninterrupted control of troops, now even to a greater degree than before there is need of a thorough understanding of the nature of meeting engagements in the initial period of a war and knowledge of the new means of combat. The proximity of the control points to the troops, smooth operation of all types of communications, and also the availability of reserve forces and means of communications all have an important bearing on stability of control.

The complex and sharply changing situation at the very beginning of and during meeting engagements demands that the commanders of the front and army troops be constantly aware of and react immediately to any changes in a situation, be ready to adopt a new decision without delay, and to clarify or assign additional tasks to the troops. It is most important to be constantly informed about the capabilities either side may have for using nuclear weapons, the condition and position of one's own troops in areas of nuclear bursts, the radiation levels in these areas, and the capabilities of the troops to carry on further combat operations; to take into account the nature of work in eliminating the effects of the enemy's nuclear attack, and several other facts on the actual situation stemming from massed use of nuclear/missile weapons.

Experience indicates that without the use of sound recording, selective communications, automatic scrambling devices, duplicating and electronic machines as well as facsimile telegraphy and television it is impossible to make

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any substantial changes in the work profile of the staffs. However, by resolving only technical problems it is impossible to make a distinct improvement in troop control. Successful combat performance of the troops will depend to a great extent on the knowledge, skill, and organizational work of the command and the staffs both in preparation for and during a meeting engagement.

All this will become possible when vital measures to organize control and communications are implemented in border districts during peacetime. It is not necessary to assert here that exercising direction of combat operations of troops from areas where the staffs are located during peacetime is excluded. In our opinion, to ensure firmness of control it is necessary to have in each formation of constant combat readiness two independent control points which are capable of taking troop control completely on themselves under the appropriate conditions of the situation. As is known, modern command and forward command posts do not resolve this problem because right now in the practice of exercises it is only in those places where the commander is located that one finds completely equipped forces and means of control. Incidentally, if one does not prepare equal control points which can replace each other during peacetime, one cannot count on continuity of control even during the first hours of the initial period of a war.

* * *

It is advantageous to begin a meeting engagement with massed powerful strikes by missiles and front aviation (in the appropriate situation and with the participation of heavy rocket artillery) with an extensive use of nuclear and chemical weapons. Preemptive nuclear strikes have as their aim the breaking up of the enemy deployment which has begun, of inflicting significant losses on him and separating his groupings into units, of destroying his coordination, and of disorganizing his control. The timely, accurate, and swift delivery of these strikes will ensure that the commander of troops of the front can seize and maintain the initiative

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and that it will have a decisive influence on the successful development of combat operations.

With the skillful use of the results of the nuclear strikes, tank and motorized rifle divisions and airborne forces, moving at high speed to the depth and operating from the flanks and the rear, complete the destruction of enemy groupings. Strong advance guards, forward detachments, and airborne forces must forestall the enemy in seizing important areas and crossings on wide water barriers and must not allow him to throw his troops in an organized manner into the engagement.

It would be naive to think, however, that in a situation of an imminent meeting engagement the enemy would wait until nuclear strikes had been delivered against him or would be forestalled in deployment and shift to the offensive. Even if the enemy delays in deploying his troops or temporarily shifts to the defensive, even in this instance he will be able at any time to deliver a surprise nuclear strike against our troops. Thus, the threat of an enemy nuclear attack during the meeting engagement does not have an episodic nature but a constant one.

Recently, in several exercises calculations have been made on the destruction by nuclear weapons of whole units and subunits. Some textbooks and military literature also give variations of calculations according to which there is determined the needed amount of nuclear warheads to inflict serious losses on the enemy (up to 70 percent). In the majority of instances, these calculations represent a mechanical transfer of old methods for neutralizing a side to a new situation and scarcely suit future engagements. One cannot imagine an enemy who would locate troops in an operational formation and battle formations in the open, and we would have no difficulty in revealing them completely and determining clearly the ground zeros for bursts and the optimum equivalents for ammunition. One thing is sure: the most important enemy objectives which are discovered must be destroyed. With the development of the meeting engagement and the increase in the speed of movement, consideration must be given

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not only to the unimpeded forward movement, but also to the enemy's stubborn resistance and to the need to clear the way for troops both by conventional weapons of destruction and by nuclear weapons.

Here nuclear weapons cannot be used as a method of artillery offensive as was observed at some exercises in the winter of 1960/61. Within the front and the army nuclear weapons must be used against such enemy objectives as operational-tactical weapons and depots of nuclear weapons, delivery aircraft at airfields, control points, troop groupings in the depth, on the march and during deployment, road junctions, and water crossings. During a meeting engagement nuclear strikes may also be delivered against the enemy operating against advancing divisions, but this must be carried out by the divisions, first of all by tactical weapons and taking into account their own approaching troops and certainly not against a single battalion or an "Honest John" installation, but against a collective target (gruppovaya tsel).

Artillery and fighter-bomber aircraft with conventional and chemical ammunition and also tanks can be used successfully to destroy the enemy's tactical weapons of attack (missiles of the "Honest John" and "Lacrosse" type) on the battlefield.

Following the nuclear strikes, the large units operating from the front break into the intervals between the columns or combat formations of the enemy from the march, break up and annihilate them by units, and prevent a planned deployment of the enemy's main forces.

Deployment of the first echelon divisions of the armies depends on the situation and, primarily, on the composition of the enemy groupings and the nature of their operations. It is advisable only for destroying the main enemy groupings by a strike at the flank or the rear (bearing in mind that the more infrequently the divisions are deployed for combat, the higher will be the speed of the offensive). Forward detachments and divisions of the first echelon of the armies

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should not be brought in to deal with splintered units and isolated centers of enemy resistance; it is recommended that units and large units from the reserves or the second echelons be detailed to destroy them.

During a meeting engagement each division must be ready to make an abrupt change in the direction of the strike and to be deployed to the side of the flank in order to combine its efforts with its neighbors. Troops advancing from the front or from the flanks must reach the areas of airborne landing operations as quickly as possible.

During the execution of a maneuver, the divisions must not be sent through zones of radioactive contamination without first determining their width, depth, and level of radiation. At the exercises and war games of 1960 to 1961, in a number of cases this requirement was overlooked. After the divisions crossed zones of radioactive contamination with high levels of radiation or after they received a massed nuclear strike, they continued to participate in the engagement as though nothing had happened to them. Such a primitive approach to these exercises is intolerable because the troops become accustomed to ignoring important specific factors in a modern situation.

The first nuclear strikes and the swift offensive by the divisions should inflict losses on the enemy which cannot be made up easily, ensure seizure of the initiative and attainment of a high speed of advance, destroy important operational staffs and communication centers, and disrupt operation of railroad junctions and highways. The decisive operations of our troops must deprive the enemy of the possibility of inflicting losses on the advancing large units with his nuclear weapons, and as a result of that he will be forced to give up the offensive.

Such a conduct of the first meeting engagement must have the result that by the end of the first day the main enemy groupings in the border zone will be broken up, and combat operations will be transferred to the operational depth. By

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moving forward swiftly, the tank army and the tank divisions of the combined-arms armies may find themselves under conditions when from the very beginning of the meeting engagement on the axis of their operations the enemy will offer insignificant resistance. In such a situation commanders of formations and commanding officers of large units first of all will take measures to force the march of divisions, to move troops in a concentrated manner, and to ensure constant control. Simultaneously, the aircraft and antiaircraft cover of the troops will be intensified, and the enemy's control of his missiles and aircraft will be disrupted by intensive jamming. Taking into consideration that the enemy may quickly send his reserves against the divisions which are moving forward freely, it is important to use the favorable conditions as quickly and effectively as possible. Simultaneously, one must direct the efforts of reconnaissance to discovering the maneuvers of the enemy's reserves and his missile troops and aircraft, and airborne forces must be used to hamper their movement forward.

Taking into consideration the possible large gap of our own troops from the remaining forces of the front, the staffs of formations and large units must be particularly careful in controlling their position on the march, guarantee thorough reconnaissance for the troops, organize protection of the flanks, and support reliable communications between the columns and the coordinating staffs moving in the center of the march order of the formation or large unit.

The basic forces of the missile troops and front aviation are used for the groupings which are moving forward swiftly and for their operations in isolation from the remaining troops of the front if this is possible. The commander of troops of the front must be ready to reinforce the operations of the troops with nuclear/missile strikes and by throwing in forces and weapons of reinforcement as well as fuel and ammunition by air. Simultaneously, he will direct the efforts of other troop groupings for the very rapid destruction of the opposing enemy and for the swift arrival in areas the occupation of which ensures reliable operational coordination with the front groupings operating far forward

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and also with troops of the neighboring fronts. The decisive role in completing the rapid destruction of the enemy is played by the operations of the tank armies and tank divisions of the combined-arms armies.

One must not forget that the enemy will try to offer resistance in a new area or organize a defense on water lines. Breaking up the measures being prepared by the enemy is a most important task and can be successfully executed only under the conditions of a constant and rapid analysis of the situation, a well based and objective evaluation of it, and also of operational foresight.

In making a decision, one must consider the conditions of using nuclear weapons against strong enemy groupings. In the practice of operational training there are instances of using nuclear weapons "recklessly", and during an engagement this can result in the rapid exhaustion of nuclear warheads and a shortage of them during critical moments of the engagement.

During a meeting engagement the commanders of operational formations must not permit a weakening of troop operations in destroying the main enemy grouping. An increase in effectiveness is achieved mainly by skillful maneuver of nuclear weapons and missile trajectories, and also by aircraft and artillery strikes and by bringing in reserves and forces and weapons being regrouped from other axes and arriving from the interior of the country.

The use of transport aviation and helicopters in a maneuver by reserves during a meeting engagement may decisively change the situation in our favor in the shortest period of time in a certain sector or axis. However, the actual capabilities do not allow us to count on large-scale use of these weapons in the very near future.

At the very beginning of a meeting engagement or during it, an unfavorable situation along an individual axis may be created by a breakdown in control or by the fact that a few units or a large unit is put out of action by enemy massed

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nuclear strikes. The scope of the enemy's probable nuclear strike can be gauged by the following data: at the NATO troops' exercises in 1959, it was planned to use over 25 nuclear warheads to deliver a massed strike against the advancing troops of only one army. The result of such strikes may be a sharp change in the balance of forces in favor of the enemy along a given axis. It is necessary to be ready for such acute critical moments during a meeting engagement. To prevent such a situation, during a meeting engagement, the commanders of the operational formations and their staffs must forestall the enemy in all his operations by the following measures: continuously conduct reconnaissance of the enemy's nuclear weapons and effectively combat the disclosed missile weapons and aircraft; always ensure dispersed leadership of large units and units; be informed about the radiation situation in all instances and organize by-passes or crossings of areas of radioactive contamination; ensure open flanks by thorough reconnaissance and by availability of reserves which are in echelon formation behind the troops operating along the threatened axis; and constantly build up troop effectiveness by a large-scale maneuver by forces and weapons and be capable of effecting quick regroupings.

Swift operations at high speed of tank and combined-arms formations and large units following nuclear strikes, deep envelopment of the flanks of main groupings, and extensive use of airborne landings will assure success in achieving the aims of the front and the army in a meeting engagement during the initial period of a war.