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WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

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RELEASE
DATE: 10-26-2009

1 February 1973

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT : MILITARY THOUGHT (USSR): Planning the
Initial Front Offensive Operation

1. The enclosed Intelligence Information Special Report is the first in a series now in preparation based on the SECRET USSR Ministry of Defense publication Collection of Articles of the Journal "Military Thought." This article deals with the problems of deploying troops and planning operations to meet the exigencies of both conventional and nuclear war equally well. It appeared in Issue No. 1 (89) for 1970. This journal is distributed down to the level of division commander in the Soviet armed forces.

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.

[Redacted]
Thomas H. Karamessines
Deputy Director for Plans

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Intelligence Information Special Report

COUNTRY USSR

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DATE OF INFO. Early 1970

DATE 1 February 1973

SUBJECT

MILITARY THOUGHT (USSR): Planning the Initial Front
Offensive Operation

SOURCE Documentary

SUMMARY

The following report is a translation from Russian of an article which appeared in Issue No. 1 (89) for 1970 of the SECRET USSR Ministry of Defense publication Collection of Articles of the Journal "Military Thought." The author of this article on a front offensive operation is General-Mayor N. I. REUT, Doctor of Military Sciences. The author refers to views of other writers on this subject which have been expressed in this journal in the past and presents his own opinion. He concludes that Soviet troops must continue to be deployed for, and to base their operations on planning for, nuclear war, but that they must have alternate plans and logistical support permitting the achievement of combat goals by conventional means.

END OF SUMMARY

COMMENT:

Military Thought has been published by the USSR Ministry of Defense in three versions in the past--TOP SECRET, SECRET

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and RESTRICTED. There is no information as to whether or not the TOP SECRET version continues to be published; the last issue received was Issue No. 1 for 1962. The last issue of the SECRET version received was Issue 3 (64) for 1962; it is published irregularly, usually at the rate of three to six issues annually. The title does not mean to imply that the articles appearing in it have been selected for reprinting from the RESTRICTED version. In Soviet usage, the phrase "Collection (Sbornik) of Articles. . ." is generally used to designate the classified version of an unclassified military periodical which is published monthly. The SECRET version is distributed down to the level of division commander.

General-Mayor N.I. Reut was the author of an article which appeared in the TOP SECRET version Issue No. 4 for 1961 titled "The Organization of the Organs of Troop Control" (CSDB-3,650,374 - 19 June 1962). He did not have his doctorate at that time. There is some evidence that he is in the General Staff Academy. Since the Soviet ranks "general-mayor" and "general-leytenant" are one-star and two-star respectively, to avoid confusion they will not be translated as "major-general" and "lieutenant-general" but will be left in Russian.

The term "front," approximating a Western army group plus an air army in support, will be left in Russian. The term "operativnyy," signifying an intermediate magnitude of combat actions between "tactical" and "strategic," will be translated "operational." The conventional translations will be used for the Soviet terms designating unit size:

obyedineniye -- formation, signifying an army or front; its commander is called "komanduyushchiy," which will be translated "formation commander."

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- soyedineniye -- large unit, which includes corps, division or brigade; at this level and below, the senior officer is called "komandir," translated "commander."
- chast -- unit, which generally refers to a regiment, but also could mean a self-contained, separately numbered unit such as a signal battalion.
- podrazdeleniye -- subunit, meaning an element which cannot be identified numerically except by reference to the chast of which it is a part, e.g., a battalion of a rifle regiment or company of a signal battalion.

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PLANNING THE INITIAL FRONT OFFENSIVE OPERATION

General-Mayor N. Reut, Doctor of Military Sciences

Under modern conditions a war can start with the mass use of nuclear weapons or with the use of only conventional means of destruction. In the second variant, the escalation of the war into a nuclear war is not excluded if one of the sides uses such weapons. The duration of a non-nuclear period of military actions (deystviye) can vary widely. Having started an operation (operatsiya) without the use of nuclear weapons, a front may, in a number of instances, complete the second, or main, part of the operation using means of mass destruction on a broad scale. It is also possible to carry out the entire initial offensive operation using only conventional means of destruction.

In connection with this, a question arose about the unity of planning of all three variants of troop actions of a front in the initial offensive operation (with the use of nuclear weapons, with the use of only conventional means of destruction, and also an operation in which nuclear weapons are used as it develops), inasmuch as it is not possible in preparing for an initial operation in peacetime to determine ahead of time which of the variants will begin earlier.

The need for resolving this problem has been expressed repeatedly in military science conferences of academies, in the staffs of military districts, and on the pages of periodicals, including in fact the Collection of Articles of the Journal "Military Thought."*

*The article of Colonel A. Volkov and the article of General-Leytenant Petrenko (Collection of Articles of the Journal "Military Thought," No. 2 [81] and No. 3 [82], 1967).

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On the basis of materials from military science conferences carried out in the military districts* and from the training experience of the General Staff Academy, it is not difficult to conclude that the solution of this problem is bound up primarily with the coordination of the actual offensive operations which a specific front is faced with carrying out. Many comrades, primarily from the staffs of the military districts,** speak out in favor of planning to carry out all three variants of operations on the very same operational axis (napravleniye), in a single offensive zone (polosa nastupleniya), with identical goals (tsel) and missions (zadacha), but with varying times for the accomplishment of the goals and missions. In their opinion, the preparation of such operations will be carried out in an identical manner, and the conduct of the operations will begin with the same initial makeup (sostav) of forces for the purpose of destroying the opposing enemy grouping (gruppirovka). Others believe, nevertheless, that the goals and the missions performed in such operations will be different.

As an example confirming the existence of differing points of view on this problem, one can cite the planning of operations in the training process of the General Staff Academy during the 1967-68 training year. Thus, the depth of an army offensive operation with the use of conventional means of destruction in Problem (zadacha) No. 1 (68) corresponded to the depth of the initial mission of any army in an offensive operation with the use of nuclear weapons, but the time of their accomplishment and the force makeup were dissimilar. In a front offensive operation in Problem No. 12 (68), the goals and initial and subsequent missions were different; so were the initial strike groupings (udarnaya gruppirovka) of troops for carrying out the operation,

*Information Collection (Informatsionnyy sbornik) of the General Staff, No. 14 (112), 1967.

**Ibid.

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the axis of the main attack and the sectors of concentration of the main efforts of the troops, and even the initial force makeup of several armies of the first echelon of the front. Roughly such views were held by the authors of the indicated articles--General-Leytenant Petrenko and Colonel A. Volkov.

The research (issledovatel'skiy) war game "Zima-69" (Winter-69), carried out in the General Staff Academy in February 1969, and the recognition of views on the reduction of the depth of the initial front offensive operations in a strategic operation in a theater of military operations (TVD) to 600-800 kilometers (army--300-400 kilometers) inclined us toward providing in planning for the carrying out of all three variants of operations on a particular operational axis and, in the course of these operations, achieving exactly the same goals and accomplishing identical initial and subsequent missions. This significantly simplifies the preparation of operations by fronts of the first operational echelon and at the same time eliminates shortcomings often arising when a particular front plans its initial offensive operation with differing depth and dissimilar missions.

It seems to us that in planning the initial offensive operation of a front it is necessary, first of all, to consider the most difficult conditions for the beginning of a war. These conditions arise with a surprise enemy nuclear attack and invasion by his combat-ready groupings of air, naval and ground forces.

This means that all important measures of a front must be directed toward the successful ^{carrying out} of nuclear combat operations. Such measures can be: bringing the troops to full combat readiness for delivery of the first massive nuclear strike and the transition to the offensive from deployment (concentration) areas or departure areas (iskhodnyy rayon), prepared in advance in respect to engineering; repelling enemy air strikes and invading with ground troops (on the maritime

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axis and from the seacoast); supporting the deployment of the troops of the front for transition to the offensive; organizing the control (upravleniye) of troops from field posts and carrying out the transition from the peacetime situation to operating at these posts; deploying forces and means (sila i sredstvo) for the accomplishment of missions stipulated in the plans for reconnaissance (razvedka), communications, defense against weapons of mass destruction, operational camouflage, engineer support, rear support, and other types of support.

Implementation of the above measures fully meets the requirements for planning non-nuclear operations. Obviously, also identical--both with the use of nuclear weapons and without them--will be the initial grouping of troops intended for the accomplishment of these missions, as well as a common--but appropriate primarily to nuclear war--order of deployment (razvertyvaniye) of the troops of the front for transition to the offensive.

The requirements of constant (postoyanny) readiness for defense against weapons of mass destruction, and above all against the nuclear strikes of the enemy, make it necessary to have small strike groupings of troops intended for operations in the first echelon, under conditions of both nuclear and non-nuclear war. In any army, for example, they might consist of two reinforced divisions, delivering the main blow with contiguous flanks, and capable of dispersing at the required moment along the front and into the depth. There will be several such groupings in a front, both in the first echelon and in the second echelon, which will make it possible to deliver a certain number of strikes per axis. This, by the way, also corresponds to a certain extent to our views on the conduct of an offensive with the use of conventional weapons.

Consideration of the situational data in working out Problem No. 1 (68) helped to establish for the divisions of the first echelon the very same offensive zones and axis, to

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coordinate the missions of the first day, and also to establish the exact same order of deployment of troops for carrying out operations. This simplified the process of deployment of the troops and, most important, on the first day of the war they were able to receive almost the exact same missions, irrespective of the beginning of the war. Even better coordination of troop actions during the first day of operation was achieved in the research war game of the General Staff Academy "Zima-69" and in working out the front offensive operations of Problems No. 12 (69), No. 14 (69), and No. 16 (69) of the 1969-70 training year.

However, with deeper and more detailed study of the nature of all three variants of operations, we run across greatly differing and difficult to coordinate methods of destroying the main enemy groupings, both at the very beginning and also in the course of a front offensive operation. The point is that the outwardly similar methods of troop operations (an offensive along separate axes, the cutting up, encirclement and piecemeal destruction of the main enemy groupings, etc.) in all three operations are carried out by fundamentally different means, occur at varying times, in different areas (under differing conditions), and entail the destruction of enemy groupings dissimilar in makeup.

Thus, for example, the simultaneous destruction of the enemy by nuclear weapons over the entire depth of the operation presumes the destruction of not only the troops of the first echelon but also the enemy reserves, and the disruption of the deployment of groupings of ground forces for delivering counterattacks or forming a continuous front in defense. By this very means, the troops of a front are provided with the conditions for the swift development of an offensive at a high rate of advance and to a great depth, with wide use of airborne (seaborne) landings and airlift of motorized rifle large units (units) (soyedineniye, chast). It follows that a less crushing delivery of destruction on the main grouping and reserves of the enemy, which is

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characteristic of an operation carried out with the use of conventional means of destruction, does not deprive the enemy of the opportunity to use operational reserves and strike groupings for delivering counterattacks or forming a continuous front in defense. In this connection, for their destruction, new forces and means will be required, as well as the maximum disengagement of troops employed on secondary axes and their regrouping for delivering attacks on the main axis.

Calculations show that with an offensive of troops of a front on the Ruhr operational axis of the Western Theater of Military Operations using only conventional means of destruction, the opposing enemy grouping might be reinforced by the fifth day of the operation by a minimum of 15 to 20 divisions, formed from reserve subunits (podrazdeleniye) of regular (kadrovyy) divisions of the Federal Republic of Germany, reserve units of Belgium and Holland, and also through the airlift of men from the U.S.A. and England and the use of stocks of weapons and combat equipment set up in advance. To destroy them will require commitment to battle of the same number or a slightly larger number of divisions, in order to preserve superiority over the enemy on the main axis. In carrying out the operation using nuclear weapons, the completion of mobilization of reserve divisions can be frustrated, and the large units and units moving forward can be destroyed while still approaching the front line.

It is just these complexities in the selection of methods of destruction of the enemy which compelled several authors to doubt the possibility of achieving the unified planning of the initial offensive operation of a front with the start of a war. Proposals appeared for separate planning, i.e., for a front to have two plans--a nuclear plan and a non-nuclear plan*--for

*Article of General-Leytenant V. Petrenko (Collection of Articles of the Journal "Military Thought," No. 3 [82], 1967).

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carrying out the initial offensive operation. Some comrades proposed having a plan for delivering the first nuclear strike and a plan of operation using only conventional means of destruction.

Obviously, these proposals must be carefully studied. However, in our view, as long as there are existing (realnyy) groupings of troops set up primarily for carrying out nuclear operations, arguments for advance and specific planning of initial operations using only conventional means of destruction are groundless. The point is that this would make it necessary to deploy (razvertivat) in addition a suitable grouping of troops, and, considering the international situation, it is now impossible to do this.

Therefore, it seems to us that under existing conditions uniformity of planning can be achieved by working out in advance a plan for preparing and carrying out operations using nuclear weapons, with suitable supplements to it for the possibility of the commencement of military operations using only conventional means of destruction, and with measures ensuring successful transition to the use of nuclear weapons in the course of the operation.

The main section of the planning of an offensive operation of a front must be the plan for the surprise delivery of the first massive nuclear strike and subsequent nuclear strikes for the destruction of the main groupings of the enemy, and also for the allocation of nuclear warheads for the immediate destruction of newly detected enemy means of nuclear attack, for the destruction of his surviving groupings of troops (installations) in the course of the operation, and for combat actions of troops planned accordingly for the completion of the destruction of the enemy and for the accomplishment of the most important intermediate missions. Taking into consideration the possibility of a sharp change in the situation after the delivery of nuclear

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strikes by both sides and the consequent weakening of strike groupings of troops, as well as the allocation to them of new missions stemming from these conditions, one can, in a number of instances, limit the detailed planning of an operation and the allocation of missions to the troops of the front to the first day of the operation, tentatively indicating the time limits for the accomplishment of initial and subsequent missions by the armies and the front. After the delivery of the first massive nuclear strike by both sides, one can make the missions of the first day more precise and determine the missions for the subsequent days in accordance with the overall situation, especially the radiation situation. With such an approach to planning, the commanders and staffs of operational formations (operativnoye obyedineniye) are saved from unnecessary and superfluous work--the planning of combat actions to be carried out after the delivery of massive nuclear strikes by both sides, with no notion of what sort of situation will arise as a result of those strikes. At the same time, they will be obliged to plan the rear support and other types of support for troop actions and the operation, proceeding from the tentative time limits for the accomplishment of initial and subsequent missions.

For the possibility of the commencement of military operations using only conventional means of destruction, it is necessary to provide for the following in an annex (prilozheniye) to the basic plan: concentration of the main efforts of the troops and the conventional means of destruction; timely detection and swift destruction of the nuclear weapons of the army and the air forces and other means of delivering nuclear weapons on a target; methods of destroying enemy groupings; the accomplishment of the main and most important intermediate missions of the operation by massive use of air forces, artillery, and the coordinated attacks of motorized rifle and tank large units; and also the building up of efforts through the commitment to battle of reserves to increase (maintain) superiority over the enemy on the axis of the offensive. In this regard, the planning of the combat actions of the

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troops for the first day of the operation and the accomplishment of their initial missions by the troops of the operational formations should be performed in the greatest detail. The subsequent mission can be planned rather tentatively.

Furthermore, since transition to the use of nuclear weapons and other means of mass destruction is possible at any time in the course of non-nuclear operations, planning must ensure constant readiness for the rapid accomplishment of a given mission. As is generally known, this is achieved by continuous conduct of reconnaissance of the enemy, especially reconnaissance of the targets of the first nuclear strike, by making the plan for delivery of the strike more precise, by maintaining missile troops and air forces in constant combat readiness for the use of nuclear warheads, and by setting up a system of control ensuring swift transmission to the troops of the appropriate commands provided for in the plan.

The second component part (section) of planning an operation must be the plan for the use of ground forces and air forces of a front, delivering attacks with conventional means of destruction. This document can also be worked out on a map with an explanatory note.

In an operation commencing with the use of nuclear weapons, the makeup of the troops of the first operational echelon of the armies and front is normally determined from calculations for completion of the destruction of the first operational echelon of the enemy and the seizure during the first day of the war of installations of operational significance located at a depth of 60 to 80 kilometers from the national border. For carrying out operations using only conventional means of destruction, the makeup of the first operational echelon of the troops of the armies and front is also calculated for the destruction of the first operational echelon of the enemy, but with massed strikes of air forces, massed fire of artillery, and swift attacks of

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tank groupings. In the first day of the war, these groupings must also seize installations of operational significance located at a depth of 40 to 50 kilometers from the national border. In a number of instances, their reinforcement can be provided for by maneuver along the front or from the depth, but most often this will become possible only with the commencement of military actions.

Consequently, for the front to be ready to carry out the initial operation with the use of nuclear weapons and without them, it must have within its composition the means of nuclear attack in full readiness to deliver the first nuclear strike and a grouping of ground forces capable of inflicting decisive defeat on the first operational echelon of the enemy on the first day of the operation, both using nuclear weapons and conventional means of destruction.

In the second and subsequent days of the operation, the main mission of the front will be completion of the destruction of the first operational echelon of the enemy and his reserves being moved forward. With the use of nuclear weapons in the operation, these missions will be accomplished by the delivery of nuclear strikes and the rapid actions of strike groupings of troops of the first operational echelon with the support of an air army, and also by the commitment to battle of the second echelon and reserves and by airborne landings. In carrying out the operation without using nuclear weapons, these missions will be accomplished by massed attacks of air forces, artillery fire, and approximately the same methods of actions of the ground forces. In this regard, their complement will be increased the whole time to maintain a favorable relative strength of forces. In this connection, for carrying out the initial offensive operation, the need emerges for already having at the present time within a front the complement of troops and stocks of material resources to ensure the achievement of the goal of an operation which commences using conventional means of destruction. This pertains particularly to the quantity

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of ammunition for artillery and air forces, and also to fuel stores.

Thus we have come to the conclusion that it is necessary to plan the initial offensive operation of a front above all as a nuclear operation, but with the creation of stores of material resources based on the requirement of achieving the goal of an operation which commences with the use of conventional means of destruction. This makes it possible, on the map-plan for the use of ground forces and air forces in the operation, to determine only the differing time limits for accomplishing the main and intermediate missions with the use of nuclear weapons and without them, and also the time for use of reserves and second echelons.

The third part (section) of planning the initial offensive operation of a front must be the elaboration of measures for bringing the troops to full (polnyy) combat readiness and forming strike groupings of them for carrying out the operation. The following must be provided for in the plan: the procedure for forming the groupings of troops of the front for the delivery of the first nuclear strike; the repulse of enemy attacks from the air and sea and the invasion of his ground forces; and the moving out of troops into departure areas and the formation of groupings for the transition to the offensive. This section of the plan of the operation must be worked out for the conditions of waging war with nuclear weapons, since these conditions are the most complicated.

The fourth part (section) of planning must be the plan of organization of control of troops, which also must be worked out only for conditions with the use of nuclear weapons, since these conditions are the most complicated for the achievement of continuity, stability and flexibility in the control of troops.

Other component parts of the plan of the initial offensive operation of a front--as measures aimed at support of the operation and encompassing in their content the interests of all organs

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of control of troops, forces and means of a front--are the plan of party-political work and plans reflecting measures for operational camouflage, defense of troops against weapons of mass destruction, engineer support, and organization of the rear and material-technical support.

Plans for the combat use of arms of services (rod voysk) and special troops are actually definition of the methods of accomplishing missions which are set forth in the plans enumerated by us; in light of this, it is permissible not to attach them to the plan of the operation.

Thus, the uniformity of planning the initial offensive operations of a front lies in the fact that they are prepared, and consequently also planned, first of all as operations using nuclear weapons, in which the complement of troops and the material-technical resources support for their operations are calculated on the basis of the requirement to achieve the goal of the operation with the use of conventional means of destruction. The following must be considered primary in this operation: planning of the delivery of the first massive nuclear strike, planning of the allocation of nuclear warheads for the destruction of the surviving enemy groupings and newly detected means of nuclear attack, and planning of measures to ensure the swift delivery of the first nuclear strike and rapid transition to the conduct of the operation with nuclear weapons. At the same time, in the plan of this operation there must be worked out the methods and procedure of operations of the ground forces and air forces of a front for accomplishing missions using only conventional means of destruction. In this connection, the results of the accomplishment of each mission in an operation using conventional means of destruction must be viewed each time as preliminary (iskhodnyy) to a subsequent nuclear strike, and to the allocation of nuclear warheads for the purpose of destroying surviving groupings and means of the enemy, and also for defining more precisely the missions and makeup of the strike groupings of the ground forces of a front and its air forces.

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MEMORANDUM

Comments on Soviet Classified Article,
"Planning the Initial Front Offensive Operation,"
disseminated as CSDB-312/00527-73

1. The subject article, which appeared in a 1970 Soviet classified military journal, addresses the question of how differences between conventional and nuclear warfare should be treated in planning the initial offensive operations of a front. The author is General-Major N. I. Reut, Doctor of Military Science and apparently assigned to the Soviet General Staff Academy.
2. The basic thesis of the article is that the ^{main} axis of attack, operational objectives, and composition and deployment of forces for an initial front offensive should not vary whether or not nuclear weapons are used from the outset. According to the author, the initial front offensive should be planned assuming the use of nuclear weapons. Supplementary plans are to cover contingencies in which a conflict begins with only conventional weapons, and in which the transition to nuclear weapons is expected.
3. According to General Reut the critical difference for planners is that the weapons and therefore the time needed to accomplish essentially identical objectives will differ due to the lesser destructive capabilities of conventional weapons. For example, he states that ground force

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requirements of the first echelon of a front are calculated on the basis of what is needed to advance some 60 to 80 kilometers (about 35 to 50 miles) on the first day of operations using nuclear weapons. Supported only by conventionally-armed aircraft and artillery, the planned rate of advance for these same forces against the same objectives is only 40 to 50 kilometers (about 25 to 30 miles) on the initial day of attack. The author also notes that when nuclear weapons are not used the enemy has more options for utilizing his reserves and reinforcing his forces. Conventional warfare is likely to require commitment of larger forces over the course of the operation, and greater concentration of forces on the main axis of attack.

4. General Reut's discussion presents nothing new or significantly different from that studied in previously obtained classified Pact documents. He indicates there is at least some debate on this subject among Soviet planners and theoreticians, but his view probably represents the current consensus. The substance of the author's view has appeared in other Pact documents, where it was treated as a doctrinal point of departure for more detailed descriptions of front offensive planning.

5. The main points raised by the author in support of his view--which he indicates is shared by most of the staff officers of the military districts--are as follows:

a. Planning for one particular axis of attack and one set of objectives simplifies preparations and avoids confusion in execution.

b. A reduction in the prescribed depth of initial front operational zones makes it possible to plan operations along the same axis and against the same tactical objectives regardless

of whether the war is fought with nuclear or conventional weapons.

c. It is necessary to first plan for a surprise enemy nuclear attack as a "worst-case." According to the author, the measures which must be taken for this contingency generally satisfy the steps that must be taken to prepare for any type of combat operation.

d. On a practical plane, the author states, as long as forces exist which are structured and equipped for operations in a nuclear conflict, extensive planning and preparations for purely conventional contingencies are not needed. Further, he asserts that preparations to optimize conventional capabilities would require additional forces, and this, considering the international situation, is now "impossible."

6. Views in opposition to those of the author, and which he rejects in his article, hold that in a war in which only conventional weapons are used, the front objectives, force composition and formation, axis of attack, and sectors of concentration must be different from those that would be employed in a nuclear conflict. It is worth noting that these opposite views have appeared in other classified Soviet articles which are referenced by General Reut. Both the article by General Reut and those espousing an opposite view, in fact, have appeared in the General Staff publication Collection of Articles of the Journal "Military Thought." In the past, this publication has been a medium for airing argumentative issues, and has a higher classification than the standard Military Thought journals. This suggests that the issue is not firmly resolved, at least among Soviet theoreticians. Had we come into possession of only the articles expressing the views counter to those of General Reut, we might have concluded that the Soviets

had adopted a planning doctrine somewhat different from that we have seen in most classified Pact documents obtained to date. This emphasizes the considerable care which must be taken in assessing sporadic copies of Warsaw Pact classified journals.