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FOREIGN DOCUMENTS DIVISION

TRANSLATION

Number 966

23 August 1966

SELECTED TRANSLATIONS FROM "VOYENNAYA MYSL'."

No 1, January 1966

OFFICE OF CENTRAL REFERENCE  
CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

Voyennaya Mysl' (Military Thought) is a monthly organ of the USSR Ministry of Defense, printed by the ministry's Military Publishing House, Moscow. The articles translated below are from Issue No 1, January 1966 which was signed for the press 25 December 1965.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
The Marxist-Leninist Theory of Knowledge and Its Significance In Soviet Military Science and Practice, by Maj Gen N. Sushko and Capt 2d Rank V. Puzik	1
Essence and Phenomenon in Military Affairs, by Col I. Grudinin	17
Combat Operations by Tank Units Against Operational Defense Reserves, by Lt Gen (Res) B. Arushanyan	29
Factors Influencing the Organizational Structure of Ground Forces, by Col M. Kir'yan	36
Logistical Support for Troop Regroupings, by Maj Gen A. Skovoroda	45
A New Edition of a Scholarly Work on War and the Army	51
A Necessary Book for Generals and Officers	59

FACTORS INFLUENCING THE ORGANIZATIONAL  
STRUCTURE OF GROUND FORCES

by Col M. Kir'yan

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A study of military organizational development in various countries shows that in resolving the matter of development and improvement of branches of the armed forces and the various types of units primary attention is focussed on those branches and types with the aid of which it will be possible most efficiently and effectively to reach the objectives of a future war. Continental nations, as is well known, have shown preference for land forces, which have played the primary role in past wars. Artillery has been the basis of their firepower. Troop organizational forms were to provide the most effective utilization primarily of artillery firepower, tank weapons, as well as air power and infantry weapons. Subordinate to this was the development of means of locomotion, control and other military equipment.

Now the main trend in the organization of land forces is determined by missiles and nuclear weapons. The appearance of these weapons in the arsenals of the armies of the world's leading nations, as well as the exceedingly intensive and extensive military application of the latest scientific and technological advances has led to a radical change in many military problems: there has been a revision of the nature and methods of waging war and conducting military operations, a revision of views on the role of various branches of the armed forces and the various types of troop units in a future war, as well as views of their organizational structure, weapons and equipment.

The theory of military science proceeds from the standpoint that a future world war will inevitably become a war of nuclear weapons and missiles, where the primary attack weapon will be the nuclear warhead, and where the primary means of delivering it to the target will be the missile. A war fought with missiles and nuclear weapons can spread to, if not all, at least the majority of continents. It will not be initiated by a clash between ground forces, but by decisive, massed nuclear bomb and missile strikes at major targets located both in theatres of military operations and deep in the heartland of the warring nations. Strategic success will be achieved not only through destroying the enemy's nuclear strike potential and by destroying major enemy troop concentrations, but also by simultaneous annihilation of the enemy's war-economic potential, by disorganization of governmental and military control. Therefore the main role in carrying out the fundamental tasks in such a war will be played by a qualitatively new branch of the armed forces -- the Strategic Missile Troops.

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that in a future war, in addition to strategic missile troops, other branches of the armed forces will also be used extensively, and each will have its own specific assignments; air defense troops -- to prevent nuclear bomb and missile attacks and to destroy enemy aircraft in the air; the air force -- to strike enemy ground targets in the heartland and to hit enemy supply lines, as well as to strike land targets along the front, and to engage in combat with enemy attack aircraft; the navy -- to strike at bases and other targets deep behind enemy lines and to engage in combat with enemy sea power.

The primary utilization of ground forces will be to destroy opposing enemy troop concentrations, to seize and hold enemy territory with the objective of preventing its utilization for the further waging of war. On the other hand land forces will also play an extremely important role in repulsing enemy ground strikes attempting to break through out lines, as well as in preventing enemy airborne and beachhead assaults. Ground forces will play an extremely important role in a future missile-nuclear war.

Just what will this branch of the armed forces be, in what direction will it develop and how will it look organizationally? The answer to these questions depends on sociopolitical, economic and particularly military factors, most important of which are the following: the nature of a future war, the combat potential and trends in the armed forces development of a probable adversary, the geographical position of the country and the nature of the theatres of war. Proceeding from the standpoint that a future world war may be a nuclear war, all of the world's leading armies make primarily such important demands on their ground forces as the capacity to wage successful warfare against enemy nuclear weapons, a high degree of mobility and ability to penetrate and cross zones of destruction and radioactive contamination, a high capability to protect personnel and combat equipment against nuclear weapons, etc. In accord with this, missile troops are being organized in our ground forces. These troops are capable of striking all targets at distances ranging up to several hundred kilometers. The range of TNT-equivalent force in our nuclear warhead arsenal is becoming broader.

All armies are focussing attention on the further development of tank forces and are equipping them with new tanks, protected to the maximum against the effects of mass destruction weapons and possessing heavier armaments. Improvements are being made in airborne assault troops, capable of being transported by air across zones which ground troops are unable to traverse. There is a considerable increase in the number of military transport aircraft, which have the job of carrying units of ground forces over great distances.

The mobility of ground troops takes on great significance under modern conditions. This is due to the necessity of utilizing most

effectively the results of nuclear attacks, by dispersing extensive radioactive contamination zones and zones of destruction, as well as scatter-deploying troops in the interests of their protection against enemy nuclear attack.

In connection with this all the most modern armies are doing much to increase the maneuverability of combat units by equipping them with armored personnel carriers and other armored vehicles with the capability of negotiating rugged and diversified terrain. The design of these vehicles provides combat units with the capability of engaging in combat without disembarking.

The rapid development of means of attack from the air has led to the necessity of further improvement of anti-aircraft and development of anti-missile defense for ground forces, and hence to the necessity of new troop units equipped with anti-aircraft guided missiles, anti-aircraft guns and diversified radio and electronic equipment.

All foreign armies are seeking the most effective techniques of protection of personnel. From an organizational standpoint this takes shape in the organization, such as in the West German Army, of special units outfitted with equipment enabling them to counteract the consequences of utilization of all mass destruction weapons. Engineer, chemical warfare, road-construction and other troops are being outfitted with new equipment so that they will be able to carry out the most complex and complicated technical assignments in the interests of supporting ground force operations and protecting them against mass destruction weapons.

Much attention is being focussed on the perfection of reconnaissance methods and devices, particularly aerial reconnaissance. Operational and tactical units in the ground forces of the USA are being more and more heavily equipped with reconnaissance aircraft, capable of carrying out reconnaissance assignments in the interests of maximum utilization of mass destruction weapons. Special units are being formed with the special assignment of jamming enemy radio and radar.

Bearing in mind that ground force operations will be of a focal nature and will develop simultaneously at great distances along the front and behind enemy lines, in the absence of solid fronts, the organizational forms of ob'yedineniya and soyedineniya are faced with the need of providing necessary independence of the latter in carrying out their combat assignments. Therefore soyedineniya, chast'i and in some cases even podrazdeleniya contain in requisite proportions weapons and combat equipment of all types of troop units and special troops, and in ob'yedineniya -- of armed forces branches.

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...begin without the employment of nuclear weapons, the armies of the world's largest nations, primarily those possessing nuclear weapons, are endeavoring to maintain ground forces which could successfully carry out combat assignments with the employment not only of nuclear weapons but also conventional weapons, which would be capable of quickly shifting from conventional to nuclear operations. Solution to this complex problem in the most highly developed nations finds expression in the endeavor to equip ground forces with artillery systems adapted for using both nuclear and conventional ordnance, as well as in an increase in the overall quantity of artillery, tanks, anti-tank weapons and tactical air units. All this also finds expression in organizational changes in sovedineniye and ob'yedineniya.

History teaches us that in every war elements of the past are inevitable alongside new features of the art of warfare. To a certain degree this holds true for a future war as well, in which isolated principles and even techniques of warfare from the Second World War will undoubtedly be manifested, particularly in those areas where only conventional weapons will be employed in large quantity. Proceeding from this standpoint, in determining the organization of ground forces under modern conditions it is essential to bear in mind experience in utilizing these weapons during the Second World War, as well as the reasons leading to organizational changes in the course of the war and after the war. The fact is that changes in combat techniques do not immediately lead to radical changes in troop organization. During a certain period of time the old forms of organization adapt to new combat techniques. Troop organization in a sense is more stable than techniques of warfare. Its changes usually occur after the art of warfare formulates operational-tactical demands for new models of weapons and combat equipment, when they are fabricated and incorporated in the line units. Since the process of developing and incorporating new weapons and equipment is normally a lengthy one, it seems that old forms of organization absorb new weapons and equipment for a certain period of time. Only when major changes take place in combat techniques under the influence of new weapons and equipment does the quest begin for new troop organization.

Only a state possessing a strong economy and high level of scientific and technological development is capable of creating ground forces meeting the demands made by the nature of a future war, and only such a state is capable of supplying these forces with everything needed to conduct successful combat operations. With the development of diversified radio equipment and electronic devices, nuclear-missile and other costly weapons, the influence of economic potential has become particularly great. Under modern conditions the thesis of Engels that "weaponry, composition, organization, tactics and strategy depend primarily on the level of production achieved at a given moment" has become even more significant. Without a highly developed economy it is now impossible to create modern ground forces and properly equip and supply them.

Economics influences the organizational development of ground forces through weapons which are distributed in such a manner that they may secure the most effective employment of the selected techniques and forms of conducting combat operations, that is in such a manner that troop organization corresponds to the predicted nature of combat operations. At the same time the nature of combat operations, changing under the influence of new weapons, demands constant improvement of the troop organization adopted before the war. This is conclusively demonstrated by the experience of the last war, during which there was constant improvement in the organizational forms of ground forces by increasing the firepower and strike potential of ob'yedineniya and soyedineniya by organizing and incorporating in these units podrazdeleniya, chasty and soyedineniya equipped with new systems of artillery and mortars, tanks, self-propelled artillery and other equipment.

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Of great importance for proper solution to organizational problems is a profound knowledge of the strong and weak points in the enemy's troop organization, in order to confront him with more highly perfected troop organization. One can see the results of erroneous or tardy conclusions in appraising the enemy's troop organization through the example of the Great Fatherland War. The initial experience of the Nazi German troops in Western Europe demonstrated that maximum successful combat operations were possible only when the ground forces included large tank and motorized units. These correctly drawn conclusions served as a basis for returning to the creation (delayed, to be true) of mechanized corps. By the beginning of the war their organization and outfitting had not yet been completed. The organizational forms of these soyedineniya were also imperfect -- they were too unwieldy and control was difficult.

Blunders committed in the organization of ground forces just before the war began had to be eliminated during the course of the war. Correct conclusions drawn from the conditions created during the first months of the war and a critical analysis of the defects existing in the prewar organization of our operational ob'yedineniya and soyedineniya enabled us not only to neutralize the enemy's advantages in troop organization but also to create improved ground force organization. To a considerable degree this predetermined our success and our potential to conduct continuous and swift offensive operations.

But this was the past. Now that troop organization is heavily influenced by new types of weapons, particularly missile-nuclear weapons, a constant study of the troop organization of the probable adversary and a solid knowledge of the basic trends in organizational development of the enemy's armed forces, the strong and weak points in the organization of operational ob'yedineniya and soyedineniya and the methods by which they are to be used in combat becomes even more important. In a modern nuclear war troop reorganization at the beginning of or during such a war, such as that which took place in the last war, is impossible. Now

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is never before it is essential before the war to possess troop organization which in all respects is superior to that of the enemy and which corresponds to the nature of forthcoming armed combat.

The influence of physical-geographical conditions on the organization of ground forces is manifested through their equipment and combat techniques. This finds expression in the creation of special combat elements, highly adapted to operations under the conditions of a specific theatre of war. Along with the development of weapons and combat equipment, and particularly reduction in the weight, size and terrain capabilities of this equipment, in all the armies of the world's largest nations one observes a tendency toward universalization of combat units, that is the tendency to set up ob'yedineniya, soyedineniya and chasty which can operate under conditions of various theatres of military operations and carry out diversified assignments. But this problem has not yet been completely resolved.

It is believed that ground force organization adopted in the armies of the majority of western nations basically corresponds to the conditions of conducting combat operations in such theatres of war as Western Europe. This is due in the first place to the fact that in past wars the decisive battles took place in this area and, in the second place, this theatre now as formerly contains the major regions, both in an economic and administrative-political respect, the largest nuclear weapons bases and other important military installations.

At the same time a study of the nature of probable theatres of possible military operations shows that they differ greatly one from another in relative ruggedness of terrain, road system, climatic and other conditions. All these factors exert substantial influence on the utilization of troops and of combat equipment, techniques of conducting battles and operations, and thus on troop organizational structure. The use of nuclear weapons in such geographically difficult theatres of military operations as mountainous or heavily forested areas will complicate to an even greater extent the employment of soyedineniya and chasty of ground forces designed to operate primarily in highly developed and densely-populated theatres of operations.

As the experience of past wars attests, the act of ignoring the specific conditions of a given theatre is fraught with disastrous consequences. The equipment and organization of the Nazi German troops successfully withstood the test under the geographical conditions of Western Europe, but they were counting on a blitzkrieg, and this equipment and organization turned out to be poorly adapted for conducting combat operations under the severe winter conditions of Eastern Europe.

The possibilities of troop operations in many theatres, particularly mountainous ones, restricted to certain accessible areas and along certain accessible routes, units split up one from another, make



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difficult such things as bringing reserves and second echelons into battle. As a result of this it is essential to have combat units for operation in such theatres which can independently carry out combat assignments. In desert areas it is not always possible to employ heavy equipment. Here vehicles with greater terrain-crossing capabilities are necessary. The same can be said in respect to the arctic regions and forest-swamp areas. In the mountains it is not always possible to employ artillery systems suited to ordinary intersected terrain. Mountain roads frequently do not permit the passage of large-caliber weapons, as well as tactical missiles. Mountains also complicate the problems of logistics.

Bearing all this in mind, it is essential to develop weapons and combat equipment which on the one hand can be successfully used to carry out combat assignments and on the other hand are suitable for utilization under specific conditions of mountainous terrain. These demands are taken into consideration in the organizational development of the armed forces of various countries. For example, many modern armies possess various types of mountain artillery, transport vehicles, engineer vehicles and other military equipment furnished to troops trained to operate in mountain theatres.

The development of weapons and equipment specially designed for use in specific conditions of various theatres of war leads to the development of new, independent podrazdeleniya and chasti outfitted with this equipment. Their organization should correspond to the nature of the combat assignments of the troops and guarantee the most effective utilization under given conditions. Some of this equipment can be incorporated in conventional soyedineniya, chasti and podrazdeleniya with the objective of broadening their combat potential.

The influence of geographical conditions on troop organization is also manifested in change in the ratio of types of troops in various troop units. If with operations on conventional terrain (flat, moderately broken) the combination of a certain number of podrazdeleniya (chasti) of different types of units in soyedineniya and ob'yedineniya guarantees the capability of carrying out assignments, such a balance may be disturbed under other conditions. For example, under sandy desert conditions troops will hardly ever be forced to cross waterways, while personnel water supply will constitute one of the most important tasks. Consequently the ratio of podrazdeleniya securing the crossing of water barriers and water supply podrazdeleniya will appropriately change. In forest and swamp areas, where tanks have limited capabilities, the ratio can be changed in favor of reducing the number of tanks and anti-tank weapons, while the number of combat vehicles with high terrain-crossing capabilities can be increased.

The individual characteristics of theatres of war present varying demands on retaining troop vitality and combat capability. These

demands can not always be met without incorporating appropriate podrazdeleniya into soyedineniya and ob'yedineniya. For example, the mass utilization of nuclear weapons in a mountain theatre of combat operations will cause large landslides and rockslides on the roads, block crossings, etc. Under these conditions combat troops may find themselves in a difficult situation, and detachment from the main body of podrazdeleniya to counteract the consequences of enemy nuclear strikes may reflect on fulfillment of the combat mission. The situation will be analogous during operations in large forest areas, where the employment of nuclear weapons will cause fires and obstructions. Obviously special units must be used for these purposes or special detachments must be organized.

It is clear from the above that two directions are possible in seeking organizational forms of ground forces from the viewpoint of having them correspond to the conditions of various theatres of military operations. First there is the organization of special soyedineniya and chast'i for operating in various theatres of military operations; second, there is the organization of units designed to reinforce conventional soyedineniya and chast'i applicable to various theatres.

Both trends have their positive and negative points. The organization of special units is advantageous in that such troops are prepared and equipped ahead of time primarily for conducting combat operations in a specific theatre. At the same time this is disadvantageous from the viewpoint of economics. The organization of podrazdeleniya and chast'i to reinforce conventional soyedineniya is more advantageous from the viewpoint of economics, but they are not always able to guarantee the successful performance of troop combat operations in a given theatre.

Bearing the above in mind, in all the armies of the major nations, in seeking the most suitable forms of ground force organization, one observes the endeavor to provide them with the capability of conducting successful operations in all combat carried out in developed, populated regions. At the same time the minimum essential number of troop units designed for operations in theatres with specific physical-geographical conditions are being set up. In the German Federal Republic an alpine infantry division was formed in 1956 and subsequently assigned to NATO. The main purpose of this division was that of operating under extremely difficult climatic conditions and on rugged terrain. The American, British and French armies devote much attention to the organization and training of soyedineniya to function under arctic conditions, and in southern regions, particularly in the jungle, where they undergo testing and advanced training.

Speaking of the influence of the nature of combat operations in a modern war on the forms of troop organization, one must remember that at a specific stage a large number of demands on these troops cannot be met in view of the lack of sufficient quantity and requisite quality of new

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equipment and weapons. It is quite logical. Military science, looking far into the future, determines appropriate demands on long-term troop organization and weapons. Weapons in turn, as they are incorporated in the line units, exert a direct influence on troop organization. In conclusion we shall note that the importance of the problem of continuous improvement of ground force organizational structure demands the ever increasing attention of military-theoretical thought toward resolving this problem.

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