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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

3 November 1978

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Director of Central Intelligence
FROM : John N. McMahon
Deputy Director for Operations
SUBJECT : MILITARY THOUGHT (USSR): A New Theoretical
Work on the Meeting Battle and Meeting Engagement

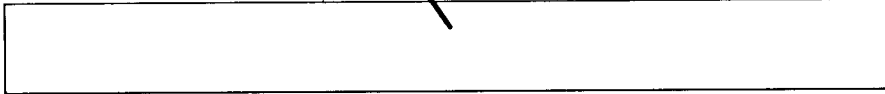
1. The enclosed Intelligence Information Special Report is part of a series now in preparation based on the SECRET USSR Ministry of Defense publication Collection of Articles of the Journal 'Military Thought'. This article, in critically reviewing a book, describes the importance of missile/nuclear weapons, the high mobility of modern troops, and the increased likelihood of meeting battles and engagements in a future war. It outlines the general nature of these battles and engagements and the factors affecting them: nuclear strikes, air reconnaissance, fire and maneuver, decision-making, support, covering troop actions, and coordination. The value of reconnaissance is emphasized as is the essential need for preemptive nuclear strikes. The article concludes by praising the book. This article appeared in Issue No. 2 (63) for 1962.

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

JN
John N. McMahon

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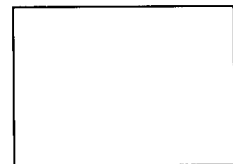
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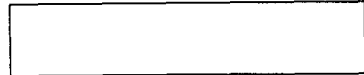




Intelligence Information Special Report

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COUNTRY USSR



DATE OF INFO. Early 1962

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3 November 1978

SUBJECT

MILITARY THOUGHT (USSR): A New Theoretical Work on the Meeting Battle and Meeting Engagement

SOURCE Documentary

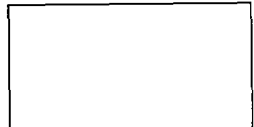
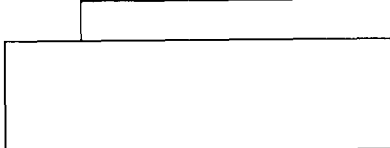
Summary:

The following report is a translation from Russian of an article which appeared in Issue No. 2 (63) for 1962 of the SECRET USSR Ministry of Defense publication Collection of Articles of the Journal 'Military Thought'. The author of this article is Colonel I. Yermachenkov. This article, in critically reviewing a book, describes the importance of missile/nuclear weapons, the high mobility of modern troops, and the increased likelihood of meeting battles and engagements in a future war. It outlines the general nature of these battles and engagements and the factors affecting them: nuclear strikes, air reconnaissance, fire and maneuver, decision-making, support, covering troop actions, and coordination. Meeting battles and engagements will not be limited to a war's initial period, but will occur throughout it. The value of reconnaissance is emphasized as is the essential need for preemptive nuclear strikes. The article concludes by praising the book.

End of Summary

Comment:

The author also contributed to "The Assault Crossing of Rivers from the March in an Offensive Operation of a Combined-Arms Army" in Issue No. 3 (69) for 1963. After 1962 the SECRET version of Military Thought was published three times annually and was distributed down to the level of division commander. It reportedly ceased publication at the end of 1970.



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A New Theoretical Work on
the Meeting Battle and Meeting Engagement

by

Colonel I. YERMACHENKOV

The theory of Soviet military art has been enriched by a useful study of one of the basic types of offensive action of the ground forces. We are speaking of the timely work for modern conditions, The Meeting Battle and Meeting Engagement,* produced by a group of authors of the M. V. Frunze Military Academy under the editorship of Army General P. A. KUROCHKIN.

The use of missile/nuclear weapons and the high mobility of troops will impart to future operations a highly maneuverable and decisive character. Troops will carry out extensive maneuvering to set up attack (counterattack) groupings and advance on the axes of attack, to quickly exploit the results of missile/nuclear strikes and rapidly move forward into the depth of the enemy disposition, to shift attacks to other axes, to reinforce groupings on separate axes and remove troops from under nuclear strikes, to withdraw groupings to new areas, etc. Maneuvering will be a constant component of the combat actions of ground forces.

It follows from this that in future operations the possibility of the occurrence of meeting encounters between both sides under the most varied conditions of the situation will increase considerably. Meeting battles and meeting engagements will be one of the basic types of combat action of the ground forces. They will play an important role in achieving the objectives of operations.

However, until recently we had devoted little attention to working out the theory of the organization and conduct of this type of action. In the guides and various training textbooks the meeting battle and engagement had been examined incompletely and incidentally to the offensive. All of this diminished their role and led to the inadequate study of these complex types of combat actions. The appearance of the work under review fills this gap to a considerable extent.

* The Meeting Battle and Meeting Engagement. Publication of the M. V. Frunze Military Academy, 1961, 120 pages.

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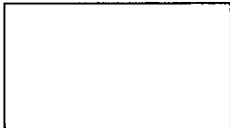
The chief merit of the work, in our opinion, consists in the fact that it is the first one in postwar theoretical literature which most fully reveals the content of such complex types of combat actions as the meeting battle and meeting engagement.

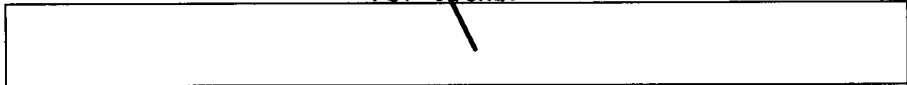
In a brief introduction the authors discuss the importance of the timely development of the theory of the meeting battle and engagement in the light of the new means of armed combat and the changes that have come about in the methods of waging it.

The first chapter examines the nature of the meeting battle and engagement; the second is on the principles of employing forces and means; the third is on organization; and the fourth is on the conduct of the meeting battle and meeting engagement.

Based on a synthesis of the experience of past wars, especially the two world wars, the authors have traced the main trends in the development of the meeting battle and engagement, showing that, as the means of armed combat have developed and the mobility and maneuverability of troops have increased, the nature of this complex type of combat action has changed and such features as the accidental nature of an encounter of both sides, the linear nature of combat actions, and the insufficient decisiveness of objectives have become things of the past. The use of aviation has made it possible to observe the movements of the enemy at a great depth, anticipate the possibility of a meeting encounter with him, and organize the battle and engagement beforehand. The scale of meeting engagements has expanded. In the Great Patriotic War they occurred both in offensive as well as in defensive operations and during a withdrawal; they were conducted with decisive objectives -- right up to the total destruction of the enemy, and in a number of cases they were conducted with the participation of several armies of a front. The role of fire and of the actions of mobile large units and operational formations in the achievement of success in meeting engagements has grown. Combat actions in a meeting battle and engagement have acquired an ever more maneuverable nature. In the course of a single engagement the most varied types and methods of combat actions have been employed.

The most characteristic conditions for the occurrence of a meeting battle and engagement in modern operations have been studied in sufficient detail. Even the first operations may begin with the meeting encounter of the main forces of the operational formations. On entering into war both sides will inevitably endeavor to seize the initiative in the very first hours of military actions. Going over to the offensive with the previously





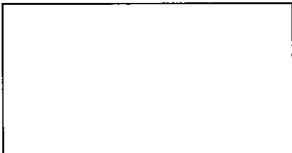
readied groupings of ground forces, they will exploit to the maximum the results of the most powerful first nuclear strikes so as to very quickly complete the destruction of the opposing forces in the border zone and rapidly advance to a great depth for the purpose of capturing vitally important areas of the enemy, disrupting his mobilization measures, and achieving the immediate strategic tasks of the war in the very shortest time. Under these conditions, meeting engagements will develop simultaneously and successively over areas that are very extensive in frontage and in depth and on separate axes; they will frequently be conducted with variable success and be characterized by great intensity.

During the operations of the initial period of war, the struggle for the initiative will grow continually. Both sides will start to build up their efforts by using fully mobilized reserves. The destruction of the enemy reserves approaching from the interior will be done predominantly in meeting engagements.

At the same time, one cannot fully agree with the assertion of the authors of this work that meeting battles and engagements are most characteristic of the initial period of war (page 12). If in World War I meeting battles and engagements were conducted predominantly in the maneuvering period, in World War II these battles and engagements took place throughout the war and not only in the beginning. Consequently, it is more correct to say that meeting battles and engagements are characteristic of wars of maneuver and of the maneuvering periods of wars, including the initial period, which is most replete with maneuvering actions. Furthermore, it is necessary to take into account that as the means of armed combat are developed, the maneuvering nature of the combat actions of the ground forces will also grow.

It is now difficult to foresee what will be the nature of ground forces operations in the subsequent stages of a war. It is most likely that the maneuvering nature of operations will be retained since both sides will be forced to make efforts to finish the war by means of decisive methods of combat actions. That is why in the subsequent stages of the war meeting battles and engagements will occupy an important place among the other types of combat actions.

The authors point out, on solid grounds, that modern meeting battles and engagements are characterized primarily by an intense continuous struggle to seize and retain the initiative. They will be started and conducted with premeditation, the use of such a powerful means of destruction as nuclear weapons being conducive to this. The increased



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scale of meeting engagements is characteristic of modern conditions. Combat actions in a meeting engagement quite frequently may involve all or most of the axes in the zone of actions of an army, and sometimes also of a front.

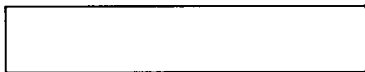
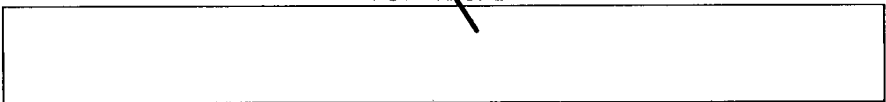
It is necessary to make a few remarks about the elements of chance in the meeting battle and engagement. The authors believe that, although modern means of reconnaissance permit detecting beforehand enemy groupings moving to meet our advancing troops, still they will not always succeed in determining precisely enough the axis of further movement of the hostile troops and in detecting the possible nature of their actions. In this connection they assert that also under modern conditions the meeting battle and meeting engagement will be characterized at their inception by insufficient clarity of the situation (page 26), and that in a number of cases the possibility of the chance occurrence of a meeting battle, especially for units and subunits, cannot be excluded (page 27).

It seems to us that there are not sufficient grounds for such assertions. With modern means of reconnaissance and their capabilities, the lack of necessary reconnaissance data about the location and nature of the actions of the enemy can only be the result of errors and miscalculations committed by the command and staffs and of their inefficiency in the organization and conduct of reconnaissance.

The lack of information about the enemy gives rise to vagueness about the situation and to all kinds of chance occurrences, not only in a meeting battle and engagement but also in any other type of combat action. A chance occurrence is the exception to the norm, it is its opposite. But, since we are speaking of characteristic features as being normal, we can in no way consider vagueness about the situation a characteristic feature of the modern meeting battle and engagement. Moreover, if we acknowledge vagueness about the situation and chance occurrence as peculiarities of this type of combat action we may thereby do definite harm to the training of our cadre personnel. The slightest failure in a meeting engagement will always be able to be justified by the so-called vagueness about the situation, which is an "inevitable" manifestation of this engagement.

Also incorrect is the assertion of the authors that the location of our own troops will not always be known fully enough either, since they are continually on the move (page 26). One can hardly count on seizing the initiative and preempting the enemy in deploying or opening fire if the location and condition of one's own troops is not known.

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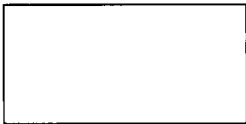


The authors correctly consider that the decisive condition for achieving success in a meeting battle and engagement is to preempt the enemy in the delivery of massed fire strikes, primarily with nuclear weapons, and to gain fire superiority. Under modern conditions the outcome of a meeting battle and engagement may even be predetermined by such preemptive strikes against the enemy. But the indispensable condition for seizing the initiative and achieving victory in a meeting battle and engagement is also that of preempting the enemy in deploying troops and going over to the offensive. This can be achieved by the timely adoption of a decision to conduct a meeting battle or engagement, by the prior establishment of the necessary groupings while the troops are moving forward, and by their deployment and commitment to battle from the march. Quick defeat of the enemy is achieved by delivering attacks against his groupings' most vulnerable spots -- the flanks and rear. Frontal encounters are not always advantageous: under modern conditions they may lead to protracted engagements and to losing the momentum of attack.

The work indicates that under modern conditions the delivery of attacks against enemy groupings on several axes is characteristic of the actions of an army in a meeting engagement. Depending on its combat strength and the concept of the engagement, an army will usually deliver attacks on two or three axes: in other words, one or two divisions will be operating on each axis (pages 40-41). The delivery of attacks by the army on several axes enables it to employ the most varied forms of operational maneuvering -- those which are most appropriate to the specific conditions of the situation -- to make flank attacks against individual groupings or against the enemy's main forces with a deep envelopment in conjunction with the swift development of the offensive into the depth, to deliver several frontal attacks so as to fragment the hostile groupings and destroy them in detail, as well as to combine frontal attacks with deep envelopments of the enemy.

In examining the operational disposition of troops, the authors of this work consider that it is most feasible in the conduct of a meeting engagement to have the army's grouping of forces and means in two echelons. Even in that case where, as a result of limited forces and means, a one-echelon disposition of the army has to be employed, the organization of second echelons is recommended "...as troops arrive from the interior and as large units are regrouped from other axes..." (page 47).

Such a recommendation, in our opinion, does not correspond to the nature of a meeting engagement. At the present time even in an offensive operation it is not always advantageous to set up a second echelon. The





buildup of efforts on any of the two or three axes of actions of the army, which are 20 to 30 kilometers apart from each other, as well as on new axes in order to accomplish tasks that suddenly arise, is more conveniently and quickly done by having reserve large units available.

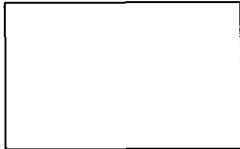
Not entirely correct, in our opinion, is the authors' assertion that in a meeting battle a division can deliver attacks on two or three axes (page 50). The attack by a division on two or three axes with separate tactical groupings, a reinforced regiment making up the basis of these, is nothing but an attack over the entire front with splintered forces and means on these axes. The strength and combat capabilities of a division can ensure the necessary superiority over the enemy and a successful attack on one, or at most two, axes. Delivering attacks on two or three axes will be the exception rather than the rule and is possible only under favorable situational conditions and in theaters of military operations with special geographic conditions.

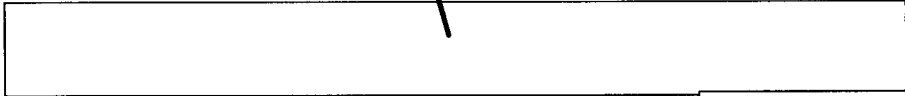
The matters connected with the organization of a meeting battle and engagement are worked out in detail in this work (Chapter 3).

A characteristic of the organization of the meeting battle and engagement is the conduct of basic preparatory measures before the initiation of the encounter with the main enemy grouping on the basis of correctly foreseeing the development of events and accurately evaluating all elements of the situation. The authors of this work have succeeded in adequately investigating the main measures in the preparation of a meeting battle and engagement.

They devote much attention to the organization and conduct of reconnaissance in support of the meeting battle and engagement. Of definite interest are the proposals on increasing the capabilities of air reconnaissance in the future by using guided reconnaissance drones (missiles) equipped with picture transmission equipment, by extensively employing aerial television surveillance, and by introducing one-step processing of photographs with transmission of the obtained data from on board the aircraft, as well as by reconnoitering combined-arms large units using long-range reconnaissance groups and by incorporating radio reconnaissance subunits into the T/O of divisions (pages 62-63).

The authors correctly indicate that "at the start of a meeting encounter the side in the more advantageous position will be the one which has managed by that time to deploy fire means, deliver preemptive fire strikes, and have troops in a grouping that allows the quick delivery of



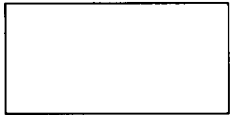


attacks with tanks and infantry against the hostile groupings. It is possible to establish this grouping with timeliness, gain time, and quickly seize the initiative provided there has been a prior determination of the concept of the meeting battle or engagement in case they occur" (page 63). The concept under these conditions usually has a tentative, approximate nature; and, as new data on the situation are received and a meeting battle or engagement becomes imminent, it must be constantly refined.

A number of practical recommendations are given on how to form groupings of troops beforehand during the preceding combat actions (page 67), how to draw up troops on the march (page 68), and how to preempt the enemy in delivering fire strikes and going over to the offensive. The matters related to the making of the decision for a meeting battle and engagement and to the assignment of tasks to the troops are analyzed in sufficient detail (pages 72-77).

Making the decision on a meeting battle and engagement is more complex than in the conduct of other types of combat actions in view of the continual, often drastic, changing of the situation and the extremely limited time for determining it more exactly. Under these conditions the preliminary hearing of reports of the chiefs of branch arms and special troops will not take place. The main thing in making the decision is: to correctly determine the enemy targets to be hit with nuclear weapons and the objective which must be achieved as a result of this, to correctly choose the time to deliver nuclear strikes that ensures greatest damage to the enemy and that preempts him in such strikes, and to determine the method of actions of the attack groupings that will make it possible to quickly exploit the results of nuclear strikes so as to complete the defeat of the enemy. The transmission of combat tasks to troops must be done with exceptional efficiency. Written orders are not suitable here. The control of troops must be based chiefly on brief instructions and signals transmitted by radio.

The matters of organizing the main types of support for the combat actions of troops in the meeting battle and engagement are discussed quite amply in this work. An important place is assigned to political work as it is one of the most important measures in maintaining the constant combat effectiveness of troops. At the same time, the authors for some reason regard air defense as one of the types of support for the combat actions of troops (page 79), although it is well known that under modern conditions air defense has advanced beyond the scope of measures to support an operation and battle and has become an independent type of combat action to



destroy enemy means of air attack. A similar viewpoint was reflected in the 1960 publication of the M. V. Frunze Military Academy, The Offensive.* The inconsistency of the authors of the work under review on this matter may perplex readers.

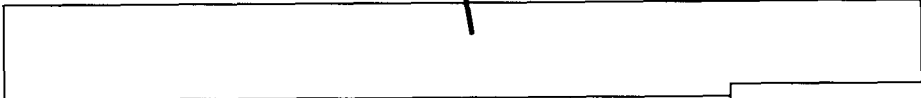
Nor can one agree with the recommendation to attach radioelectronic countermeasures means to the divisions operating on independent axes apart from the main forces (page 62), since all the first-echelon divisions of the army will, in essence, be operating on independent axes. Dispersing these means will not enable us to rapidly shift jamming zones and direction-finding bases, which may lead to the neutralization of our radio nets by the enemy.

In examining the organization of a troop attack from the march, the authors of the work believe that "under modern conditions, large units will enter into the battle and engagement from the march by axes and at different times as the troops come into contact with the enemy"; therefore, "the necessity of designating a line of deployment for the division disappears" (page 63). For these reasons, they suggest, when a meeting engagement is anticipated, determining not a line of probable encounter with the enemy, but an area (page 64).

Such a recommendation can be acceptable only for those cases where the deploying enemy grouping is neutralized by our preemptive nuclear strikes and its fate is already predetermined by these strikes. But under those conditions where our troops have at their disposal a limited number of nuclear warheads for the meeting engagement or where we do not succeed in preempting the enemy in delivering nuclear strikes, we cannot allow our troops to take action separately. Otherwise, instead of a simultaneous powerful blow, the result will be separate "pinpricks" barely felt by the enemy and our large units may find themselves under the threat of destruction in detail.

In such a situation it is necessary to ensure simultaneity of attack by the first-echelon large units. Only thus can one count on quickly crushing the enemy and having the attacking troops effectively exploit the results of our nuclear strikes. In addition, it should be borne in mind that the designation of lines of deployment of the troops, as well as the determination of the line of probable encounter with the enemy, have exceptionally great value from the organizational standpoint.

* Works of the Academy No. 78, The Offensive, theoretical work, 1960, pages 148-149.



Also researched in this work are the main matters of the conduct of a meeting battle and engagement. The authors quite correctly indicate that under modern conditions meeting battles and engagements will begin with powerful nuclear strikes to the full depth of the enemy disposition for the purpose of gaining fire superiority and inflicting damage on the main enemy groupings before they come into contact with our troops. Accordingly, nuclear weapons strikes must be delivered against those installations and targets whose destruction will have a decisive effect on the outcome of the meeting battle and engagement. The enemy's means of nuclear attack and main troop groupings are such targets.

At present it is not always advantageous to time the delivery of fire strikes to some specific moment of troop actions. In order to gain fire superiority, both sides will endeavor to preempt their enemy in the delivery of fire strikes, primarily against means of nuclear attack, which pose the greatest threat to one's own troops. Therefore, immediately upon the detection of the enemy's means of nuclear attack these must be destroyed with all the nuclear and conventional means of destruction that are available and in readiness.

As to the time and procedure for delivering nuclear strikes against the main enemy grouping, these will depend on the specific situation that develops, including the location of this grouping, the possibility of having our own troops exploit the results of the nuclear strikes, the availability of ready means of destruction, etc. Frequently, in delivering nuclear strikes it will be necessary to wait for advantageous moments so as to bring about the greatest destruction of the enemy, for instance, when the enemy's grouping has begun to deploy or when his troops have bunched up. The bunching up of enemy troops, it is stressed in this work, can be brought about by us by means of premeditated actions, in particular by air and missile strikes with conventional and chemical means of destruction against the enemy's columns and crossings (page 95).

Of great interest to the reader is the study of the possible development of the meeting encounter of the groupings of both sides in the first operation of the initial period of war (Chapter 4). The authors have attempted to draw a picture of the possible beginning of meeting battles and engagements in the border zone and to make clear the nature of the combat actions of the troops. But this is not done completely enough, in our opinion. From what is said on page 95, it is evident that the covering troops (in the zone of actions of an army these are one or two divisions) have deployed, positioning themselves on the most important axes of attack of the enemy, and, therefore, they say, the first meeting encounters will



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begin with the combat actions of these troops. But what combat actions? Since these troops are deployed, especially on axes of a probable enemy attack, it is obvious that they have a definite task, "...to cover the approach and commitment to combat actions of the main forces that are located in the interior.." (page 95). Meeting encounters of both sides require that the troops be in a fluid situation. Only in this event can an encounter lead to meeting battles and engagements. But if the covering troops have such tasks as are cited above, then the beginning combat actions of these troops will not be in the nature of meeting engagements. Subsequently, as is correctly said on pages 95-96, "...the covering troops, decisively moving forward into the depth of the enemy's disposition, immobilize by means of offensive actions the maneuvering of his advancing main groupings, seize important terrain areas and thereby ensure that the troops approaching the border from the interior can carry out swift maneuvering to the enemy's flank and rear..." This method of troop actions may occur during the start of a meeting engagement.

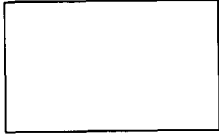
The authors of the work propose different variants of the deployment of troops to deliver attacks from the march, depending on the specific conditions of the situation. The reader will find recommendations on organizing the defeat of the enemy's first-echelon troops, on combating his reserves, as well as on the combat employment of rocket troops, artillery, and aviation during the meeting battle and engagement.

* * *

On the whole, the work The Meeting Battle and Meeting Engagement is a sufficiently thorough theoretical investigation into all the basic principles pertaining to these types of combat actions. The value of the work is increased by the fact that its authors give us a number of practical recommendations based on the experience built up in recent years in the combat and operational training of troops and staffs. True, the volume of these recommendations could have been much greater.

The shortcomings mentioned in this review do not diminish the practical importance of this work. There is no doubt that its appearance will be of great help to our officer personnel in the study of one of the complex types of combat actions.

It should be mentioned that comments from the troops (the Baltic, Leningrad, Carpathian, Transbaykal, and other military districts) as well



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as from a number of the central directorates of the Ministry of Defense express the opinion that there is a need to publish this work on a mass scale. Successful mastery by troops of the variety of methods of organizing and conducting the meeting battle and meeting engagement can be achieved when good texts such as this new book are available. Its publication will render great help to commanders and staffs in the instruction of troops, as well as in further investigation into the most timely problems of the meeting battle and engagement.

The Chief Directorate of Combat Training of the Ground Forces, which has, incidentally, also supported the publication of this book, must show more vigorous initiative in this matter in order to satisfy the demands of the troops for this text as quickly as possible.

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