

**COMMENTS ON LOMOV'S "SOVIET MILITARY DOCTRINE"**

**Thomas W. Wolfe**

**October 1963**

**P-2816**



COMMENTS ON LOMOV'S "SOVIET MILITARY DOCTRINE"

Thomas W. Wolfe\*

The RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, California

This paper offers some comments on a recent brochure by Colonel-General Professor N. A. Lomov, entitled Soviet Military Doctrine (Sovetskaia Voennaia Doktrina).

The Lomov pamphlet, a copy of which was purchased in a Moscow bookstore by a visitor to the Soviet Union in September 1963, is of considerable interest as a document in the on-going dialogue in the Soviet Union over military doctrine and strategy. It was published by the All-Union Society for the Dissemination of Political and Scientific Knowledge, rather than by the Military Publishing House of the Ministry of Defense. This circumstance, together with certain internal evidence which will be discussed presently, suggests that the document may have originated at the prompting of authorities outside the Ministry of Defense, possibly as an expression of views which the Party wishes to encourage.

Publication of the Lomov brochure in mid-1963 (it was sent to the press on May 29, 1963 and was printed in 60,000 copies) takes on additional interest in view of the fact that it represents a

---

\*Any views expressed in this paper are those of the author. They should not be interpreted as reflecting the views of The RAND Corporation or the official opinion or policy of any of its governmental or private research sponsors. Papers are reproduced by The RAND Corporation as a courtesy to members of its staff.

re-working of an article by the same author which had appeared a year earlier in a Soviet military journal.\* The brochure is an expansion of the original article. Much of the content is similar -- many passages in fact are verbatim -- but there are also some noteworthy differences of emphasis and omissions which may bear on the course of the military dialogue in the Soviet Union over the past year. To what extent the new Lomov brochure constitutes a statement of "official" views, as distinct from an individual contribution to the military dialogue, remains, however, an open question.

The general scope of the Lomov piece, which runs to 31 pages, is reflected by the Table of Contents, translated as an appendix to this paper. Approximately half of the brochure is devoted to an historical sketch of the development of Soviet military doctrine. The remainder, beginning with the chapter entitled, "The Revolution in Military Affairs and Military Doctrine," deals with contemporary issues. These comments will focus mainly on the latter portion of the brochure, although something should first be said about the general point of departure of Lomov's piece.

Lomov begins by paying tribute to the well-known Khrushchevian proposition that "in the contemporary epoch there is no fatal inevitability of war." This is duly attributed, quoting Khrushchev, to:

The present relationship of forces in the world arena /which/ makes it possible for the socialist camp and other peace-loving forces for the first time in history to...compel the imperialists, under the threat of destruction of their system, not to launch a world war. (p. 3)

---

\*Colonel-General N. Lomov, "On Soviet Military Doctrine," Kommunist Vooruzhennykh Sil (Communist of the Armed Forces), No. 10, May 1962, pp. 11-21.

Amongst various constraints which keep the imperialists from carrying out their "aggressive intentions," Lomov cites as a "powerful factor" the "defensive might of the Soviet Union, of all the countries of the socialist camp, and mainly the rocket-nuclear weapons in the hands of the Soviet government." (p. 4)

Lomov's prologue includes reference to the Soviet policy of peaceful coexistence as the only alternative to a "catastrophic war," and then concludes (p. 5) with the observation that in connection with all the problems of war and peace, "the strengthening of the armed forces and the defense capability of the Soviet Union became especially acute and significant."

This rather standard presentation of familiar themes (in which Lomov adverts to the need for strengthening the unity and might of the socialist camp as a whole, along with improvement of the Soviet defense posture) contains nothing to set off Lomov's point of departure from his earlier article or from what might be expected in any routine Soviet brochure on military doctrine. The first indication that Lomov may have turned his hand to something more than a routine re-writing chore comes when he next sets out a definition of military doctrine, and comments on where the competence and authority to formulate it is to be found. His definition reads as follows:

Military doctrine consists of the officially accepted and scientifically-based views within the state and the armed forces on the nature and conduct of war, and also on the requirements which arise from these views with regard to preparing the country and the armed forces for war. (p. 5)

This is a somewhat more succinct and less sweeping description of military doctrine than that given, for example, in the Sokolovskii book on military strategy.\* The most notable variation from the Sokolovskii treatment comes, however, when Lomov directly ascribes full competence for the formulation of military doctrine and the development of the armed forces to the political leadership. His statement reads:

It follows that the foundations of military doctrine are determined by the country's political leadership, for it alone has the competence and jurisdiction to make decisions with regard to the problems of developing the armed forces, basing its /decisions/ upon an evaluation of the nature of a future war, and upon an appraisal of political tasks and military-economic capabilities, as well as the enemy's potential. (p. 5)

By contrast, the Sokolovskii treatment had been far less generous toward the political leadership; in fact, on this point, the Sokolovskii book could be regarded as pursuing a trend in the Soviet military press during 1961-62 to expand on the military's share of credit for developing military doctrine and by implication, as an argument for increased military influence upon policy-making in an area customarily reserved to the political leadership.\*\* Lomov himself, in his May 1962 article, had duly referred to the foreign and internal policies of the Party and the Soviet state as the basis for Soviet military doctrine, but he had not singled out the political leadership in the conspicuous fashion now employed in the brochure.

---

\*See pp. 130-131 of the Prentice-Hall version of Soviet Military Strategy.

\*\*See Soviet Military Strategy, p. 33.

In his original article Lomov had, in fact, seemed to stake out a line for implicit recognition of significant military influence upon the formulation of military doctrine. In one passage, for example, he wrote:

The formation of our military world-view has taken place in a creative atmosphere; it has been accompanied by a struggle among various viewpoints and is the result of the common efforts of military theorists and practical military people. Thanks to this, we have developed that body of unified theoretical views, upon the basis of which has been carried out a broad state program to prepare the country and the armed forces for the defense of the Fatherland.\*

This passage does not appear at all in the new brochure. One is left to speculate whether Lomov's new and more pointed attention to the primacy of the political leadership is a reaction -- self-imposed or otherwise -- to criticism of the earlier formula under which the military was accorded a greater share of credit for the development of Soviet military doctrine.

In any case the Lomov brochure now takes its place along with a number of other re-assertions made since publication of the Sokolovskii book with regard to the complete dominance of the political leadership generally and of Nikita Khrushchev personally in military affairs and in the formulation of military doctrine.\*\*

---

\*Communist of the Armed Forces, May 1962, p. 12.

\*\*These included a pamphlet by Marshal R. Y. Malinovskii, Vigilantly Stand Guard over the Peace, published in November 1962, pp. 16, 22-23; and critical reviews of the Sokolovskii book appearing in Voennyi Vestnik (Military Herald) January 1963, p. 7, and Voenno-Istoricheskii Zhurnal (Military-Historical Journal) May 1963, p. 91.

Before going on to the portion of the Lomov brochure dealing with contemporary doctrinal questions, one further comment should be made concerning Lomov's definition of military doctrine. It will be noted that he defined it as views officially accepted "within the State and the armed forces..." [my underscoring; in the original, the whole definition was in italics]. The saving phrase "within the armed forces" may have been meant to preserve the notion of some right for the military to resist the imposition of politically-originated conceptions which might seem incompatible with professional military judgment. This is a thin reed, to be sure, but if the document does grow in part out of a continuing polemical contest between political and military viewpoints, even such subtle points might seem worth scoring. The same phrase, incidentally, had been used in Lomov's earlier article.

Elsewhere in the brochure (p. 19), what may be a similar sort of indirect reclamer for military professionalism versus intruding non-military political influence can be found in Lomov's discussion of the importance of the command cadres of the armed forces. While noting that almost 90 per cent of the officer corps consists of Party and Komsomol members -- in itself a way of inferring that the political health of the officer corps is sound -- Lomov stresses that the regular officer corps has a special role to play in the era of a revolution in military technology. "Preparation of the officer cadres has an especially important significance," he writes, "for they are the backbone of the armed forces, the creator and the bearer of the military art and the teacher of the soldiers in the ranks." Lomov then goes on (p. 20) to emphasize the high level



of technical competence required of the officer corps in modern armed forces. These passages, which did not appear in the May 1962 Lomov article, come close to being a reminder that the professional officer corps serves a function for which the Party by itself is no substitute. Apart from such indirect suggestions of a defense of the professional military viewpoint, however, the brochure as a whole certainly reaffirms the Party's claim to a leading role in the development of military doctrine.

Turning now to Lomov's exposition of contemporary Soviet military doctrine, two general points of interest emerge at the outset. First, his selection of sources of authority for current doctrine is rather revealing. In addition to such documents as the Party Program, he refers both to Marshal Malinovskii's report to the 22nd Party Congress in October 1961 and to Khrushchev's speech to the Supreme Soviet in January 1960, but the latter enjoys precedence. In all, Lomov finds occasion to cite Khrushchev's authoritative contributions to Soviet military doctrine seven times, compared with twice for Malinovskii. Although such comparisons may not be particularly meaningful, the score in Lomov's May 1962 article was four references for Khrushchev and three for Malinovskii.

Secondly, it should be said that no substantive propositions of a wholly novel character are advanced in the Lomov brochure. As indicated previously, the picture it provides of current military doctrine represents essentially the same ground covered in Lomov's May 1962 article, and is thus interesting less for originality than for the selective emphasis it gives to some aspects of questions

which have been discussed in other more extended Soviet treatments of the subject. The following are among the substantive items of interest covered in Lomov's account.

THE REVOLUTION IN MILITARY AFFAIRS

Lomov gives the now standard rendition of the revolutionary impact which modern weaponry has had on military science and on the organization of the Soviet armed forces. (pp. 14-15) He takes particular pains to point out, however, that the Party and its Central Committee have provided direct leadership in applying the results of scientific-technical-industrial progress to the transformation of the Soviet armed forces. At one point (p. 17) a passage from Engels is cited which even seems to suggest that without the special insight provided by Marxism-Leninism, the innate conservatism of the military command might have delayed the application of new technological successes to military affairs. The reference from Engels did not appear in the May 1962 Lomov article.

The two foremost features of the "radical reconstruction" and modernization of the Soviet military establishment are identified as "the introduction on a massive scale of rocket-nuclear weapons into all branches of the armed forces, and the creation of strategic rocket forces." (p. 16)

Emphasis on the importance of nuclear weapons and missiles is underscored by Lomov's statement (p. 24) that "one can scarcely imagine at the present time anything which could take the place of [these weapons]." He goes on to say that any country which does not possess such weapons, or which only has them in small

quantities, is placed in an extremely disadvantageous position. Following the same line of thought expressed in his previous article, Lomov adds that one can't make up for nuclear deficiency with other forces, as in the past one might compensate for inferiority in one type of force with strength in another type.

#### MILITARY SUPERIORITY

This question receives relatively little direct attention in the Lomov brochure, as was also the case in his May 1962 article. General assertions of the growing over-all superiority of the "socialist camp" appear on several occasions (pp. 15, 25) and there is also a claim that the Soviet Union has superiority in nuclear weapons over its "probable enemy." (p. 25) However, Lomov appears to avoid specificity on the question of superiority, and he does not raise the issue whether quantitative or qualitative superiority counts most. At one point (p. 15) he slips into a rather "un-Marxist" argument that the superiority of the Soviet "social system" is proven by the current high stage of "military development in the Soviet Union."

#### NATURE OF A FUTURE WORLD WAR

Lomov cites Khrushchev's January 1960 description of a future world war to make the point (p. 18) that if war comes, it will differ from any war of the past. As in his previous article, Lomov lays stress in the coalition character of a future war -- in which he notes (p. 22) that for the first time in history one side would be made up of a coalition of socialist states. In general, his

discussion of a future world war does not depart from the customary treatment of this subject. The outbreak of war might come in two ways, either with a surprise mass attack by the "aggressive bloc," or through escalation of a "local war into a world war." (p. 25) It would be a nuclear war, fought for unlimited ends, namely the existence of one system or the other. (p. 22) Lomov also says that a future world war would be the first war of truly "intercontinental scope" in history, making the point (pp. 23, 24) that in such a war the U.S.A. will not be exempt from destructive blows, the "consequences of which it is difficult to under-estimate." The afterthought quoted here did not appear in the Lomov article a year previously.

#### LOCAL AND NATIONAL-LIBERATION WARS

Three categories of wars are recognized in the Lomov brochure: world wars, local wars and national-liberation wars. (p. 21) The discussion of the latter two types follows almost verbatim Lomov's earlier treatment, but remains of considerable interest, particularly because of Lomov's effort to clarify the distinction between a local war and a national-liberation war. This is a point upon which some confusion seems to persist in Soviet doctrine, which takes the position that local wars are dangerous and should be avoided while national-liberation wars should be supported.

Lomov speaks first of the recent tendency of the "imperialist camp" to develop a theory of local war and special forces for such wars in order to carry out its "aggressive designs" without risking the collapse of the capitalist system in a world war. He makes the customary doctrinal assertion that a small local war would not remain limited for very long, although he does not stress its immediate and

automatic escalation into global nuclear war. He then voices a rather odd plea not to confuse local wars with national-liberation wars. Whether this passage refers to internal Soviet tendencies to confuse the two, or to Western commentary on the inconsistency of the Soviet position regarding local and national-liberation war, is not clear. The passage in question is quoted in full below:

Consequently, local wars must not be evaluated on the basis that they can be waged within local territorial limits. If one takes this position, then one must also place in this category wars of national-liberation and civil wars -- that is, just wars which also are waged within territorial limits. The only correct criterion for defining the character of wars is their socio-political content. In this light, we look upon local wars as small imperialist, predatory and reactionary wars. (p. 21)

Another point of interest under the rubric of local war, which shows up in the new brochure but not in the earlier article, is Lomov's almost casual reference (p. 15) to the possibility that nuclear weapons might be employed in local as well as in world war.

#### QUESTION OF SHORT OR PROTRACTED WAR

This is one of the issues on which there has been a good deal of ambivalence in Soviet doctrinal appreciations. Lomov's brochure reflects a slight shift of emphasis, giving somewhat less weight to the protracted war possibility than his earlier article. In the brochure he states:

On this question, current Soviet military doctrine is guided by the proposition that war objectives can be attained in a short period of time, since powerful surprise blows with rocket-nuclear weapons and effective exploitation of the results by the armed forces can quickly decide the major strategic tasks of war. (p. 25)

Lomov goes on to say that the possibility of a short war is based on "current realities" -- first, on the growing advantage of the socialist camp with respect to the "correlation of forces in the world arena," and second, on the superiority of the Soviet Union over "its probable enemy in the military-technical provision of nuclear weapons to the armed forces." A third factor introduced in the brochure's treatment of this question (p. 26) is that the worldwide peace movement, together with modern combat capabilities, will make it possible to "significantly shorten the duration of a war and to speed up the conclusion of peace." Only after this marshalling of reasons favoring the likelihood of a short war does Lomov add a single sentence to the effect that:

...it cannot be excluded that under certain conditions a war might take on a protracted character, which will demand of the country and the armed forces a maximum, sustained effort. (p. 26)

By contrast, Lomov's earlier article had presented a somewhat less unbalanced argument as between the short and long war possibilities, and had moreover dwelt on the importance of preparing the country's economic base for a prolonged war by providing for large-scale wartime expansion of war industry\* -- a point which has been dropped in the brochure.

#### SIZE OF ARMED FORCES

This issue also has been at the center of the debate over military policy in the Soviet Union. Lomov displays consistency in his 1962 and 1963 positions on this question, arguing in both cases

---

\*Communist of the Armed Forces, May 1962, p. 15.

that even under conditions of nuclear warfare, mass, multi-million man armies will be needed. His position thus stands in contrast to some recent efforts in Soviet military writing to revive Khrushchev's January 1960 theme that nuclear firepower makes possible significant manpower reductions without adverse effect on combat capability. While Lomov appears in this instance (pp. 19, 27) to hold out for a position favored by the traditionalist side of the military debate, he does give ground on an associated point. In his May 1962 article he had come out for the maintenance of substantial trained reserve forces in order to allow the political and military leadership room to make bold decisions in the event of war with a strong enemy. The brochure is silent on this point.

#### COMBINED FORCES

The doctrine of combined operations of all arms as a prerequisite for "conclusive" victory, even though the decisive role has passed to the strategic rocket forces, is adhered to in the new Lomov brochure (p. 27) as in the case of his May 1962 article. He holds that ground, air, and naval forces will conduct offensive operations, marked by large-scale maneuver and with the employment of rocket-nuclear weapons of all types. He also finds a continued requirement, "depending on the nature of the objectives," for the employment of conventional forces, in close co-operation with rocket forces. (p. 27) A new note added in the brochure (p. 27) pertains to the difficulties that would be posed for theater combat operations by radioactive zones resulting from use of nuclear weapons by both sides.

In neither the present brochure nor his May 1962 article does Lomov address the question of carrying out combined operations outside the framework of theatre warfare, which would become a pertinent matter in considering a campaign against an overseas opponent like the United States.

The roles of the separate branches of the armed forces engage Lomov's attention only briefly. He does find occasion in the brochure to cite Khrushchev's observation in October 1961 that the development and improvement of aviation continues. In this connection, Lomov notes (pp. 27, 28) the "new qualities" which long-range bombers have acquired by virtue of being armed with air-to-surface missiles. In a brief allusion to naval roles (p. 28) Lomov omits mention altogether of a strategic delivery role for missile subs. He stresses instead their role against carrier forces and lines of communication.

#### TARGET DOCTRINE

No new elements are introduced on the question of targeting doctrine in the Lomov brochure. As in his own previous article and in keeping with other Soviet expressions on this subject, Lomov adheres (pp. 23, 24) to a doctrine of mixed targeting, according to which enemy nuclear delivery means and other military forces would be attacked "simultaneously" with attacks to destroy and disrupt the enemy's economic base and to disorganize his governmental system. There is no discussion in the Lomov brochure of "restrained targeting" and "controlled response" concepts.



IMPORTANCE OF THE INITIAL PERIOD OF A WAR

This subject, linked with the question of surprise attack -- upon which comment is to follow -- received central attention in both the May 1962 Lomov article and in the new brochure. While in neither case is the possibility ruled out that a decision in a future war might be postponed beyond the initial period, the brochure, as previously noted, tends to place even more emphasis on the potentially decisive character of the initial period, and the consequent importance of keeping the Soviet armed forces in a state of constant combat readiness. Beyond stating (p. 25) that this is the "main and first-priority" task of the armed forces, however, Lomov does not elaborate on what measures are thought to be required by Soviet planners.

SURPRISE ATTACK AND PRE-EMPTION

The new Lomov brochure gives major emphasis to the question of surprise attack as has been customary in all recent Soviet doctrinal literature. There are, however, some slight though interesting variations between Lomov's May 1962 treatment of the subject and the 1963 brochure. In both cases, Lomov cites Malinovskii to the effect that a "realistic evaluation of the situation" must take into account that the "imperialists are preparing a surprise nuclear attack against the USSR," and that therefore the Soviet armed forces "must be in constant readiness to reliably repel a surprise attack by the enemy and to break up his criminal aggressive plans."

This rather cryptic formula, used in various Soviet statements with minor variations since Malinovskii advanced it in October 1961, has been taken to convey a guarded declaratory threat of pre-emption. However, in his recent brochure, Lomov not only repeats the Malinovskii formula (p. 25), but also gives it somewhat more specific emphasis in another passage. Stating (p. 28) that the Soviet armed forces "must be ready to react under conditions of a surprise enemy attack," Lomov then goes on to say that for their own part, Soviet forces "must also skillfully apply surprise."

With respect to the consequences of surprise attack, Lomov attempts to tread the same rather fine line which Khrushchev has upon occasion followed, when finding it necessary to temper the serious implications of a surprise nuclear attack upon the Soviet Union with assurance that this would not spell a catastrophic end for the Soviet system itself. Lomov, in fact, adverts (p. 28) to Khrushchev's January 1960 formulation that if a state is "sufficiently large," it will always be able to deal the aggressor a retaliatory blow. He also makes the argument (p. 29) that a large state [like the Soviet Union] enjoys the advantage of space for dispersal of economic centers and military installations, but then drops the matter without coming directly to grips with the problem of survival in the face of a surprise nuclear attack. Elsewhere (p. 19) Lomov lists, as one of the political articles underlying Soviet military doctrine, the proposition that victory of the Soviet camp is "inevitable" in a war with the "imperialist bloc," which presumably covers the situation.

Appendix

TABLE OF CONTENTS, SOVETSKAIA VOENNAIA DOKTRINA

	<u>Page</u>
PROBLEMS OF WAR AND PEACE	
War can be prevented. The forces of peace. Peaceful coexistence . . . . .	3
ON THE HISTORY OF THE QUESTION	
What is military doctrine. Role of V. I. Lenin in the creation of Soviet military doctrine. Basic content of military doctrine before the Great Fatherland War . . . . .	5
THE REVOLUTION IN MILITARY AFFAIRS AND MILITARY DOCTRINE	
Essence of the revolution in military affairs. The main factor. Political bases of military doctrine. New traits of the personnel of the Soviet armed forces . . . . .	14
CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES OF WORLD WAR	
World and local wars. Basic features of world war . .	20
FOUNDATIONS FOR THE CONDUCT OF WARFARE	
Decisive role of rocket-nuclear weapons. Utilization of various types of armed forces. The factors of surprise, space and time . . . . .	26
LITERATURE . . . . .	31



