

SOVIET STRATEGIC THOUGHT IN TRANSITION

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Throughout the decade since the death of Stalin, Soviet strategic thought has been in a process of transition as the Soviet leadership has sought to adapt military doctrine and strategy to new problems arising out of the changing technological and political environment of the modern world. These problems, whose cumulative effect has become increasingly evident in the development of Soviet defense policy and military posture in the past couple of years, are of several kinds.

UNDERLYING PROBLEMS

A central problem relates to the allocation of resources. The need for greater investment to repair serious agricultural deficiencies and to sustain a high rate of industrial growth, a rising level of consumer expectations, the burden of keeping up the space race -- these are some of the rival demands upon the Soviet economy which have made it more difficult than usual for the Soviet leaders during the past year or two to decide what share of their resources should

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be allocated to military purposes. Moreover, these competitive economic demands have come at a time when, according to informed Western estimates, the Soviet economic growth rate has slumped from around 6 to 10 per cent annually during most of the fifties to around 2.5 per cent in 1962-1963.¹ Even though the long-term Soviet growth rate may average out for the remainder of the present decade at around 4 to 5 per cent if temporary difficulties are ironed out,² the economic situation undoubtedly poses unwelcome constraints upon Soviet decisions in the field of military policy and strategy.

The worsening Sino-Soviet estrangement represents another problem of great magnitude for the Kremlin leaders. Its ramifications are widespread. Besides sharpening the competition between Moscow and Peking for support of "national liberation movements," the conflict may have shaken some of the basic strategic assumptions on which Soviet planning has been based. Together with a "polycentric" movement toward greater autonomy among the East European countries, the growing Sino-Soviet rift has made it necessary for the Soviet leadership to divert at least part of its attention from the East-West confrontation to internal relations, including those of a military character, within the communist camp itself.

¹See The New York Times, January 8, 1964, for report of analysis by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency.

²Annual Economic Indicators for the USSR, Materials Prepared for the Joint Economic Committee, Congress of the United States, February 1964, pp. 93, 98.

Another set of underlying problems for the Soviet leadership grows out of the military-technological revolution of the mid-twentieth century. Soviet awareness of the destructiveness of nuclear war, which could jeopardize the very existence of the Soviet system itself, has had a striking impact on basic Soviet doctrine. It accounts in large measure for Khrushchev's revision of the dogma of inevitable war and his persistent advocacy of the strategy of peaceful coexistence as the safest and most reliable form of class struggle in the international arena. At the same time, however, the Soviet leaders also are aware that the power position and political standing of the Soviet Union in the world today rest to a large extent on Soviet military strength and the technology associated with it. They recognize, moreover, that the world's fear of nuclear catastrophe provides a potent emotional issue around which the "peace struggle" and other forms of political warfare can be mobilized. Hence, the Soviet leaders are caught in a perplexing dilemma. On the one hand, nuclear-age military technology gives rise to questioning of the feasibility of war or the threat of war as an instrument of policy. On the other hand, the potential political worth of modern military power, exercised through "missile blackmail diplomacy" and related forms of intimidation, offers a temptation which the Kremlin leaders may not find it altogether easy to forego. This dilemma is not eased by constant barbs from the Chinese "left flank," charging that the Soviet "revisionist" leadership has been awed into "capitulationism" by the West and has failed to exploit its military power for support of revolutionary movements throughout the world.

In the immediate area of Soviet military doctrine and strategy, it would appear that almost two years after the unsuccessful deployment of Soviet missiles to Cuba, the Soviet leadership is still confronted with various unresolved issues in seeking a military posture suitable to Soviet needs in the power contest with the United States. The ongoing dialogue in Soviet military literature bears witness to the fact that today there are still competing schools of thought on many matters which have been under debate for some time past. Before turning to current Soviet views on some of these issues, it may be useful to comment briefly on the character of the debate over military doctrine and policy that has been taking place in the Soviet Union for the past few years.

CHARACTER OF THE MILITARY DEBATE

First, with regard to what might be called the climate of debate, it should be said that there is now somewhat more latitude in the Soviet Union than formerly for expression of divergent views, not only on military questions, but also on other matters. The amount of latitude fluctuates, and there is still a fairly elaborate ritual for conveying criticism by indirection so that the myth of communist solidarity may be preserved, but nevertheless the conditions of Soviet discourse today do allow more room for public airing of differences than before. This means, of course, that outsiders have an opportunity of listening in.

When Khrushchev, for example, finds it expedient to deliver a long speech criticizing Soviet agriculture, industrial management, literature, or defense industry, as he has done publicly on various

occasions, he faces the problem that outsiders may obtain insights they would not get if all this were done in closed sessions. Indeed, Khrushchev has recognized this explicitly, as when he spoke to a construction workers conference in Moscow in April 1963:

After today's conference, my speech will be published. There is a great deal of criticism in it. Our enemies will again howl: look, there is a crisis in the Soviet Union. There is this and that in the Soviet Union. We should not be afraid of this comrades. If we start to hide our shortcomings, we will impede the creation of conditions for eliminating them.¹

It is not to be supposed, of course, that the exigencies of internal communication and debate in the Soviet Union are likely to result in uncontrolled revelation of what is customarily regarded as "classified" military information. However, even in this area, there has been some change. For example, Marshal Malinovskii, the Soviet Minister of Defense, called attention a couple of years ago to the changed ground rules for military discussion in these words:

We nowadays set forth the basic theses of Soviet military doctrine openly -- both in its political and in its technical aspects -- not hiding such details as even in the recent past were considered great state secrets.²

So much for the slightly more open climate of discussion in the past few years. As for the military debate itself, the main lines have been fairly well-defined since the late fifties, when the consolidation of Khrushchev's political primacy coincided with the prospect that the Soviet Union might soon count on having

¹Pravda, April 26, 1963.

²Marshal R. Ia. Malinovskii, Bditel'no Stoiat Na Strazhe Mira (Vigilantly Stand Guard Over the Peace), Voenizdat Ministerstva Oborony SSSR, Moscow, 1962, p. 23.

advanced weapons in some numbers. From that time, the debate has centered essentially on the efforts of the political leadership, with Khrushchev himself deeply involved personally, to reorient Soviet military doctrine and forces in a direction considered more suitable for the needs of the nuclear-missile age. These efforts have met with varying degrees of resistance from some elements of the military, perhaps with tacit backing among other sections of the party-state bureaucracy whose interests were engaged in one way or another.

It would oversimplify the picture, however, to describe this as merely a contest of views between political and military leadership groups, for the debate probably has been dominated as much by the nature of the issues as by purely institutional differences. In fact, there has been a continuous tributary stream of debate within the military itself, with "modernist" and "traditionalist" outlooks at each end of the spectrum and a body of "centrist" opinion in the middle.

The modernists have tended to be more or less in sympathy with the kinds of views advanced by Khrushchev, arguing for more radical adaptation of modern technology to military affairs, and suggesting that this approach might permit reducing the size of the armed forces -- that quality, so to speak, would replace quantity. The traditionalists, on the other hand, while recognizing the impact of technology on military affairs, have nonetheless tended to argue

against discarding tried and tested concepts merely for the sake of adopting something new.¹

Several major landmarks in the military debate of the past few years deserve mention. One of these was Khrushchev's presentation to the Supreme Soviet on January 14, 1960, in which he laid down a definitive assessment of requirements in the nuclear-missile age for Soviet defense policy and structure, while at the same time announcing a substantial troop-reduction program.² Another was Marshal Malinovskii's military report to the 22nd Congress of the CPSU in October 1961,³ in which the Soviet Minister of Defense offered views differing in some notable respects from those advanced a year-and-a-half earlier by Khrushchev. A third important landmark in the military debate was the much-discussed work, Military Strategy, by Marshal Sokolovskii and a collective team of military experts, which appeared in late summer 1962. While not an "official" treatise, this was the most ambitious treatment of doctrine and strategy attempted in the Soviet Union in many years, and as such it could hardly avoid becoming a forum in which both differences and areas of agreement in Soviet military thinking were exposed to view. A revised second edition

¹For analysis of the post-Stalin military debate up to the fall of 1962, see: Marshal V. D. Sokolovskii, et al., Soviet Military Strategy, with Analytical Introduction and Annotations by H. S. Dinerstein, L. Goure' and T. W. Wolfe of The RAND Corporation, Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1963, pp. 12-41. See also the parallel version of this work, Military Strategy: Soviet Doctrine and Concepts, with Introduction by Raymond L. Garthoff, Frederick A. Praeger, Publisher, New York, 1963, pp. vii-xxi.

²Pravda, January 15, 1960.

³Ibid., October 25, 1961.

of this work, brought out in the fall of 1963, a scant fifteen months after the original volume, marked a further major contribution to the military debate.¹ Meanwhile, in both the military and general Soviet press, spokesmen for the various schools of thought have continued to press their views, from which emerges a general picture of Soviet strategic thinking in transition.

CURRENT SOVIET VIEWS ON SPECIFIC ISSUES

Nature of a Future War. In order to orient themselves and provide a doctrinal underpinning for the multiplicity of practical decisions involved in preparing the armed forces and the country for the possible eventuality of war, the Soviets customarily have attached great importance to making a thorough theoretical assessment of the nature of a future war.² Up to a point, there is a large measure of agreement in Soviet military literature on the basic features of a future general war. As to the conditions of outbreak, the general Soviet view is that a war would start either with a surprise nuclear attack against the Soviet camp or by escalation from a small, local war. War by accident or miscalculation also is conceded.³ The prevailing image of the war itself is that it would be global and nuclear in character; that missiles would be the main delivery means; and

¹Marshal V. D. Sokolovskii, et al., Voennaia Strategia (Military Strategy), 2nd ed., Voenizdat Ministerstva Oborony SSSR, Moscow, 1963.

²See, for example, comments by Marshal Malinovskii on this subject, Red Star, October 25, 1962. See also, Colonel V. Konoplev, "On Scientific Foresight in Military Affairs," Kommunist Vooruzhennykh Sil (Communist of the Armed Forces), No. 24, December 1963, pp. 28-29.

³Military Strategy, 2nd ed., p. 364.

that the war would be fought for unlimited ends, namely the existence of one system or the other. Another agreed feature of a future war is that nuclear attacks would be made not only against military targets, but against industrial, population, and communication centers as well. (The concept of targeting restraints to limit the destructiveness of nuclear war remains unacceptable in current Soviet doctrine.¹) In addition to these aspects of a future war, Soviet thinking places growing emphasis on the special importance of the initial period, which is generally credited with "decisive influence" on both the course and outcome of the war.² At this point, however, a certain amount of divergence begins to enter Soviet thinking. How decisive will the initial period prove to be; will it be a short war or a protracted one; what is the likelihood that war will even occur? On these questions, views differ.

Likelihood of War. An ambiguous position on this issue continues to be evident in Soviet discourse. The general Soviet line, consonant with efforts of the past year to foster an atmosphere of detente in East-West relations, holds that the danger of war has diminished somewhat, owing mainly to respect in the "imperialist camp" for Soviet military might. However, military writers, such as the authors of the Sokolovskii volume, tend to stress the danger of Western attack

¹See discussion of this question by the present author in "Shifts in Soviet Strategic Thought," Foreign Affairs, April 1964, p. 480.

²For some representative Soviet views of the nature of a future world war mentioned here, see: Military Strategy, 2nd ed., pp. 241-261; Marshal P. Rotmistrov, "Causes of Modern Wars and their Characteristics," Kommunist Vooruzhennykh Sil, No. 2, January 1963, pp. 29-32; Colonel P. Derevianko, "Some Features of the Contemporary Revolution in Military Affairs," ibid., No. 1, January 1964, pp. 17-25.

on the Soviet Union, "despite the growing influence of factors ensuring the preservation of peace."¹ In general, Soviet military spokesmen seem more prone than political leaders to dwell on the ever-present danger of war, which might be interpreted as an indirect suggestion to the political side of the house not to skimp on resources for the defense establishment.

Short or Long War. This is a vexed issue, charged with practical implications as to how the armed forces should be prepared and which arms should receive priority. Positions taken one way or the other on this issue by military spokesmen often have tended to signify either a certain amount of sympathy with or quiet resistance to Khrushchev's general military policy approach. Two broad viewpoints have emerged: the first gives major emphasis to the decisive potential of the initial period and the need to prepare the armed forces and economy to bring any war to a conclusion "in the shortest possible time, with minimum losses."² The second view pays more heed to the possibility of protracted war, with consequent need to make provision economically, militarily and psychologically for such a war. Some theorists of the latter persuasion have revived certain arguments reminiscent of Stalin's "permanently operating factors," advocating a strategy of protracted war in which -- following initial nuclear exchanges -- the allegedly superior political-morale qualities of the Soviet side, plus its residual economic and

¹ Military Strategy, 2nd ed., p. 232.

² Ibid., p. 261; Konoplev, Kommunist Vooruzhennykh Sil, No. 24, December 1963, p. 28.

military capacities, would insure a favorable outcome.¹ In general, the present tendency is for political leaders like Khrushchev to view a modern war as likely to be short and decisive,² while prevailing military doctrine still contains a precautionary hedge as to the possibility of a long war.³

Size of the Armed Forces. The size of the armed forces that should be maintained in peacetime (and the corollary question of how successfully additional forces could be mobilized in wartime under nuclear conditions), is an issue that has been at the center of the Soviet military policy debate since the late fifties. In a sense, internal debate on the doctrinal question of whether "mass, multimillion man" armies will be needed any longer in the nuclear age has served as a substitute for more outspoken, but politically unsettling, arguments over the allocation of resources among various claimants.

Khrushchev's proposal in December 1963 for further troop reduction,⁴ perhaps to complete his earlier 1960 troop-cut program which was suspended under the pressure of events in 1961, met with

¹See Colonel P. I. Trifonenkov, Ob Osnovnikh Zakonakh Khoda i Izkhoda Sovremennoi Voiny (On the Fundamental Laws of the Course and Outcome of Modern War), Voenizdat Ministerstva Oborony SSSR, Moscow, 1962, pp. 48, 53-54; Colonel G. A. Fedorov, Major General N. I. Sushko, et al., Marksizm-Leninizm o Voine i Armii (Marxism-Leninism on War and the Army), Voenizdat Ministerstva Oborony SSSR, Moscow, 1963, pp. 187ff.

²See, for example, Khrushchev's letter to President Kennedy, Izvestiia, February 24, 1962; Khrushchev speech of February 27, 1963, in Pravda, February 28, 1963.

³See Colonel General N. A. Lomov, "New Weapons and the Nature of War: The Revolution in Military Affairs," two-part series in Red Star, January 7, 10, 1964.

⁴Izvestiia, December 15, 1963.

notable lack of enthusiasm among top-ranking Soviet military officers. Indeed, a few days later Marshal Chuikov, commander of the Soviet ground forces, publicly launched a rather thinly-disguised lobby against the proposal. In an article which had all the earmarks of a case of special pleading, Chuikov pointed out that the Western powers had recognized the pernicious effects of "one-sided" military theories and were building up their ground forces along with their strategic nuclear power.¹ The implication of this and other concurrent articles in the Soviet military press was clearly that trends in the West counseled against reducing the size of Soviet theater forces. Subsequent developments indicated that the lobby against the troop-cut had lost its case, but Khrushchev also seems to have yielded some ground by giving public assurance in a major speech in February 1964 that the reduction would be "reasonable."²

Offense versus Defense Concepts. Despite consistent Soviet emphasis on the value of active defense, including growing attention to the prospects of antimissile defense,³ the concept that the offense holds the upper hand over the defense in nuclear warfare has become firmly embedded in Soviet strategic doctrine today. This view marks a basic shift from the Stalinist conception of fighting a war by first taking up the "strategic defense" and then moving

¹Marshal V. Chuikov, "Modern Ground Forces," Izvestiia, December 22, 1963.

²Pravda, February 15, 1964.

³For representative Soviet views on antimissile defenses, see: Major General I. Baryshev, "Nuclear Weapons and PVO," Red Star, November 13, 1963; Marshal V. Sudets, "A Reliable Shield," Izvestiia, January 5, 1964.

gradually after mobilization to the "counteroffensive." The importance of offensive operations from the very outset of a war has been implicit in the increasing stress placed upon the primacy of the strategic missile forces in Soviet thinking of the past few years. It also has been made explicit. Colonel General S. Shtemenko, chief-of-staff of the ground forces, declared in February 1963 that in view of "the striking power and range of present-day weapons...Soviet military doctrine regards the strategic defense as an unacceptable form of strategic operations in modern war."¹ Other Soviet military men have stated in still stronger terms the unacceptability of "orienting oneself on the strategic defense in the initial period of a modern war, which means dooming oneself beforehand to irreparable losses and defeat."²

This conception of the need to take the strategic offensive immediately highlights an area of contradiction between Soviet military and political strategy, for the latter disclaims the implication that Soviet forces might try to seize the initiative in a nuclear attack. Out of this situation also arises the ambiguity of

¹Colonel General S. Shtemenko, "Scientific-Technical Progress and Its Influence on the Development of Military Affairs," Kommunist Vooruzhennykh Sil, No. 3, February 1963, pp. 27-28. See also Military Strategy, 2nd ed., p. 252, where the Sokolovskii authors state: "...one must recognize that the present instrumentalities of nuclear attack are undoubtedly superior to the instrumentalities of defense against them."

²Major D. Kazakov, "The Theoretical and Methodological Basis of Soviet Military Science," Kommunist Vooruzhennykh Sil, No. 10, May 1963, pp. 10-11. See also Konoplev, ibid., No. 24, December 1963, p. 28.

the Soviet position on pre-emption. Soviet spokesmen regularly insist that the USSR is committed solely to a retaliatory doctrine, yet at the same time they speak of Soviet readiness to frustrate and break up an enemy's attack "by dealing him in good time a crushing blow," which suggests that the Soviet Union may contemplate a strategy approximating that of pre-emption, in fact if not in name.¹

Military Superiority. The predominant note in Soviet discourse on this question clearly has favored a doctrine calling for military superiority over the West. Khrushchev himself has more than once made plain that the policy of peaceful coexistence rests on the premise that the Soviet bloc countries, as he puts it, "have a rapidly growing economy and surpass the imperialist camp in armaments and armed forces."² Military spokesmen, almost without exception, have urged commitment to a policy of military superiority, as in the statement in the spring of 1963 by Marshal Andrei Grechko, Soviet First Deputy Minister of Defense and Commander of the Warsaw Pact Forces: "The Communist Party and the Soviet government base their military policy on the fact that as long as disarmament has not been implemented, the armed forces of the socialist commonwealth must always be superior to those of the imperialists."³

At the same time, however, the Soviet leadership seems to have come to the realization that there are liabilities in professing too stridently a policy of military superiority. If the Soviet military

¹See discussion of this question by the present author in Foreign Affairs, April 1964, pp. 483-484.

²Pravda, February 28, 1963.

³"The Nation's Exploit," Izvestia, May 9, 1963.

posture is made to look excessively formidable, the result might well be simply to spur the West to greater efforts, leaving the Soviet Union relatively worse off than before. For a country whose resources already seem strained by the steep cost of arms competition, this is a serious consideration, and doubtless a major reason for cultivating an atmosphere of détente. Apparently with this in mind, a rather restrained note replaced customary assertions of Soviet superiority in the statements of some Soviet spokesmen, including Grechko, toward the end of 1963.¹

The issue of military superiority does not end, of course, with stressing or soft-pedaling statements on the subject. The difficult problems arise over how to attain superiority over a powerful opponent who declines to rest on his laurels. Should the Soviet Union strive for quantitative or qualitative superiority or both? Presently, military advocates of seeking a solution via the qualitative superiority route, involving intensive research and development efforts rather than diversion of additional resources into massive procurement programs, appear to have the inside track with an economy-conscious political leadership. At least one leading military figure has sounded an oblique warning, however, that superiority in weapons technology alone may not suffice. In an article in early 1964, Marshal S. Biriuzov, chief of the General Staff, noted that the key to victory in modern war would go to the one who "not only masters the new weapons, but who takes the lead in producing missiles."²

¹See article by Grechko, "On a Leninist Cause," Red Star, December 22, 1963.

²Marshal S. Biriuzov, "A New Stage in the Development of the Armed Forces and Tasks of Indoctrinating and Training Troops," Kommunist Vooruzhennykh Sil, No. 4, February 1964, p. 18.

War-Winning Strategy. The question of attaining a military victory in modern war obviously is high on the agenda of Soviet military theorists and planners. To the question -- is victory possible? -- the doctrinaire answer is yes. There is much less certainty, however, on how to assure it. Prevailing doctrine, while recognizing the primacy of the strategic missile forces, continues to hold that victory will be attainable only by operations of combined forces to defeat the enemy in detail and occupy his territory.¹ There is, at the same time, a contrary view that nuclear blows might paralyze the will of an enemy and that the worldwide "peace movement" might be exploited to end a war quickly in Soviet favor.² So long as the latter view is not wholly accepted in Soviet doctrine, however, and so long as it is argued that mass armies, combined operations and occupation of the enemy's homeland comprise the necessary formula for victory, the question remains: how does one apply this formula against a powerful opponent whose main bastion of strength lies overseas?

As a theoretical problem, this question stands unresolved in Soviet military literature. It has, however, been recognized by some Soviet critics. For example, Admiral V. A. Alafuzov, in a critique of the first Sokolovskii edition, noted specifically that while doctrine called for the occupation of enemy territory by large forces, there

¹Military Strategy, 2nd ed., pp. 246, 263.

²Ibid., pp. 20, 32. See also: Colonel General N. A. Lomov, Sovetskaia Voennaia Doktrina (Soviet Military Doctrine), Izdatelstvo Znanie, Moscow, 1963, p. 26.

seemed to have been no provision made nor thought given to how such armies were to be deployed overseas to subdue an enemy located at intercontinental distances from the Soviet Union.¹ The second Sokolovskii edition responded to this criticism by recognizing the need "to make provision for amphibious operations,"² and other Soviet military writing began to devote more attention to this subject.³ While the advocates of the combined-arms path to victory seem to have worked some of the kinks out of their theory, it still remains to be seen whether they can establish a claim on the Soviet budget for the resources necessary to develop naval and amphibious capabilities on the formidable scale required for invasion of an overseas opponent like the United States. Soviet announcement that the military budget for 1964 is to be trimmed slightly does not suggest acceptance of an ambitious new program of this sort.⁴

Limited War and "National Liberation" Struggles. The question of limited war customarily has received much less attention in Soviet military literature than general nuclear war. The Soviet doctrinal image of general war, emphasizing its violent global character and rejecting the idea of limitations on its scope and destructiveness,

¹ Admiral V. A. Alafuzov, "On Publication of the Work 'Military Strategy'," Morskoï Sbornik (Naval Collection), No. 1, January 1963, pp. 92, 95.

² Military Strategy, 2nd ed., p. 313.

³ See, for example, Captain First Rank N. P. Viunenko, "Modern Amphibious Landings," Morskoï Sbornik, No. 9, September 1963, pp. 21-27.

⁴ Pravda, December 16, 1963.

doubtless has been meant to serve a deterrent function by suggesting an unqualified Soviet nuclear response in any warfare at the strategic level between the nuclear powers. Similarly, regarding the link between small wars and global war, the Soviet position also has reflected a rather high degree of doctrinal rigidity, exemplified by stress on the great danger of escalation. Today, however, there are some signs that the Soviet position is undergoing change. More attention is being given to the possibility of local wars and there seems to be some effort, particularly in military writing, to treat the subject of escalation in a less arbitrary way. An interesting example of this occurred in a November 1963 article by four of the Sokolovskii authors, in which they embarked on the highly unusual task of responding in detail to U.S. commentary on the first edition of their book. Among other things, they took great pains, as well as some liberties with their original text, to make the point that Soviet doctrine does not preach the "inevitable" escalation of limited wars into general war.¹

The new trend of Soviet argument on escalation suggests that the Soviets may be hoping thereby to reduce their vulnerability to Chinese charges that a rigid line on escalation immobilizes support of national liberation movements. At the same time, they may wish to deter the West from feeling that it has greater freedom to act

¹Red Star, November 2, 1963. Omission of the word "inevitably" in a citation from their own text dealing with escalation from local to general war suggested how anxious the Sokolovskii authors were to make their point. See the present author's comment on this maneuver in Foreign Affairs, April 1964, pp. 481-482.

in local situations because of hypersensitive Soviet concern about escalation. Although Soviet assurances of material as well as moral support of national liberation movements were tendered with increasing frequency in the press in the latter part of 1963 and early 1964,¹ it is worthy of note that Soviet commentary remains deliberately vague on a central point, namely: whether the kind of material support the Soviet Union is prepared to render may include the use of Soviet forces in military situations arising from the national liberation struggle.

War as an Instrument of Policy. It is symptomatic perhaps of the general ferment in Soviet strategic thinking induced by nuclear-age realities that during the past year a considerable amount of discussion has arisen over the continuing validity of the Leninist thesis on war as a continuation of politics by violent means.² This question has been injected both into the polemics with the Chinese and into internal Soviet discussion. Interestingly, Soviet military spokesmen have tended to defend the validity of Lenin's dictum, while political spokesmen, seeking fresh ammunition in the polemics with Peking, have sometimes gone so far as to repudiate the Leninist formula outright. For example, one political commentator, Boris Dimitriev, restated it: "War can be a continuation only of folly."

¹ See, for example, Red Star, October 10, 22, December 18, 24, 1963; Pravda, January 19, 1964.

² Boris Dimitriev, "Brass Hats, Peking and Clausewitz," Izvestia, September 24, 1963; Colonel P. Trifonenkov, "War and Politics," Red Star, October 30, 1963; Marshal S. Biriuzov, "Policy and Nuclear Arms," Izvestia, December 11, 1963; Major General N. Sushko and Major T. Kondratkov, "War and Politics in the 'Nuclear Age'," Kommunist Vooruzhennykh Sil, No. 2, January 1964. See also Military Strategy, 2nd ed., pp. 25, 216.

Many fundamental issues appear to lie beneath the surface of the doctrinal dialogue over Lenin's prescription on war and politics. They include such questions as: defining the feasible use of military power, or the threat of its use, in a nuclear world; determining whether the criteria for developing the Soviet armed forces should focus on deterrence or war-fighting capability; establishing the continued worth of seeking military superiority; and finding a way to sustain the morale of the military profession, which may come to feel that its contribution to the nation's life is under question. These are not matters susceptible of easy resolution, but neither can they be ignored by the men who must chart the course of Soviet policy. Consider, for example, some of the practical implications that hinge on what the role of war and the political limits of military power in the nuclear age are understood to be.

If on the one hand there is still in the Soviet view a prospect that war can be won -- or lost -- in a meaningful sense, then it may well seem worth the effort to strive for a war-winning strategy and for superior forces commensurate to this task. But if on the other hand there should no longer seem to be anything to choose between victor and vanquished in a nuclear war, then the course to take might look quite different. In terms of Soviet strategic policy, a second-best solution might be readily rationalized as the best solution. That is to say, the Soviet leadership might be prepared to settle indefinitely for a strategy of deterrence and Soviet forces at a level sufficient to maintain credibility but still clearly inferior to those of the adversary. How the Soviet leaders perceive such questions as these and what their response may be remains uncertain. What does seem

likely is that Soviet strategic thinking will remain in transition for a long time to come before the final returns are in.