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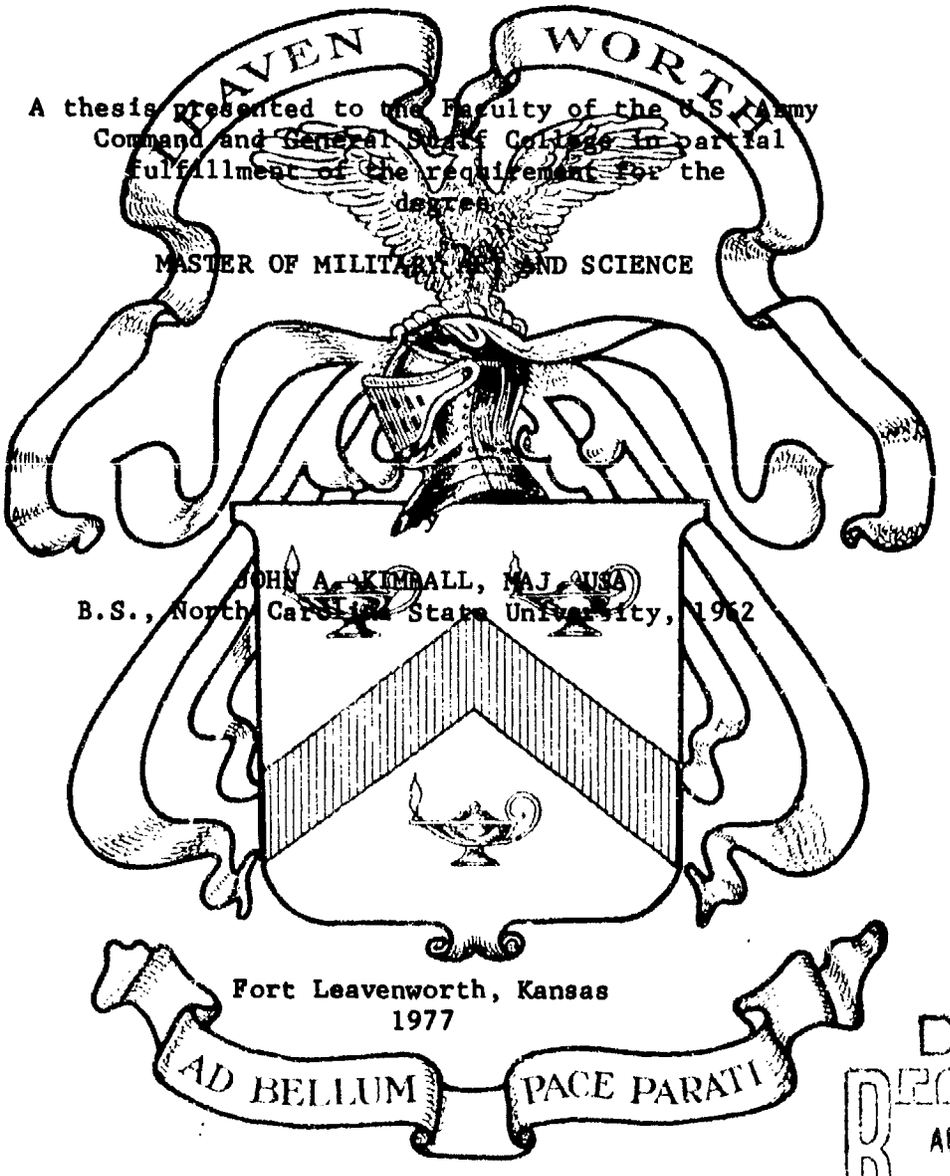
This research project is designed to examine the available evidence concerning the employment of a Soviet Army reinforced motorized rifle battalion in the conduct of a meeting engagement.

Specifically addressed herein are three questions: (1) what is the doctrine for the employment of a reinforced motorized rifle battalion in a meeting engagement; (2) do the units involved train to comply with the doctrine; and (3) how well do they train? In order to answer these questions, this study has concentrated on available Soviet writings published since the Middle East War of 1973.

The investigation of the available material indicates there is some very specific doctrine for the employment of the battalion that has been considered for modification since the Yom Kippur War of 1973. The typical motorized rifle battalion generally follows the doctrine during its training cycle. However, their training seems to leave much to be desired.

THE SOVIET MOTORIZED RIFLE BATTALION

IN THE MEETING ENGAGEMENT



A thesis presented to the Faculty of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE

by

JOHN A. KIMBALL, MAJ, USA
B.S., North Carolina State University, 1962

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MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE

THESIS APPROVAL PAGE

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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the individual student author and do not necessarily represent the views of either the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

ABSTRACT

This research project is designed to examine the available evidence concerning the employment of a type unit of the Soviet Army in a particular offensive action. This paper is the result of this author's efforts to understand the use of a Soviet Army reinforced motorized rifle battalion in the conduct of a meeting engagement.

Specifically addressed herein are three questions: (1) what is the doctrine for the employment of a reinforced motorized rifle battalion in a meeting engagement; (2) do the units involved train to comply with the doctrine; and (3) how well do they train? In order to answer these questions, this study has concentrated on available Soviet writings published since the Middle East War of 1973.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is difficult to remain steadfast to the task of writing such a paper when others are busily engaged in enjoying "the best year of your life." The critical examination of small unit operations of the Soviet Army is still in its infancy. My perseverance hopefully has been rewarded by providing a better understanding of how one type unit conducts one particular offensive action.

The fact that I have not faltered, but followed the research to some conclusion is due largely to the efforts of Lieutenant Colonel George F. Steger, Threats Division, Combined Arms Combat Development Activity, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. For the great deal of time he withdrew from his own activities to work with me and for guidance and assistance, I wish to express my sincere appreciation.

To Captain Harry L. Wolbers, also of the Threats Division, Combined Arms Combat Development Activity, and to Professor Harry J. Psomiades, consulting faculty advisor from the Political Science Department of Queens College, who provided me with valuable assistance in the structural formulation of this project, I wish to express my gratitude. Additionally, I wish to express my thanks to the staff of the Command and General Staff College Library for their aid in obtaining research material.

Finally, to my family who was so patient and understanding, particularly to my wife for her encouragement, support, editing, and

typing, I owe an immense debt. To the combined efforts of all these people, I can only say thank you.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEFINITIONS

Chast'	- Administrative, line and supply unit of the (branches) of troops, which has a number and a banner, e. g. a regiment, separate battalion, and troop organizations equal to them.
Podrazdeleniye(i)	- Troop unit of permanent organization and homogeneous composition in each branch of troops, which unit forms a larger podrazdeleniye or a chast'.
Zampolit	- The political officer found in all units from battalion upward.
Stakhanovism	- The perpetual pressure to overfulfill work norms and pressures.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

INTRODUCTION

> Equipment of itself does not make the difference. It is the people in whose hands this equipment is located, in their knowledge and ability to employ this equipment with greatest effect, to squeeze from it everything it can give.
>
> Marshal Grechko[1]

The Soviet motorized rifle battalion has been equipped, at least in part, by the most modern armored personnel carrier in the world. It is supported by new self-propelled artillery and by more than adequate tanks. This quality improvement, however, will not guarantee success in every battle for the Soviet Army. As Marshal Grechko said, people and their training still make the difference.

This paper is an attempt to determine how well the Soviet motorized rifle battalion in one type of offensive action--the meeting engagement--combines its equipment capabilities and its personnel talents to produce an effective fighting force. The paper will focus on three questions: (1) What is the doctrine for the employment of this battalion? (2) Does

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[1]A. Bessarad, "Class Rating is an Important Component of Combat Readiness," trans. for USA, Military Herald, no. 11-75, pp. 124-5. Bessarad takes a quote from a speech given by Marshal Grechko at the All-Army Conference of Otlichniki of Combat and Political Training. (Throughout the paper, the number of the Military Herald will reflect the number of the original version when published in Moscow as Voyennyy Vestnik. Page numbers will correspond to page numbers in translated copy.)

it train to comply with the doctrine? and (3) How well does it train?

BACKGROUND

The Soviet Army has 110 motorized rifle divisions[2] in various stages of combat readiness stationed throughout the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe; and, though Soviet political writings affirm that the Soviet Union will not be the first to attack in an East-West confrontation, its ground forces definitely are oriented on the offensive. Soviet military writings contain three forms of offensive action: (1) the meeting engagement, (2) the breakthrough, and (3) the pursuit.

The meeting engagement has been defined "as the most common offensive action and is likely to occur when one or both forces meet unexpectedly and enter immediately into the battle."[3]

Because of the importance attached to the meeting engagement, this paper will be limited to that single form of offensive action. Contemporary Soviet military writers reinforce the impression that the meeting engagement is of premier importance in the offensive. Col. Savkin in his book Operational Art and Tactics has this to say about the meeting engagement, "Maneuverable combat operations of troops along axes have begun to have decisive importance in attaining high rates of advance, as opposed to the methodical

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[2] _____. Military Balance 1975-76 (London: The International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1975), p. 8.

[3] U. S., Department of the Army, Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Military Operations of the Soviet Union, USAITAD report no. 14-U-76 (1976), pp. 13-14.

breakthrough of the past."[4] Col. Sidorenko in his book The Offensive writes at some length on the methods by which troops will launch offensive action.[5] He suggests that the meeting engagement is a natural evolution in offensive warfare because artillery ranges are increased and, therefore, weapons do not have to be positioned so close to the forward edge of the battle area (FEBA). The implication of his comments are that the meeting engagement adds to the speed of maneuver and thus aids the desired rate of advance and provides a relative degree of surprise and secrecy. He further acknowledges there are certain weaknesses such as counterbattery fire, coordination of movement, and simultaneous action on the part of all elements of the task force in going directly into battle, but believes the advantages outweigh the disadvantages.

Thus the paper proceeds from two assumptions at this point: (1) Both Col. Savkin and Sidorenko's writings are accepted as doctrine, and (2) there is a desire to know as much as possible about how the combined arms team, led by the motorized rifle battalion, will conduct the meeting engagement.

This desire to know what the Soviet forces do in this particular type of offensive action and how they do it took on added importance following the Arab-Israeli War of 1973. The lethality

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[4]V. Y. Savkin, The Basic Principles of Operational Art and Tactics, trans. for the USAF, Soviet Military Thought Series, no. 4 (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1975), p. 198.

[5]A. A. Sidorenko, The Offensive, trans. for the USAF, Soviet Military Thought Series, no. 1 (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1975), pp. 64-70.

of that three-week encounter left an indescribable impact on the minds of military planners. Suddenly planners in the Defense Department realized the United States could not fight such a war and expect to win by winning the last battle. In fact, there might not be a second battle. The first battle had to be won. If the forces of the Middle East, equipped and supplied by the Soviet Union and the United States, could create such a holocaust with these weapons of destruction, what would war be like in the hands of the troops of the two superpowers? For example, more tanks were lost in those three weeks than the United States has in Europe. Destructiveness of the modern weapons of conventional forces lent impetus to finding new ways to prepare for that next "first battle."

The new-found impetus has resulted in a number of studies being made throughout the Army as to the doctrine of the Soviet armed forces. Certainly some very valuable information has been uncovered, but equally as certain is that there are many questions which remain unanswered. Many of the unanswered questions involve basic Soviet Army tactics. This study attempts to add to that body of knowledge by examining the tactics of the motorized rifle battalion in the meeting engagement.

For a number of years, the United States intelligence community analyzed and wrote about the strategic posture in terms of numbers of divisions, amounts of equipment, and tactics of armies and fronts. Thus, until recently (mid 1974) little or no information was available on how smaller units were designed and equipped

to fight (and what was available was often classified so as not to be available to the average soldier). Since that time, a number of articles have appeared,[6] but a number of gaps still exist. Therefore, there is not an abundance of source material about either the meeting engagement or the motorized rifle battalion.

Because of the perceived threat, United States Army interest is focused on Europe and the Warsaw Pact forces. Therefore, the data collection effort for this study has been limited to a review of material providing insight into European operations. The fictitious scenario is portrayed along the edges of the North German Plains. This countryside is characterized as being relatively flat and open terrain. Rivers and valleys do not canalize cross-country movement as is the situation further south. Such conditions as are present make the area ideally suited to armor operations and provide Warsaw Pact forces with the best terrain to conduct high-speed offensives across Western Europe to the major port facilities along the coast. The meeting engagement is the form of the offensive which best supports the high-speed attack. The battalion is the basic organizational unit and in many respects corresponds to a company in the United States Army.

Studies of this nature are, of course, greatly dependent upon the validity of the sources of material used for research. Such an assumption becomes even more important when studying

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[6]Examples of the more recent worthwhile publications devoted to small unit tactics include: TC 30-102, The Motorized Rifle Company; TC 30-4, The Motorized Rifle Regiment; DDI-1100-77-76, The Soviet Motorized Rifle Company; DDI-1120-129-76, Soviet Tank Company Tactics; and FM 30-40, Handbook on Soviet Ground Forces.

facets of the USSR because of the closed nature of the society. Therefore, three general areas, all unclassified, are used for source material. They are:

(1) Interviews with persons who have served with the United States Military Liaison Mission (USMLM) in the Democratic Republic of Germany.

(2) Soviet publications which for the most part were printed in Russian for internal consumption and subsequently were available in English translations. The most significant of these is the Military Herald which is published monthly as Voyennyy Vestnik.

(3) Writings of those individuals in the West who have become recognized experts in the field of Soviet armed forces.

CHAPTER I

EMPLOYMENT OF THE MOTORIZED RIFLE BATTALION

> "The principles of military art are a consequence of the reflections in people's heads of demands of laws of warfare and laws of armed conflict and of those conditions under which it is conducted and under which the armed forces operate."
>
> Col. Savkin[7]

In finding a point from which to launch an analysis of the Soviet motorized rifle battalion in the meeting engagement, it is appropriate to discuss briefly two points: (1) the tactical and offensive principles of war and (2) the scenario in which the battalion action will be staged.

A. Principles of Military Art

Col. V. Y. Savkin enumerates in his book Operational Art and Tactics the following seven principles of military art:[8] (1) mobility and high rates of combat operations, (2) concentration of main efforts and creation of superiority in and means over the enemy at the decisive place and at the decisive time, (3) surprise, (4) combat activeness, (5) preservation of the combat effectiveness of friendly forces, (6) conformity of the goal and plan of the operation to the conditions of the actual situation, and (7) interworking.

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[7]Savkin, Operational Art, p. 121.

[8]Ibid., p. 165.

It is well to have an appreciation of these seven principles prior to a discussion of either the fundamentals of offensive action or the conduct of the meeting engagement, for they furnish the framework upon which the fundamentals of the offensive can be developed. Maj. Gen. Voznenko, in his contribution to the book The Revolution in Military Affairs, writes that to assume the soldier will find a method for using new weapons and tactics at the time of battle is to doom that soldier's unit to defeat.[9] He then writes further and explains that new methods of armed combat are not created spontaneously.[10] To understand how these thoughts affect the relationship between the principles and the fundamentals, one has only to realize the relationship between operational art and tactics. The term operational art is a tool whereby the Soviet thought process moves from strategy to tactics. From a Soviet viewpoint, an understanding of operational art is necessary before one can successfully apply the tactics. Therefore, in order to understand the fundamentals of the offensive and how the junior officers in the battalion will apply the tactics, it is necessary to have some understanding of these principles.

Mobility and High Rate of Combat Operations

The Soviets do not limit this term simply to the maneuver and the speed necessary to move from point A to point B. Rather they look upon the term as representing a measure of a commander's

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[9]N. A. Lomov, ed. Scientific-Technical Progress and the Revolution in Military Affairs, trans. for USAF, Soviet Military Thought Series, no. 4 (Washington: United States Government Print-Office, 1974), p. 131.

[10]Ibid.

efficiency in conducting a battle from beginning to end. It includes all the inherent decision-making processes with changing instructions and shifts in organization. Technology has had a profound impact on the ability of troops to move rapidly (personnel carriers, self-propelled artillery, helicopters), and this speed has decreased the time commanders and staffs of all units will have to make appraisals of battle situations.

The rate of advance phrase deserves special consideration. The daily speed goals established in the tactics of the 1960's, when nuclear warfare was considered the only option, varied from 97[11] to 121[12] kilometers. More recent writings scale down these figures roughly fifty percent to "29 kilometers in a conventional role and 58 kilometers in a nuclear environment."[13] Col. Savkin writes,

> . . . the most important methods of troop operations directed toward attaining high rates of advance are: reliable neutralization of the enemy by fire and timely exploitation of results of nuclear fires, . . . the conduct of maneuverable combat operations along axes; swift crossing of zones of radioactive contamination; and nonstop assault crossings of water obstacles.[14]

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[11]Trevor Cliffe, "Military Technology and the European Balance," Adelphi Papers, no. 89 (London: The International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1972), p. 33. (Where miles have been converted to kilometers, a conversion factor of one kilometer = .621 mile has been used.)

[12]Malcolm Mackintosh, Juggernaut: A History of the Soviet Union (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1967), p. 306.

[13]U. S., Department of the Army, Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Handbook on Soviet Ground Forces FM 30-40, 1975, pp. 5-13.

[14]Savkin, Operational Art, p. 190.

To attain these rates of advance it is necessary for "the personnel carriers to move immediately behind the tanks not only before the battle, but during it as well,"[15] and for the troops not to fight in a dismounted attack; for if they do, the attack is no longer a meeting engagement, but a deliberate attack. In recent months, there has been quite a discussion as to which arm should spearhead the assault.[16] This reconsideration is an outgrowth of the Soviets' review of tactics since the Yom Kippur War. The lethality of the antitank weapons presented such a wall of steel that obviously some Soviet thinkers are now beginning to wonder if enough tanks will be left after a successful breakthrough to support or lead the exploitation and pursuit.[17]

Concentration of Efforts

The Soviets describe this principle as follows:

> To attain victory over the enemy one must not dissipate his forces and means equally across the entire front, but the main efforts must be concentrated on the most important axis or sector and at the right time in order to form there the necessary superiority over the enemy in man and weapons.[18]

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[15]Ibid., p. 197.

[16]A discussion of this doctrinal point can be found in Phillip Karber's article "The Soviet Anti-Tank Debate" in the May/June 1976 issue of Survival.

[17]A. Grechko, Armed Forces of the Soviet State, 2d ed. (Moscow, 1975), p. 198 cited by P. Karber, "The Soviet Anti-Tank Debate," Survival (May/June 1976): 106, in which Grechko writes "that the main striking force of the attackers--tanks--has become more vulnerable, and the use of them on the battlefield, more complicated. The continuing process of perfecting the anti-tank weapon has placed before science and technology a serious task in the business of tangibly raising the viability of tank troops and developing more effective ways and means of reliably suppressing anti-tank defense."

[18]Savkin, Operational Art, p. 201.

Note the author does not define this concentration simply in terms of men and weapons. Rather he chooses to say it is through concentration of effort to gain superiority in men and weapons. There seems to be a rather subtle difference between the term concentration of effort and the term concentration of mass. Therefore, to the Soviets the term has passed from strictly a quantitative measurement to a more qualitative character. Such a change has been completed in an evolutionary manner primarily since World War II.

Before, and to some extent during, the "Great Patriotic War", the front line unit commanders had only to worry about those forces directly in front of their units to determine combat power. Therefore, it was much easier to speak of concentration of mass. However, several important improvements, such as the mechanization of the infantry, the development of the long range missile and its warhead, the increase in the capability to see the depth of the battle, and finally the development of the self-propelled artillery, have changed the character of the concentration.

These improvements increase the capability of the commander to place more troops and weapons at a given point in time at the expense of other areas. However, it is the realization that the defense can do the same thing which makes the concentration one of effort.

This effort becomes a key point when measured in terms of such things as increased fire power, mobility, morale, leadership, training, and equipment characteristics. It is these factors which must be added to the concentration of mass--men and weapons--

to build the concentration that Col. Savkin writes about when he uses the term.

Surprise

This principle is the heart of the meeting engagement. By definition, the meeting engagement is set apart from other forms of offensive action by the fact that one or both sides meets the other unexpectedly. It

> . . . consists of the attempt to begin and resolutely conduct military operations unexpectedly for the enemy with the most expedient grouping of fully combat effective troops against the weakest or the strongest but poorly trained enemy groupings on that axis and at that time when they least expect it.[19]

Col. Savkin writes that "Surprise steadily rises with the development of the means of combat . . . . Its role is especially great in brief operations and battles where the time factor is of decisive importance."[20] If such be the case, surprise is likely to assume an added significance in a war between NATO and Warsaw Pact forces. For the intensity of such a war just may be too great to last very long. Savkin enumerates three methods to achieve surprise:

> (1) a mass build up in weapons in a particular location may lead to surprise when used, (2) a search for the most skillful and original method for the unexpected use of available weapons may be the answer, or (3) the commanders and staffs might employ new or unexpected organizations and tactics to surprise the enemy.[21]

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[19] Ibid., p. 230.

[20] Ibid., p. 232.

[21] Ibid., p. 236-7.

Combat Activeness

> Soviet doctrine emphasizes the importance of the attack in providing a psychological boost to the attacking side by showing a stronger will than the opposing forces.[22]

According to Col. Savkin, success in combat is achieved by that side which, with all else being equal, acts more aggressively and resolutely by taking the initiative and holding it firmly. The abilities of commanders to make bold decisions and put them into effect, the energetic, decisive actions of the troops, and the desire to win victories through total defeat of the enemy are the keys to this principle.[23, 24]

However, there seems to be a major gap between the doctrine and practice of this principle. Writers in the monthly publication Voyennyy Vestnik describe numerous situations in which the Soviet officers and non-commissioned officers (NCOs) are chastised for not adequately implementing the doctrine of combat activeness during the course of the unit training cycle.

Preservation of Combat Effectiveness of Friendly Troops

> In the course of an operation or battle the combat effectiveness of troops must be constantly maintained at the level which insures successful accomplishment of assigned combat missions.[25]

This principle seems to have become much more significant

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[22] M. Frunze, Selected Works, (Moscow, Voyenizdat, 1950), p. 206, cited by Savkin, Operational Art, p. 242.

[23] Savkin, Operational Art, p. 240.

[24] Ibid., p. 241.

[25] Ibid., p. 258.

for Soviet planners since the 1950's and the development of nuclear warfare. Col. Savkin writes that combat effectiveness can no longer be considered simply a major duty of commanders and their staffs, but it has to be elevated to an independent principle and be included in the basic guiding rules of troop operations.[26]

This fear of nuclear weapons and their ability to destroy entire units on an ever increasingly lethal battlefield seems to be foremost in Col. Savkin's mind throughout his writings on the subject. In fact, he writes that:

> If it is violated, it becomes practically unbelievable to apply all other principles of operational art and tactics since troops who have lost combat effectiveness cannot conduct successful operations.[27]

In order to preserve combat effectiveness, the Soviet Army seems to divide the problem into four areas:[28]

Methods of combat operations.

Protection against NBC weapons.

Constant combat readiness.

Restoration of troop effectiveness.

The first can be accomplished by the use of active and forceful combat operations which tend to disrupt the enemy's use of tactical nuclear weapons. The second is achieved through better protective clothing and equipment and the development of tactics which do not leave troops grouped in open areas for any extended periods of time. The third measure to maintain readiness

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[26]Ibid., p. 259.

[27]Ibid., p. 258.

[28]Ibid., p. 260.

is through high physical and psychological training standards coupled with equipment that is simple and rugged. The fourth group of measures is to restore effectiveness. This is done by sound management principles which basically involve knowing where all assets are located and their conditions. With such knowledge, units can quickly be reconstituted and retrained for battle.[29]

Conformity of the Goal and Plan of the Operation to the Conditions of the Actual Situation

> The goal of the operation or battle must fully conform to the conditions of the actual operational (combat) situation and be commensurate with the forces and means in their correlation with the enemy's forces and means and with consideration of the factors of space and time.[30]

In many ways this is what leadership is all about, and only those who skillfully apply the principle are successful leaders.

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[29]The measure of combat effectiveness and how quickly a unit's effectiveness can be lost or restored involves a very subjective evaluation. It can vary over time depending on many factors. B. H. Liddell Hart, in his book, The Red Army (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1957), pp. 236-237, has this to say about the Russian soldier: "Russians, especially Soviet Russians, react to battle differently from civilized city dwellers. They remain unaffected by high casualties, by threats to their flanks, by close combat, by battles at night, in villages and in forests. They were used to misery, to lack of care, to absence of leave and mail, to suffering cold and hunger." Today it may be doubtful if such is an accurate characterization. The modernization of the USSR has made the society much more urban and much more attuned to a softer life. The result may be that those things which Hart cites as being somewhat peculiar have changed and with the change has come about a way of life that may decrease the legendary hardness of the individual. The result is that the Soviet Army's control of combat effectiveness may have been altered, possibly not to the betterment of the combat power of the force.

[30]Savkin, Operational Art, p. 266.

It is a skill which "presumes a thorough and profound estimate of the situation, making a substantiated decision, and precise organization of support of combat operations and troop control."[31] The adherence to the principle, or problems adhering to it, are found in many of the monthly issues of Voyennyy Vestnik. There, much is written each month about leaders showing initiative, or the lack thereof, which presumably would allow them to make the changes needed to orient their forces to the actual situation Such initiative seems particularly desirable for the commander of the unit in the meeting engagement since that force is out some distance from the senior commander. Yet month after month battalion commanders are chastised for failure to display initiative when exercises do not go as planned by the senior staff.

The Soviets plan operations to the nth degree with all forms of fire power and control measures against what they see as the enemy's strength. Assignments of missions to first and second echelons certainly are done according to what is recognized as the enemy threat. However, if intelligence is incorrect and the goal becomes unrealistic, it is possible that the Soviet command structure may be too rigid to alter the goals until too late.

Interworking

> The success of contemporary combat operations may be achieved only through the joint efforts of all forces and means participating in an operation or battle on

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[31] Ibid., p. 266.

the basis of their close and continuous interworking and fullest use of combat capabilities.[32]

Col. Savkin is, of course, saying that combined arms teams are the only way to get the mission accomplished. The Soviets have been much better at writing about this than they have been about putting it into practice if the amount of practice is related to the number of times the principle is praised or faulted in open literature. The combined arms team of the motorized rifle battalion usually will consist of the motorized rifle battalion; an artillery battalion; a tank company; and antitank, air defense, engineer, and chemical elements. Col. Sidorenko writes of the positioning of these forces by saying, "podrazdeleniya of each combat arm and of special troops are assigned that place in the combat formation which under given conditions provides for their closest coordination and control."[33]

The methods by which this formation is put together is being reviewed and changed constantly as technology makes qualitative changes in equipment possible. Such is the case in the on-going discussion of which should go into battle first--the personnel carrier or the tank--and how close should they be positioned? There are times, however, when the Soviets believe speed of advance outweighs combined arms; and in such cases the interworking relationships are not so important and should not be used. At least one advocate of this separation of the combined

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[32]Ibid., p. 273.

[33]Sidorenko, The Offensive, p. 92.

arms team is Lt. Gen. Bukharenko who mades such a point in a recent article in Voyennyy Vestnik.[34]

B. Fundamentals of the Offensive Action

The principles of military art have then provided a basis upon which to build some of the more important fundamentals of the offensive. A list of these fundamentals would vary as often as the list is made; but each list might well include the following: (1) speed, (2) combined arms, (3) reconnaissance and security, (4) fire power, (5) maneuver, (6) echelons, (7) continuous operations, and (8) by-passing of built-up areas and strong points. In a discussion of the meeting engagement which is to follow in the subsequent chapter, each fundamental will be reflected in the conduct of that engagement.

Speed

Speed is the cornerstone of all offensive action. Forces are organized and equipped to provide for a maximum rate of advance, which will take them quickly to and through enemy positions--the objective being to destroy the enemy rather than to seize key terrain.

Combined Arms

Much is written of the massive numbers of tanks and the shock action provided. However, the Soviets still view the motorized rifle troops as the basic arm of the ground forces. With such a combination to form the backbone of the combined arms

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[34]V. Bukharenko, "Employment of the ICV in Combat," Military Herald, no. 11-75, pp. 103-104.

team, the Soviets tend to organize all formations into a combined arms unit. Most open literature indicates the motorized rifle battalion positioned as the advance guard will contain a tank company, an antitank battery, an artillery battalion, an air defense battery, an engineer platoon, and a chemical squad.[35]

Reconnaissance and Security

One of the roles of the battalion in the meeting engagement is to fulfill a reconnaissance and security mission. As a reconnaissance element, its mission is to find the shortest, most unimpeded route for the main force to follow. As a security force, it is designed to prevent the main force from being attacked unexpectedly. It is also designed to keep the force moving at maximum speed by overrunning those defensive positions encountered which are designed to force the main body to deploy for a deliberate attack. Where the enemy cannot be overrun, the by-pass technique is practiced.

Fire Power

Fire power in volume is a trademark of Soviet offensive operations in both the nuclear and conventional role. Artillery has been provided to forces down through regimental level, and mortars are in the companies and battalions. All major offensive actions are preceded by lengthy and heavy preparations, and rolling barrages moving just ahead of the attacker are standard for

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[35]I. Garbuz, D. F. Loza, and I. F. Sazonoy, The Motorized Rifle Battalion in Modern Combat, trans. Foreign Science and Technology Center. Published in Moscow in Russian in 1965, p. 5.

breakthrough operations. The selection of conventional fire power is varied, but includes the standard tube artillery (122mm available at battalion level), rocket launchers, mortars, and superior tank rounds. The conventional rounds are also supported by a wide variety of nuclear weapons.

Maneuver

Maneuver is stressed over and over again in literature. Training in this area supposedly is practiced often. However, descriptions of battalion level attacks often show little fire and maneuver except in meeting engagements. The Soviets obviously tie this doctrine to that of speed and attempt to move quickly from assembly areas into the attack. Support such as river crossing equipment is in abundance and used extensively in practice. Axes and routes of advance are provided to lower echelons to ensure the proper movement to arrive at the new position in an expedient manner.

Echelons

Soviet offensive doctrine calls for the attacking force at regimental level and higher to be organized into three waves. The first two are referred to as first and second echelons, and each is provided a specific mission when operational orders are prepared. This third wave is the reserve and is committed by the unit commander when and where needed. The first and second echelons are divided on a two to one ratio. The reserve is small and usually will consist of a force two units lower than the

parent unit, i. e., a platoon reserve for a battalion or a company reserve in the regiment. Such organization lends depth to the attacking force and allows for a concentration of force.

Continuous Operations

The Soviets view their offensive as being a continuous day and night operation. Based on the provided fire power, the mechanization of the total force, and the extensive night training and river-crossing practice which supposedly is conducted, round-the-clock operations are an integral part of Soviet strategy.

By-passing of Built-Up Areas and Strong Points

Attacking forces of the first echelon of the division--the most likely location of the battalion in the meeting engagement--are given the primary task of destroying the enemy force. In an effort to inflict maximum casualties, speed of advance is most important; and all effort is made to by-pass strong points and built-up areas which will slow the rate. Battalions involved in the meeting engagement have a primary role of assisting higher units in avoiding such locations.

C. Scenario Setting of Meeting Engagement

> In studying the terrain, the battalion commander determines the camouflage conditions for the entire length of the route of march and, proceeding from this, he establishes those sectors along the routes at which it is necessary to cover the podrazdeleniye against enemy air strikes most dependably. Next, he analyzes the terrain from the point of view of protecting the battalion against weapons of mass destruction and he determines the areas which have the most favorable conditions for the landing and operations of enemy tactical airborne assaults and reconnaissance-sabotage groups.

> The battalion commander devotes considerable attention to evaluating the terrain at the line (lines) of possible clashes with the enemy.[36]

The Soviet concept for the attack would allow a motorized rifle battalion to be positioned in one of three locations in which it could become involved in a meeting engagement: (1) a forward detachment, (2) an advance guard or flank detachment, or (3) in the main column at either the head or tail of formation.

In the role of the advance guard, the battalion should:

> . . . assure the unhindered movement of the main body, warn it against surprise enemy attack, assure it of suitable conditions for commitment to battle, and also prevent the penetration of enemy ground reconnaissance.[37]

For purposes of discussing in some detail the interworkings of the combined battalion force, a scenario setting has been fictitiously created. The battalion in the setting has been successful in the breakthrough operation of a first echelon division and is now moving as a portion of the exploitation force. Enemy reinforcements have been hurried forward to act as a blocking force. In some low hills five to eight kilometers forward of the battalion headquarters, the point element or reconnaissance platoons of the two forces have become engaged. The Soviet battalion commander coming over the crest of the hill has a view down the valley of the contested area (Figure 1).

The lead element (reinforced motorized rifle platoon) is in the distant hills (Pt. 1). Approximately one kilometer back

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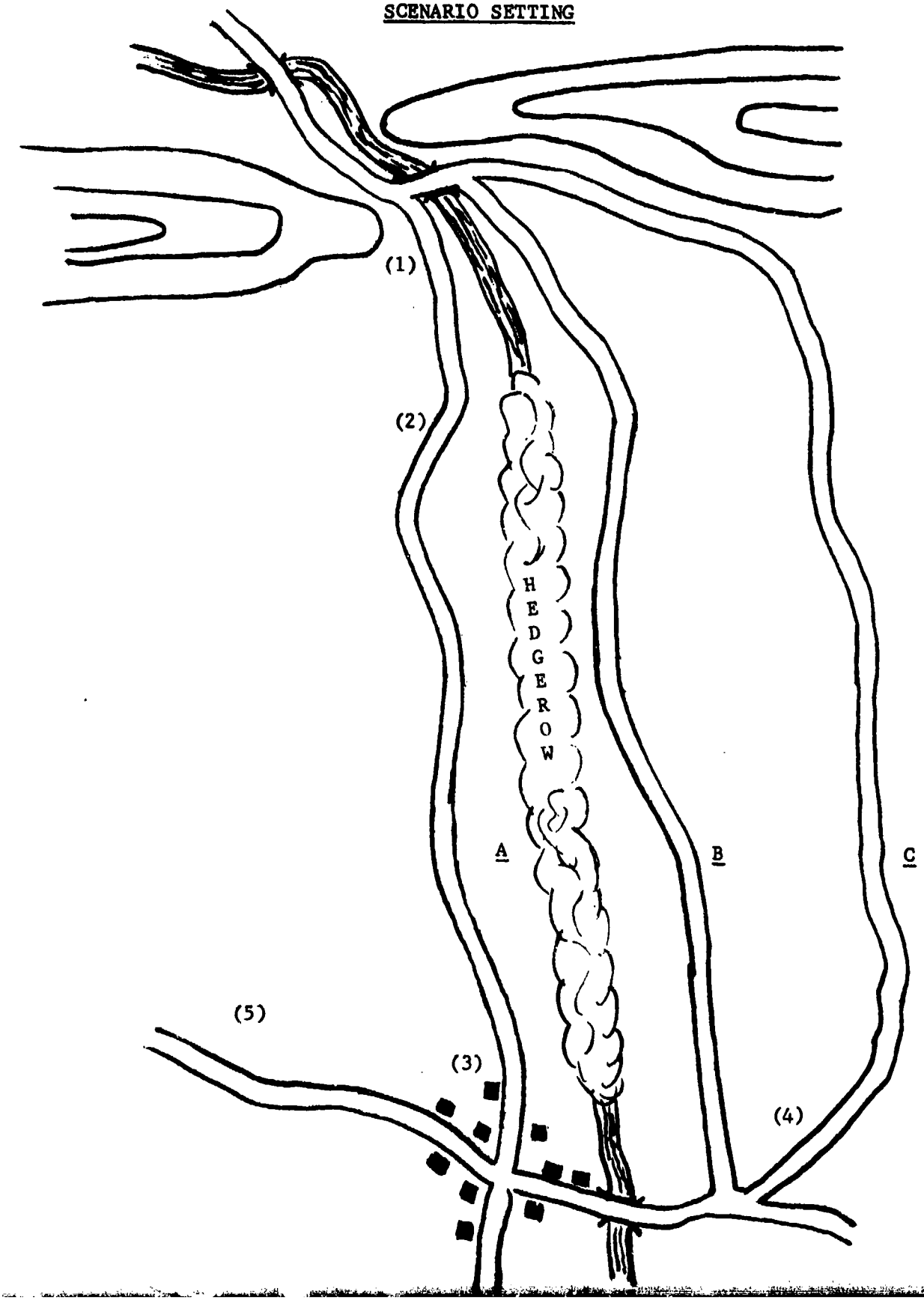
[36]Garbuz, Motorized Rifle Battalion in Modern Combat, p. 9.

[37]G. Garbuz, D. Loza, and I. Saronoy, The Motor Rifle Battalion on the March and in the Meeting Engagement, (undated), p. 5.

FIGURE 1

SCENARIO SETTING



(Pt. 2) is the vanguard of the advance guard. This force is composed of a motorized rifle company minus the platoon in contact. Now just coming into the area is the main portion of the battalion, which is approximately five to six kilometers to the rear of the vanguard (Pt. 3). There is one squad of flank security located at points four and five. The terrain is forested to the left of the main highway (Rt. A). To the right of the highway the terrain consists of gently sloping open fields with two roads (Rts. B and C) running parallel to the main highway.

The commander of the motorized rifle battalion now no longer commands a battalion in a movement to contact role. He is now involved in a MEETING ENGAGEMENT. Subsequent chapters deal with how he utilizes various elements of this force to prevent any slowdown in the rate of advancement of the main formation of troops which are following.

CHAPTER II

THE MEETING ENGAGEMENT

> The meeting engagements usually are of a fast moving nature. Their duration depends on the quantity and quality of means of armed combat and the basic means of routing the enemy is the destruction of the enemy by parts.
>
> Maj. Gen. Reznichenko[38]

The Soviet Army expects the meeting engagement to be the form of offensive action most frequently encountered on the modern battlefield. By definition the two opponents will approach each other at relatively high speeds with at least one of the forces entering the fray unsuspectedly. As each commander attempts to seize and hold the initiative, the contact will be fast-paced, lack clarity, and be filled with sudden changes in the situation.[39]

A. Concept of Meeting Engagement

The Soviet concept stems from their belief that there will be an absence of static front lines which were characteristic of World War II. Instead, troops will be constantly on the move, reinforcing weak spots or gaps that exist, moving reserves forward to concentrate on strong points, or conducting exploitation and

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[38]V. Reznichenko, "Tactics During World War II," trans. for USA, Military Herald, no. 4-75, p. 86.

[39]This definition represents an aggregate of the various individual definitions noted in numerous articles by Soviet authors.

pursuit roles. The Soviet's desire for speed and a specific rate of advance necessitates near constant movement. Gen. Pavlovskiy points out that under present conditions units must always be ready to march rapidly over long distances, to change direction of movement quickly, and to deploy and be committed in short periods of time.[40]

Certainly, this offensive action is currently practiced extensively. It is a carry-over from World War II where it was used in both attack and defensive operations. The key goal of the meeting engagement is the retention of the initiative and the desire to put constant pressure on the enemy.[41] The motorized rifle battalion may be assigned one of several roles in which a meeting engagement could occur. It may have a regimental assigned mission of acting as the advance guard or the flank or rear guard during the course of a regimental march, in which case it would be the lead battalion of the first echelon regiment. It might assume a role following the breakthrough in which it would be in a position to encounter reserve forces being sent forward to bolster the defense, or it could meet unexpectedly withdrawing enemy forces during the pursuit operation. There is also a new theory involving a tactic called the "daring thrust," which envisions regiments being used more or less independently in surprise, non-reinforced attacks designed to penetrate deep

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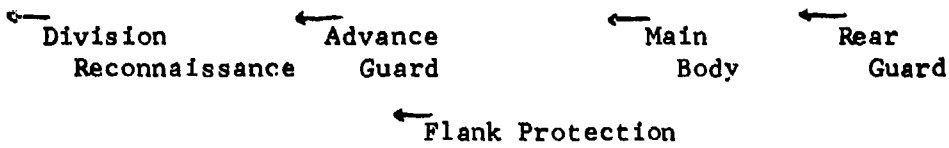
[40] I. Pavlovskiy, Commander in Chief of the Soviet Ground Forces, "A High Degree of Field Training is a Guarantee of Constant Combat Readiness," trans. for USA, Military Herald, no. 6-75, p. 6.

[41] See Major John F. Concannon's student research report, The Soviet Concept of the Meeting Engagement, Garmisch: USA Institute for Advanced Russian and East European Studies, 1976.

into the enemy's rear area.[42] If such a maneuver were employed, the lead battalions of such regiments would conduct meeting engagements against enemy forces being hastily deployed to prevent the capture of key terrain features or facilities in the rear areas.

Since the initial NATO contact with Soviet ground forces will be the result of a Soviet offensive, the first forces encountered will be those organized in a march formation. As such, a division will have out an advance guard positioned between the division reconnaissance and the division main which is ready to engage the enemy forces.[43]



Thus, for the purpose of analysis, the advance guard will be the focus in the fictitious scenario setting which has been created (Figure 1). The Soviet motorized rifle battalion will be examined to determine how it is organized in the march to conduct the meeting engagement; and once into the fray, how its command and control operates, what are its intended maneuvers, and how its fire power is applied.

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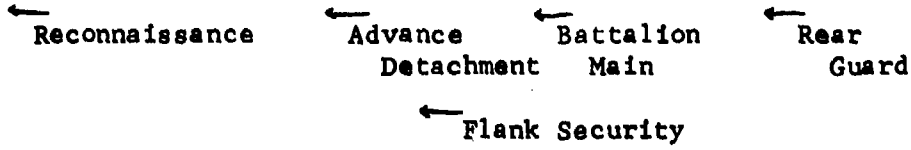
[42]This new theory is apparently based on statements made in a series of articles concerning the employment of the BMP, which appeared in Military Herald during the period June 1975-March 1976. In this series of articles, several authors discussed "raid tactics" and the need for BMP-equipped units to operate in advance of other units. Of the seven articles, three deserve particular note: A. Molozev, "Employment of the ICV in Combat," trans. for USA, Military Herald, no. 11-75, pp. 105-107; V. Bukharenko, "Employment of the ICV in Combat," trans. for USA, Military Herald, no. 11-75, pp. 102-104; V. Merimskiy, "The BMP in Combat," trans. for USA, Military Herald, no. 3-76, pp. 32-37.

[43]V. Reznichenko, Tactics, trans. by Foreign Technology Division, USAF, (Moscow, 1966), p. 143.

Physical Configuration

Just as the division to which the selected battalion belongs employs a security screen, so, too, does the motorized rifle battalion when in the advance guard. Normally the battalion is deployed as follows:



The reconnaissance element may be positioned out to a distance of ten kilometers from the advance detachment. The advance detachment, which has more of a security mission than a reconnaissance one, is usually out five to ten kilometers beyond the main body.[44, 45] The rear guard is positioned approximately three kilometers behind the end of the main body, and the flank security can be out as far as five kilometers.[46, 47] All the distance figures provided are dependent upon terrain and situation. Within the various elements of this force, particularly the main body, the vehicles involved will be spaced twenty-five to thirty meters apart. Such spacing, therefore, indicates that the distance from the leading reconnaissance elements to the end of the rear guard is approximately twenty-five kilometers at optimum

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[44]Garbuz, The MRB in Modern Combat, pp. 12-13.

[45]For a slightly different version of the reconnaissance organization, see Military Operations of the Soviet Army, USAITAD report no. 14-U-76: pp. 108, 122, 158. Diagrams on pp. 108 and 158 indicate the reconnaissance element is composed of both a point and a reconnaissance patrol. The diagram on p. 122 tends to disagree and indicates this author's configuration of the force.

[46]Ibid., p. 108.

[47]Ibid., p. 105.

conditions.

In such a configuration, the motorized rifle battalion is expected to perform the following missions:[48]

prevent enemy main forces from occupying key terrain.

conduct reconnaissance.

insure unimpeded movement of the main force.

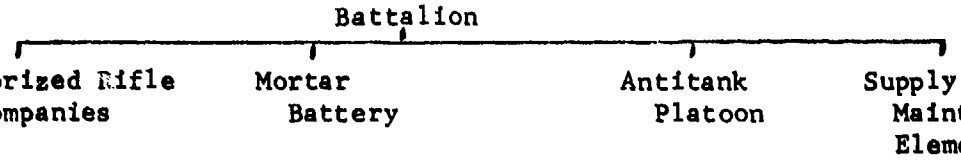
warn the main force of surprise attack.

assure the main force of suitable conditions for combat.

prevent the penetration of enemy ground force reconnaissance.

Battalion Organization

The motorized rifle battalion is the basic combined arms force of the Soviet army. It is a pure motorized rifle unit in organization and equipment. The battalion consists of 441 officers and enlisted men organized as follows:[49]



The battalion is usually commanded by a senior major or lieutenant colonel.[50] From an operational view, his two principal staff officers are the executive officer and the chief of staff. The three company commanders are senior lieutenants or captains, and

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[48]Garbuz, The MRB in Modern Combat, p. 5.

[49]HB 550-2 Organization and Equipment of the Soviet Army, p. 2-3. This total of 441 is in contrast to the 891 in the current US Army battalion (TOE 07-045H).

[50]This command level is made based on content analysis of the Military Heralds reviewed.

each commands a company of 108 persons within the motorized rifle battalion.[51] Depending on the type available, the number of armored personnel carriers (APCs) varies within battalions. Where the newer APC, the BMP, is deployed, one vehicle per squad is present for a total of ten BMPs per company and thirty-one BMPs in the battalion. As production schedules permit, the BMP could perhaps eventually replace the older model APC in all the motorized rifle battalions.

Attachments

When assigned the mission of the advance guard, the motorized rifle battalion is given considerable reinforcement in anticipation of the meeting engagement. This attached force will likely consist of an artillery battalion, a tank company, and elements of anti-aircraft and antitank forces. There will also be an engineer platoon, most likely reinforced, and a radiation and chemical reconnaissance squad.[52] This force will consist of some 500 personnel and give the combined arms battalion a strength of approximately 940 (Figure 2).

The artillery battalion might consist of 321 personnel and eighteen 122mm towed guns with a range of 15.3 kilometers. As more of the self-propelled 122mm guns are produced, they will likely replace the towed version found in the battalion. The tank company consists of fifty-eight personnel and thirteen T-62 tanks with one

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[51] Ibid.

[52] See both Garbuz, The MRB in Modern Combat, p. 5, and C. H. Donnelly, "The 'March' in Soviet Tactical Doctrine," Journal of the Royal United Services Institute for Defense Studies 119 (September, 1974): pp. 77-80.

FIGURE 2

MOTORIZED RIFLE BATTALION

* - Attached Units

for the company commander and four in each of three platoons. The T-62 carries forty rounds of main gun (115mm) ammunition with an effective range of 2,000 meters. The antiaircraft element is likely to be a mixture of the ZSU-23-4 and the newer SA-9. There are four weapons of each system in the motorized rifle regiment. Each battery consists of approximately thirty people. The ZSU-23-4 is a self-propelled, four barrel, 23mm gun with a range of 3000 meters. The SA-9 is launched from a quadruple canister mounted on a modified BRDM. The antitank battery is likely to be the battery from the motorized rifle regiment. These would be the total antitank assets of the regiment, but both the Soviet sources as well as unclassified Western sources reflect a battery of antitank weapons.[53] The regimental battery consists of some sixty persons and contains nine BRDM antitank missile launcher vehicles, each equipped with the AT 2/3 missile.[54]

When provided this amount of reinforcement, the battalion is capable of operating well in advance of the following regiment. It has the means to detect and cross or by-pass contaminated areas. Engineer support allows the force to maintain movement by overcoming obstacles along the route, and it can conduct combat operations for a limited period of time even when outnumbered.

Battalion Task Organization

The motorized rifle battalion commander, having received the attachments, has the task of combining the forces to fit the mission and the terrain in which the battalion will operate (Figure 3). Since

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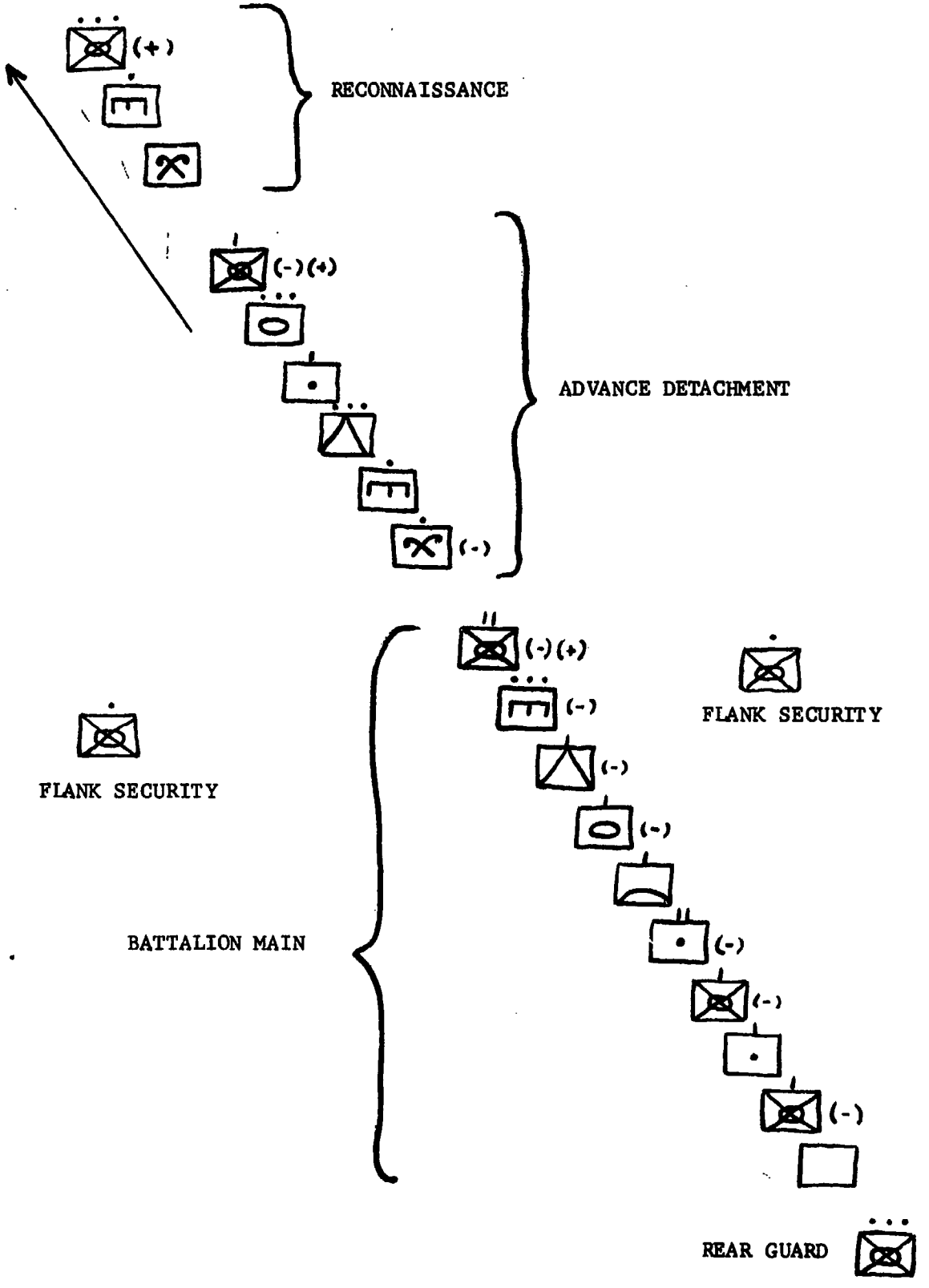
[53]Ibid.

[54]HB 550-2, p. 2-2.

FIGURE 3

BATTALION TASK ORGANIZATION



this paper is limited to the advance guard situation in Western Europe, all examples of task organization noted in Soviet writings are basically the same. The key thought for the commander is to organize in such a manner as to be able to maintain the desired rate of advance, but simultaneously to allow for the commitment of the unit into combat in the proper manner. Thus, the organization will likely be along the following lines:[55]

Reconnaissance:

Motorized rifle platoon (Three BMPs, each with an eight-man squad plus BMP driver and gunner and a platoon leader or platoon sergeant).[56]

Chemical reconnaissance element (Composition unknown, possibly a single vehicle, BRDM-rkh, with two technicians to monitor the air for NBC effects).[57]

Engineer reconnaissance section (Composition not fixed; dependent upon intelligence estimate of terrain and forces in front of the battalion).

Advance detachment:

Motorized rifle company minus the platoon in the reconnaissance patrol (Seven BMPs).[58]

Tank platoon (Four T-62 tanks).[59]

Artillery battery (Six tubes of 122mm artillery).[60]

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[55]Garbuz, The MRB on the March, p. 33; and Donnelly.

[56]U. S., Department of the Army, Training and Doctrine Command, The Motorized Rifle Company, TC 30-102, 1975, p. 9.

[57]Conversation with former member of the US Military Liaison Mission in Democratic Republic of Germany.

[58]TC 30-102, p. 9.

[59]Ibid.

[60]HB 550-2, p. 32.

Antitank element (Three BRDM missile launcher vehicles with AT 2/3).

Combat engineer section (Composition unknown).

Chemical reconnaissance sections (Probably two vehicles of the type in the reconnaissance element).[61]

Battalion Main:

Battalion headquarters (Sixteen personnel; one BMP).[62]

Field engineer platoon (Would vary in composition, depending on perceived need).[63]

Antitank battery minus one platoon (This would be the remaining six vehicles from regiment).

Tank company minus one platoon (Nine T-62 tanks).[64]

A bridge-laying tank.[65]

Antiaircraft battery (The battery is reflected here; however, a ZSU-23-4 and an SA-9 could be located in the advance guard, and the remaining ZSU-23-4 and an SA-9 could be dispersed in the main column to give better

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[61]USMLM member and Donnelly, p. 79.

[62]HB 550-2, p. 2-3; there are other transportation assets, which could be an armored command vehicle or one or more GAZ 66 vehicles or both.

[63]A slightly different variation is provided by Donnelly, p. 80, where he reflects a signal platoon following the engineer platoon. Garbuz makes no reference to this signal platoon in The MRB on the March, p. 33.

[64]TC 30-102, p. 9; and U. S., Department of Defense, Defense Intelligence Agency, Soviet Tank Company Tactics, DDI-1120-129-76, (May 1976), p. 2.

[65]This vehicle becomes all important, for there are water barriers of ten to twenty meters every ten kilometers in Western Europe, according to U. S., Department of Defense, Defense Intelligence Agency, "Soviet River-Crossing Mobility Doctrine," Defense Intelligence Digest, (March 1968), p. 26.

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protection since this element is more likely to be organized to protect the march than to be used in the meeting engagement.)

The artillery battalion minus one battery (twelve 122mm howitzers, possibly the D-30 towed type, but more likely the newer self-propelled version).

A motorized rifle company. (The company could be intact, or it might be minus two squads which would be posted to the flanks to serve as flank security.)[66]

A mortar battery. (This unit consists of six 120mm mortars.)[67]

A motorized rifle company minus a platoon which is the rear guard.[68]

Rear services followed by one vehicle from the last rifle company which operates between the rear of the main body and the rear guard platoon.[69]

Rear Security

This force will consist of up to a platoon from the rear rifle company in the main body. It is doubtful if all three BMPs will be together, but rather the vehicles will spread singularly over the prescribed route.

Role of Each Element

The role of each element is defined by the position it occupies in the march formation. However, there are several points to be noted, particularly with regard to reconnaissance and security.

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[66]Composition is like that of the company in the advance guard. Flank security indicated by Garbuz, The MRB on the March, p. 26.

[67]HB 550-2, p. 2-3. It is reflected here as maintaining unit integrity and moving in the main body.

[68]Composition is like that of the company in the advance guard.

[69]The rear services consist of repair and evacuation equipment, medical personnel, trucks carrying ammunition, automotive supplies, and fuels and lubricants.

The overall mission of the battalion force as a whole has been outlined; however, in assigning the mission to the reconnaissance element, the following represents the detailed type of information expected to be gathered:

> Finding the enemy.
>
> Determining the grouping of his units.
>
> Determining the presence of nuclear weapons, tanks, and artillery.
>
> Determining the locations of artillery, mortars, antitank guided missiles.
>
> Locating the span of deployment and determining the direction of advance.

Once any of this information is noted, it should be reported, but to whom is unclear. If it is first detected by the division reconnaissance force, there is no indication of any communications from the division reconnaissance back to the reconnaissance of the advance guard. The information provided by division reconnaissance is made available to the forward detachment, but passed by the division intelligence officer to regiment and then to battalion.[70] In all probability, the rate of advance would preclude such a warning from taking place in timely enough manner. Therefore, this reconnaissance element of the advance guard probably might not benefit from the information provided by elements of the division reconnaissance battalion.

The method of reporting information between elements of the advance guard is not discussed in available sources; however, there is sufficient radio equipment aboard the BMPs for information to be passed to the commander of the detachment. As this information is passed, the

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[70]Garbuz, The MRB on the March, p. 15.

reconnaissance element of the battalion moves forward, by-passing initial enemy elements.

The advance detachment is the first element of the Soviet Army which will be organized and assigned the mission of engaging the enemy in decisive combat. It will do so based on the information provided by the reconnaissance element. Moving to meet the enemy, it will attempt to insure the selected road network is free of obstacles; and it will make hasty repairs and alert the main body as to the work to be accomplished. Contaminated areas will be marked and by-passed where possible. Once the decision has been made to by-pass or cross such areas, the main body is notified.

March Recapitulation

The march characteristics provided have reflected a typical organizational assembly. Naturally, this composition will vary according to the surrounding conditions. For example, if nuclear weapons have been deployed at the onset of the war, there will be more NBC elements involved. If the division mission is through such terrain as to require more engineer support, such support of the type needed will be available in both the forward detachment and the main body of the battalion organization. It is unlikely that additional fire power in terms of mechanized rifle, armored, or artillery units will be located in the march column. There may be some minor changes in the positioning of units in the main body depending on the personal preference of the senior commander who approves the battalion commander's plans. For example, the armor unit could be positioned directly behind the battalion headquarters ready for immediate employment. A

similar possibility would be to move the two rifle companies ahead of the artillery battalion.[71] However, if that were done, the commander would be putting himself in a position in which his armor and motorized forces might be ready and, in fact, have to attack before the artillery could be ready to fire in support.

Even with these variations, the Soviet commander is now organized to fulfill the battalion missions of decisively engaging the enemy. As the reconnaissance elements report the advancing enemy forces, the march is ready to develop into the meeting engagement.

B. The Meeting Engagement

Garbuz and his fellow authors write:

> To achieve success in a meeting engagement, it is necessary to discover the advancing enemy troops in time and establish continuous observation of them. It is important to forestall the enemy in seizing a position suitable for the engagement and in opening artillery and tank fire. The podrazdeleniye (units) of the battalion deploy quickly into combat formations and move into the attack immediately after nuclear strikes launched by the weapons of the senior commanders and conduct fire from their own weapons. They operate boldly and decisively, striving to break up the enemy into individual groups and destroy them in detail.[72]

As the meeting engagement opens, the forces could be displayed on the terrain as indicated in Figure 4. The reconnaissance element passes to the commander of the advance detachment the information concerning the approaching enemy unit. In a sequence of events, the following actions are likely to occur:

Up until this time, the battalion has operated under radio

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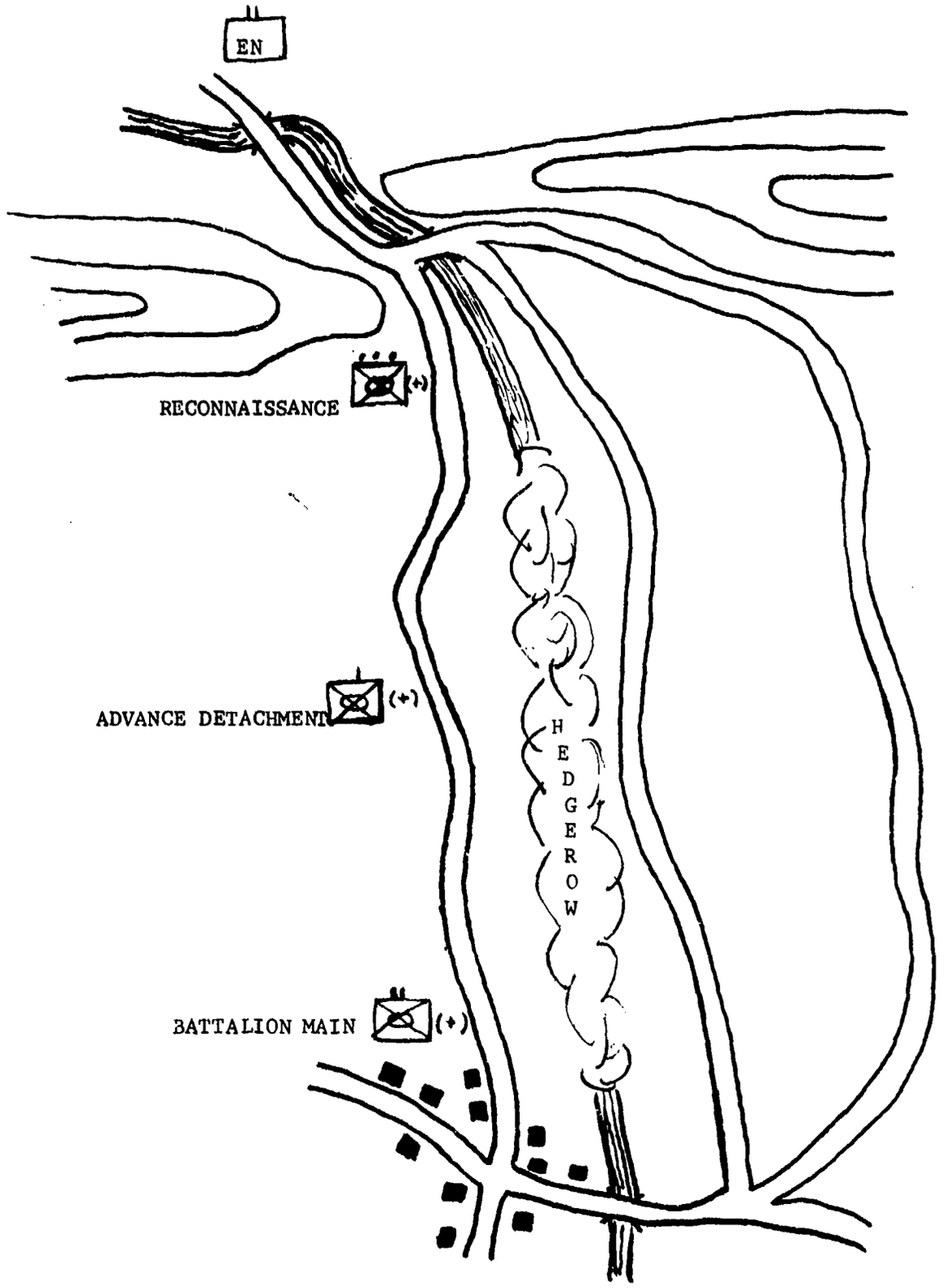
[71]Donnelly, p. 80.

[72]Garbuz, The MRB on the March, pp. 17-18.

FIGURE 4

FORCES AT INITIATION OF MEETING ENGAGEMENT



> silence for the most part. The only radio exchanges have been short prearranged signals. Where possible, hand and arm and flag signals have been used. At this time, restrictions have been lifted; and the radio is used with extensive reference to the detailed coded map.[73]

The advance detachment up until this time has been moving under available cover and concealment in short bounds, examining local features from short halts. Built-up areas, such as the village just passed, are reconnoitered with special care.[74] With the report from the reconnaissance element of the advancing enemy, such careful advance stops; and the detachment increases the rate of advance as the artillery pulls out of the formation to prepare to fire. There being no evidence of artillery forward observers with the reconnaissance element, the artillery battery will fire initially with no adjustment.[75] The tank platoon will make a frontal attack against the enemy, while the rifle company will attempt to move to the flank and attack (Figure 5). There will be no immediate need for the chemical and engineer elements. The air defense element will follow the tanks as will the antitank platoon. The attack by the tanks will be most effective for the Soviets as they approach the range of 1500-1200 meters. The rifle company

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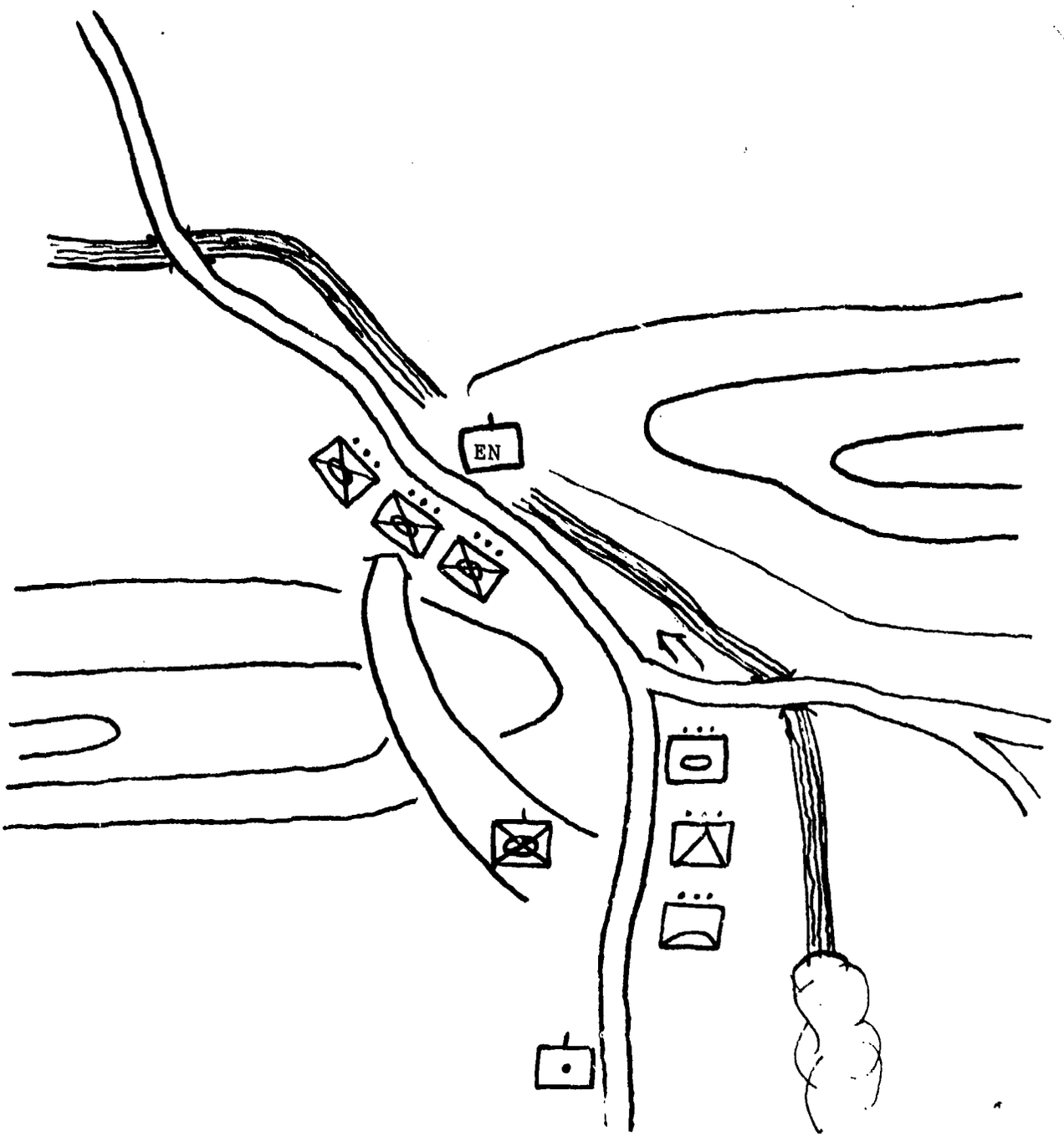
[73]Ibid., p. 39.

[74]Ibid., p. 86.

[75]There are artillery scouts, but their mission does not appear to be that of the forward observer as is known in US artillery doctrine. For those who have an interest in this particular point, the following three sources are provided to support the belief that there is presently no forward observer: Maj. Gen. of Artillery N. Besedin, "Striking of Fixed Targets," trans. for USA, Military Herald, no. 10-75, p. 142; Col. S. Ostroumov, "Firing for Effect," trans. for USA, Military Herald, no. 1-76, p. 131; and Col. G. Litvinovich, "Battalion Firing at Observed Targets," trans. for USA, Military Herald, no. 1-76, p. 137.

FIGURE 5

ADVANCE DETACHMENT DEPLOYMENT



will move off to the flank in a company column formation breaking down to nine BMPs on line, with no reserve to attack the flank by surprise. The company will attempt to carry out the maneuver without the dismount of the infantry squad.

The air defense platoon will move behind the tanks and the antitank platoon. Such positioning will give the tanks and antitanks weapons space to deploy, but will not degrade the antiaircraft protection.[76] Because the terrain is relatively flat in the area, the guns will likely operate one behind the other. The guns will remain within 400 meters of the tanks and separated by about 150 meters.[77]

The commander of the rifle company is also the commander of the advance guard. He will report by radio to the battalion commander the proposed action; and, when approval is given, he will then move with the rifle company. Upon being notified of the impending combat, the battalion commander will start to move forward to direct the operation. The three major subunit commanders--motorized infantry, armor, and artillery--all seem to be free at this point to perform as they see the situation from their respective areas. In the main, the advance guard has fulfilled its role. It has protected the main body from surprise attack, insured favorable conditions for deployment, and hopefully prevented enemy reconnaissance from further advances.

This form of offensive is one of the few times company commanders in the Soviet Army have any opportunity to show initiative. They are

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[76]R. Rodurov, "Battle Formations in Offensive Combat," trans. for USA, Military Herald, no. 1-76, p. 156.

[77]Ibid., p. 154.

out in the front far enough to act independently until the battalion commander arrives.

As the battalion commander moves forward to take command of the battle, the reconnaissance, now forward of the combat involving the advance detachment, reports the approach of the main body of the enemy formations.

The battalion commander now has to make a quick estimate of the situation. As the enemy formation approaching is of sufficient size, it will cause the deployment of the battalion into a full meeting engagement (Figure 6). The limited high ground to the front is the key terrain which will significantly aid the side occupying it. There are parallel roads to the right that can be used; however, these roads are separated from the major route by one of the numerous streams that flow across the West European countryside. By using the two secondary roads, he can reduce the time required to move troops forward by nearly one half (Figure 6). Since his rate of march in daylight is twenty to thirty kilometers per hour and the distance is some ten kilometers to the hill mass, the utilization of the other routes means he can reach the hills in about twenty minutes.[78] Deploying the maneuver element on all three routes, the battalion commander has created sufficient maneuver space to block the enemy's advance with his own advance guard and send his main body on a flanking attack.[79] By using

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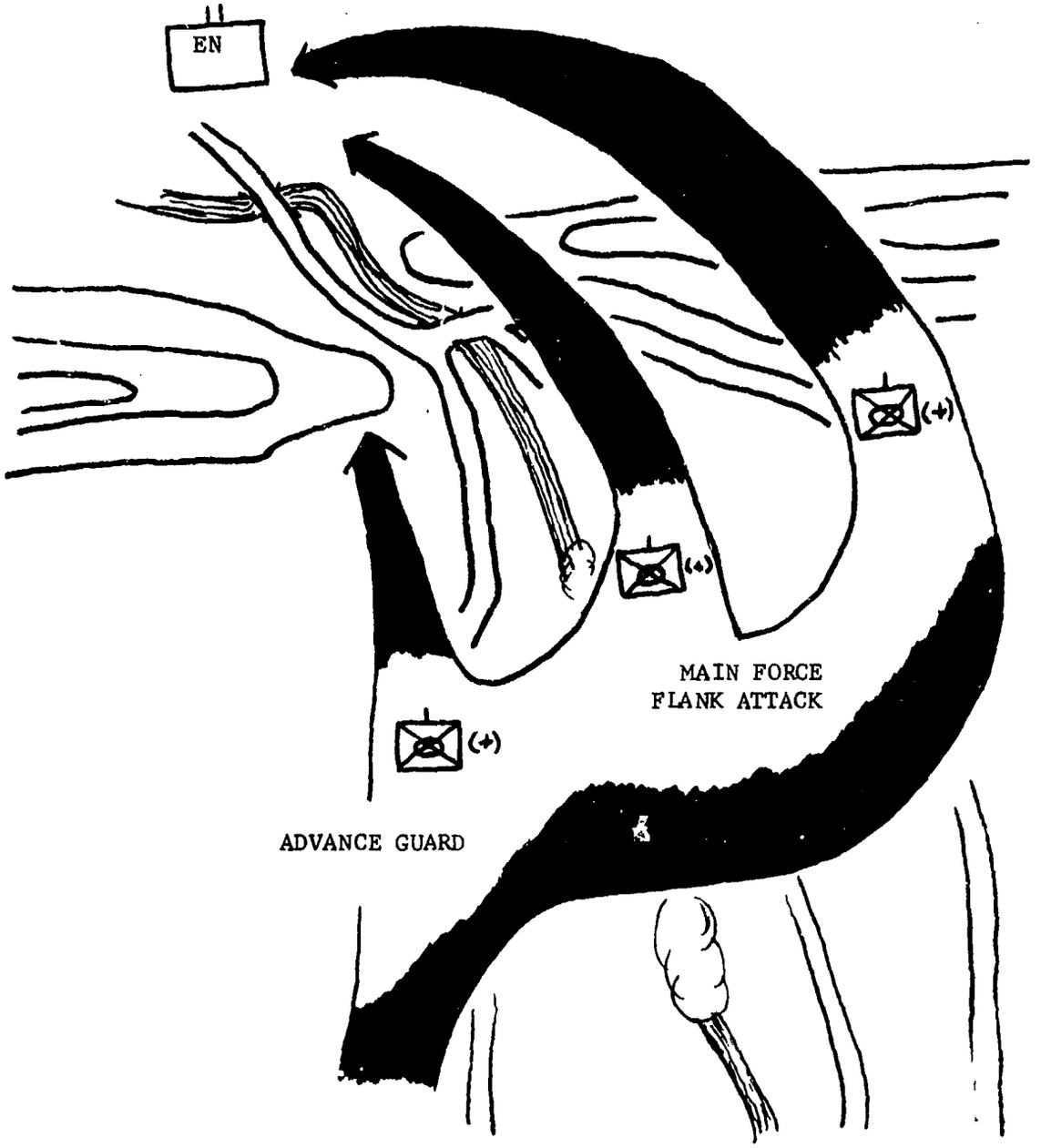
[78]Garbuz, The MRB on the March, p. 7, provides the speed. The twenty minutes is based on Time = Distance ÷ speed.

[79]U. S., Department of Defense, Defense Intelligence Agency, Soviet Tactics: The Meeting Engagement, DDI-1100-143-76, (Dec. 1976), p. 10, figures C and D.

FIGURE 6

TYPICAL MEETING ENGAGEMENT



this flanking maneuver, the commander has avoided the commitment of the battalion in piecemeal deployment as they arrive at the hill mass where the advance guard is deployed.[80]

Having reached his decision as to the manner of engaging the enemy, the battalion commander notifies his chief of staff (battalion operations officer) of the plan and moves on to join the combat being conducted by the advance guard. As he moves, he informs both the artillery commander and the commander of the advance detachment; and the chief of staff informs the remaining elements of the main body.[81] In this manner there will be no need to interrupt the movement of the main body.

As missions are assigned, units begin to move to their assigned tasks. It becomes clear the commander intends to move his fire support forward to where the advance detachment has halted or is halting the enemy advance and intends to use his two remaining motorized rifle companies and the tank company minus to move to the right and attack the left flank of the enemy (Figure 7).

The engineer platoon, including the bridge-laying tank, moves

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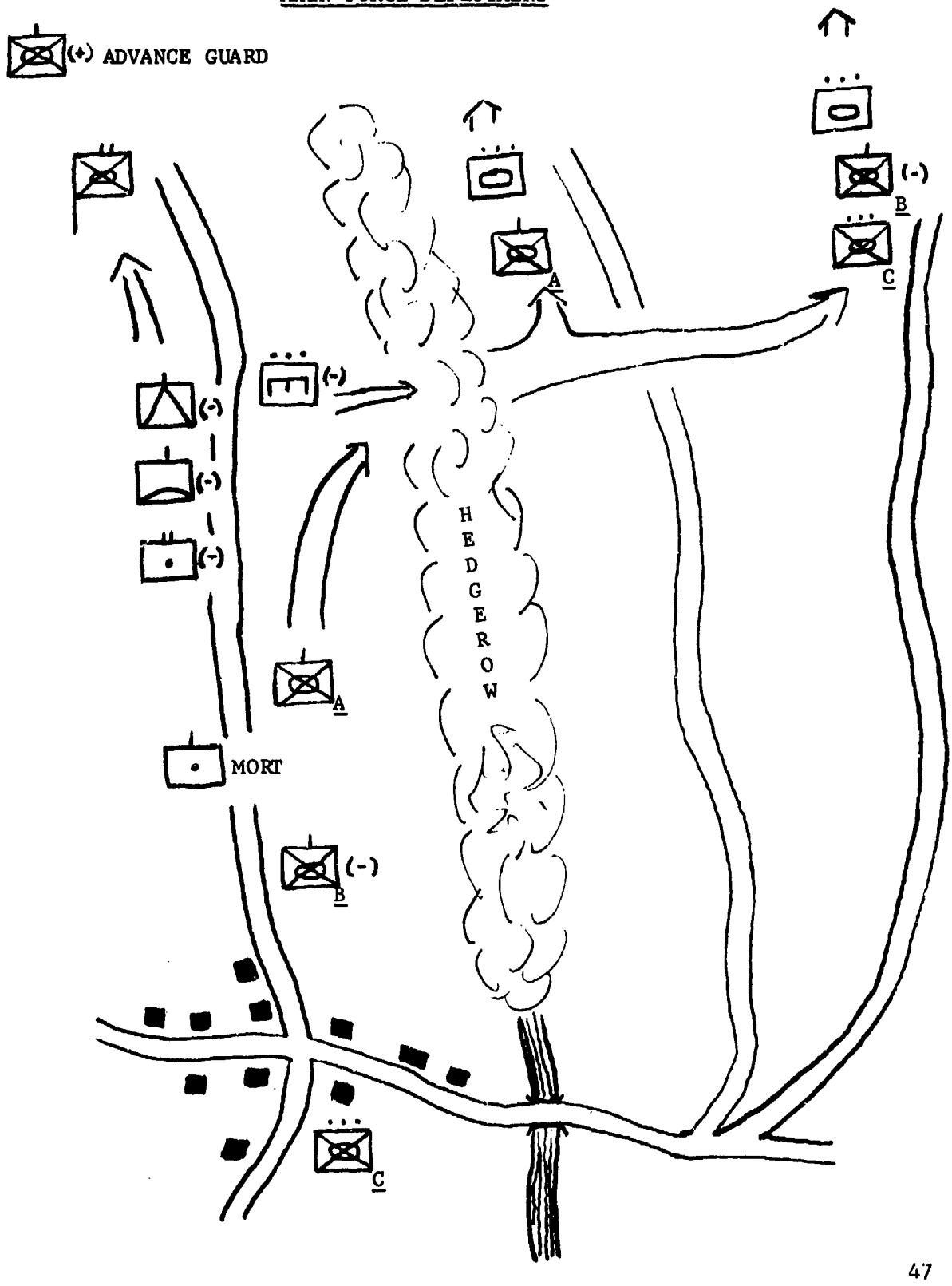
[80]This mental estimate made by the battalion commander may be implemented; however, there is some doubt about the time lag involved. Though writers in the Military Herald emphasize the initiative allowed commanders in meeting engagements, Garbuz infers that the senior commander will also play a part in this decision-making process. Since the battalion as described here is leading a regimental force, this senior commander will be a regimental commander. If such is the case, the procedure indicates a weakness (as a result of lack of timeliness) in the effective command and control. Garbuz, The MRB on the March, p. 78.

[81]A. Bogdanov, "Coordination in Combat," trans. for USA, Military Herald, no. 9-75, p. 54.

FIGURE 7

MAIN FORCE DEPLOYMENT



out to the right to use its bulldozer and the bridge-laying tank to provide a crossing of the stream and hedgerow for the tank company and two motor rifle companies (Figure 7). As the tanks pass the engineer-prepared crossing, one section of engineers continues to the far road to support the third motor rifle company, while the engineer commander and one section move to the head of the second motor rifle company. The tanks and motorized rifle units move with all possible speed, using folds in the terrain and artillery and mortar fire to protect the advance. The rifle troops will remain mounted as long as possible as they go into the attack. The dismount will be made only when the fire power of the tanks and BMPs is insufficient to effect the destruction of the enemy.

The antitank battery of BRDM/SAGGERS will continue to move forward until it can deploy within a 3000 meter range of the advancing enemy armored vehicles (Figures 7 and 8). It will join the base of fire already being provided by the platoon of tanks and antitank guns of the advance detachment.

The air defense element has two weapons forward with the advance detachment, thus leaving two with the battery headquarters (Figures 7 and 8). Depending on the decision of the commander, it is highly probable these latter two guns were divided during the march with one near the front of the main body and one near the rear.[82] To give proper coverage to the force throughout the attack, the trailing pair of guns might be given the mission of moving with the third company. Such a mission would afford protection against helicopters being

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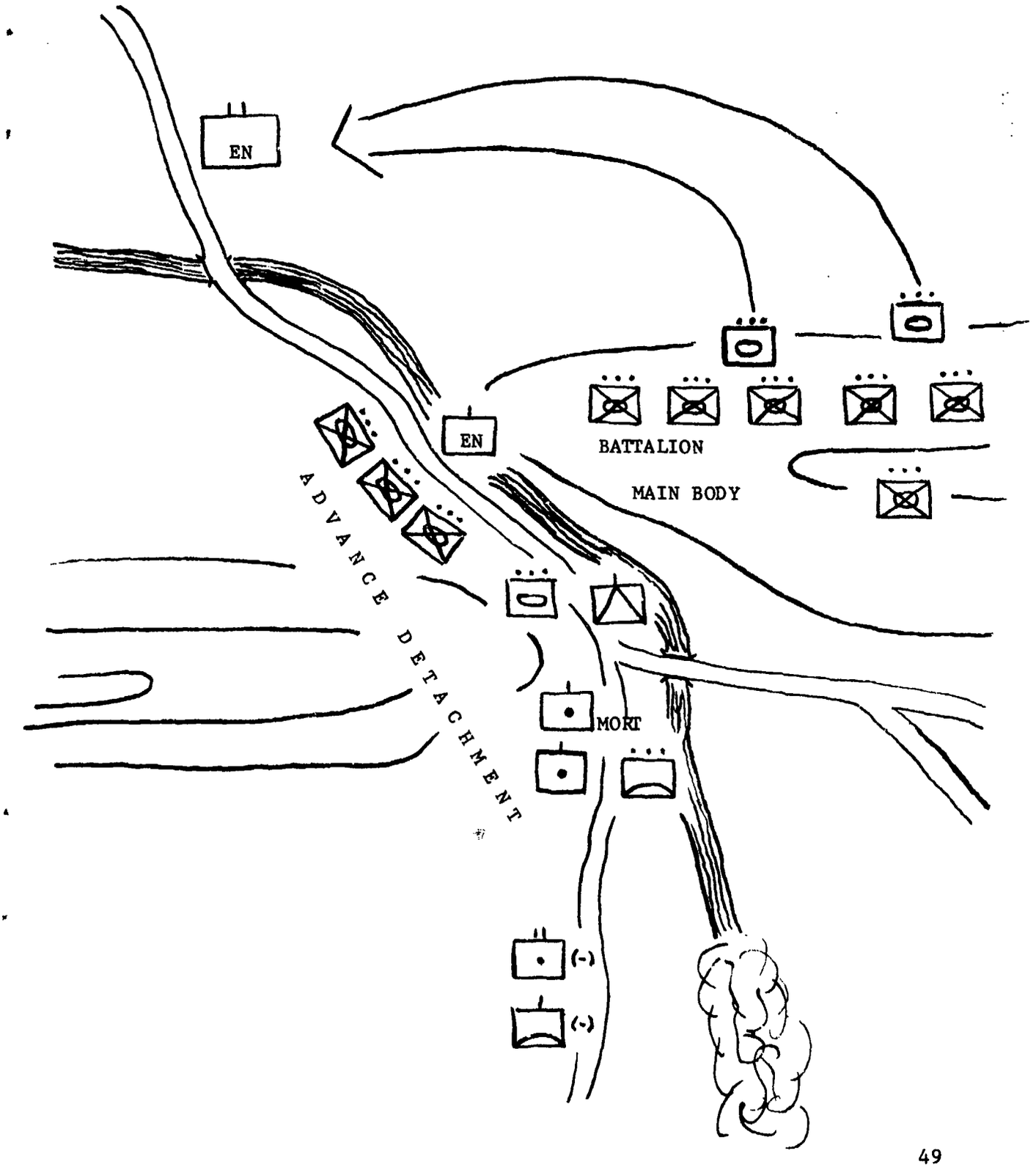
[82]Rodurov, p. 155.

FIGURE 8

BATTALION FORCE DEPLOYMENT



deployed by the enemy. However, since artillery is such a prime target for enemy helicopters, several Soviet writers hinted that anti-aircraft guns remain near the artillery to give it air defense support.[83] (Figure 8)

The artillery battalion is not concerned with moving forward to the location of its advance battery. Instead, its employment will be rapidly accomplished so as to hit the enemy before he is able to employ his own forces and weapons.[84] Therefore, having advanced beyond the point in which the main body deploys from the march column, the artillery will deploy quickly to the side of the road to fire (Figure 8). As it does, likely targets will be determined by the battalion control platoon based on information from both the reconnaissance elements well ahead of the combat and from the forward battery commander.[85]

During the elapsed time of some fifteen to twenty minutes,[86] as the two batteries of artillery prepare to fire (remember the Soviets do not use the "hip-shot" method or a similar technique),[87]

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[83]V. Ivanov and V. Nesterov, "A Question on the Survivability of Artillery Podrazdeleniye," trans. for USA, Military Herald, no. 10-75, p. 143-49.

[84]P. Kunitskiy, "On Meeting Battles," trans. for USA, Military Herald, no. 8-74, p. 117.

[85]M. Sidorov, "Collection and Analysis of Reconnaissance Data in the Artillery Battalion," trans. for USA, Military Herald, no. 4-76, pp. 128-49.

[86]Y. Yardashevskiy, "Providing Fire When Deploying from the Move," trans. for USA, Military Herald, no. 9-75, p. 49.

[87]U. S., Department of the Army, The Field Artillery Cannon Battery FM 6-50 (July 1976), pp. 6-1 and 6-2. The "hip-shot" is a term long known for what is now also called the Emergency Occupation. It is the ability of an artillery battery to provide immediate fire support while moving. For more details on the technique see the additional information on the cited pages.

the battalion commander continues to move forward so as to be adjacent to the motorized rifle battalion commander.[88] Without the aid of forward observers (as characterized in US artillery terminology),[89] the battalion commander becomes important to the adjustment of the artillery fire.[90] Several authors have noted that where the commander was to visually adjust the fires, the initial rounds should be smoke or high explosive so as to see better the burst in relationship to the target. In addition, the use of smoke rounds serves to mask the deployment of the rifle troops from the enemy and aids in suppressing the gunners of the antitank weapons.[91] Once positioned to support the maneuver force, the battalion will remain in place until moved by the motorized rifle battalion commander.

The mortar battery organic to the motorized rifle battalion presents somewhat of a mystery as to its place in the scheme of maneuver. The weapon has a range of 5,700 meters, which indicates it cannot stop

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[88] P. Kunitskiy, p. 118.

[89] The Soviets devote large portions of their artillery writings to the acquisition of targets through various reconnaissance means. However, once the firing starts, little detailed information is available to support a description of the manner of adjustment. Artillery reconnaissance is defined at length in the Great Soviet Encyclopedia, Third ed., Vol. II, "Artillery Reconnaissance," as being carried out by reconnaissance subunits with the aid of optical and electronic optical instruments, sound-ranging observation posts, radar and radio technical stations, artillery reconnaissance groups, and the crews of reconnaissance fire-correction helicopters.

[90] S. Ostroumov, "Firing for Effect," trans. for USA, Military Herald, no. 1-76, p. 131.

[91] See both the article by V. Koritchuk, "Combat with Antitank System in the Offensive," trans. for USA, Military Herald, no. 6-74, p. 119, and A. Rodin, "Peculiarities of Firing at Maximum Range," trans. for USA, Military Herald, no. 7-75, p. 124.

and fire at any significicant distance short of the area in which the advance guard is engaged in combat. One article available in Military Herald refers to the battery being at the end of the advance party; however, this article is concerned with the utilization of the battery in the mountains.[92] There, maneuver space might be so critical as to require such a positioning. The authors of The Motorized Rifle Battalion on the March and in the Meeting Engagement suggest there are no mortars in the advance guard, but rather show a platoon of mortars in the main body.[93] The latter positioning (in the main body) seems to be the more correct. The mortar is towed by the thin-skinned GAZ-66 vehicle and, therefore, is unlikely to be forward in the advance guard where it might be subjected to a surprise attack by antitank weapons. Placing the mortars in the main body during the march gives the commander a bit more leeway as to their positioning in the assault phase in case advance guard action does not clear enemy resistance. He can bring them forward to serve as a base of fire (as is done in this scenario), or he can have the battery follow the two motorized rifle companies used in the flanking attack (Figure 8). While the rifle companies deploy from column to on-line positions, the mortars can deploy to support the attack.

Thus as the deployment phase ends, the motorized rifle battalion is arranged as indicated in Figure 8. Provided the meeting engagement follows the expected course, the battalion has fulfilled the

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[92]O. Begoyan, "A Mortar Battery in the Mountains," trans. for USA, Military Herald, no. 1-76, p. 122.

[93]Garbuz, The MRB on the March, p. 33.

requirements of the meeting engagement. The march has been made, the direction of movement has suddenly been changed, and the forces have been deployed and committed in a relatively short period of time. The battalion is now ready to deliver the final blow by striking the flank of the enemy with the motorized rifle troops while stopping the advance with the advance detachment and fire power.[94]

With the advance of the enemy forces halted, the two companies involved in the flanking movement are now ready to attack the main body of enemy troops. Under cover of fire from the artillery battalion, the mortar battery, and the antitank battery, the two companies can attack in one echelon, with the tanks leading the BMPs on a front up to 2,000 meters.[95] Such a front presupposes a distance of 100 meters between vehicles in a platoon with 100 meters between platoons in a company. The distance between companies may be as much as 400 to 500 meters. However, since one platoon is being used as the battalion reserve, width of the assault force will be reduced to 1,700 meters[96] (Figure 9).

Obviously, as the attack is made, the troops will remain mounted in the BMPs. The BMPs should follow the tanks at a distance of not more than 400 meters in a mounted attack, according to Lt. Gen. of Tank Troops A. Bondarenko.[97] However, for the purpose of the scenario,

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[94]A. Zheltoukov, "Conditions for Success," trans. for USA, Military Herald, no. 8-74, p. 124-25.

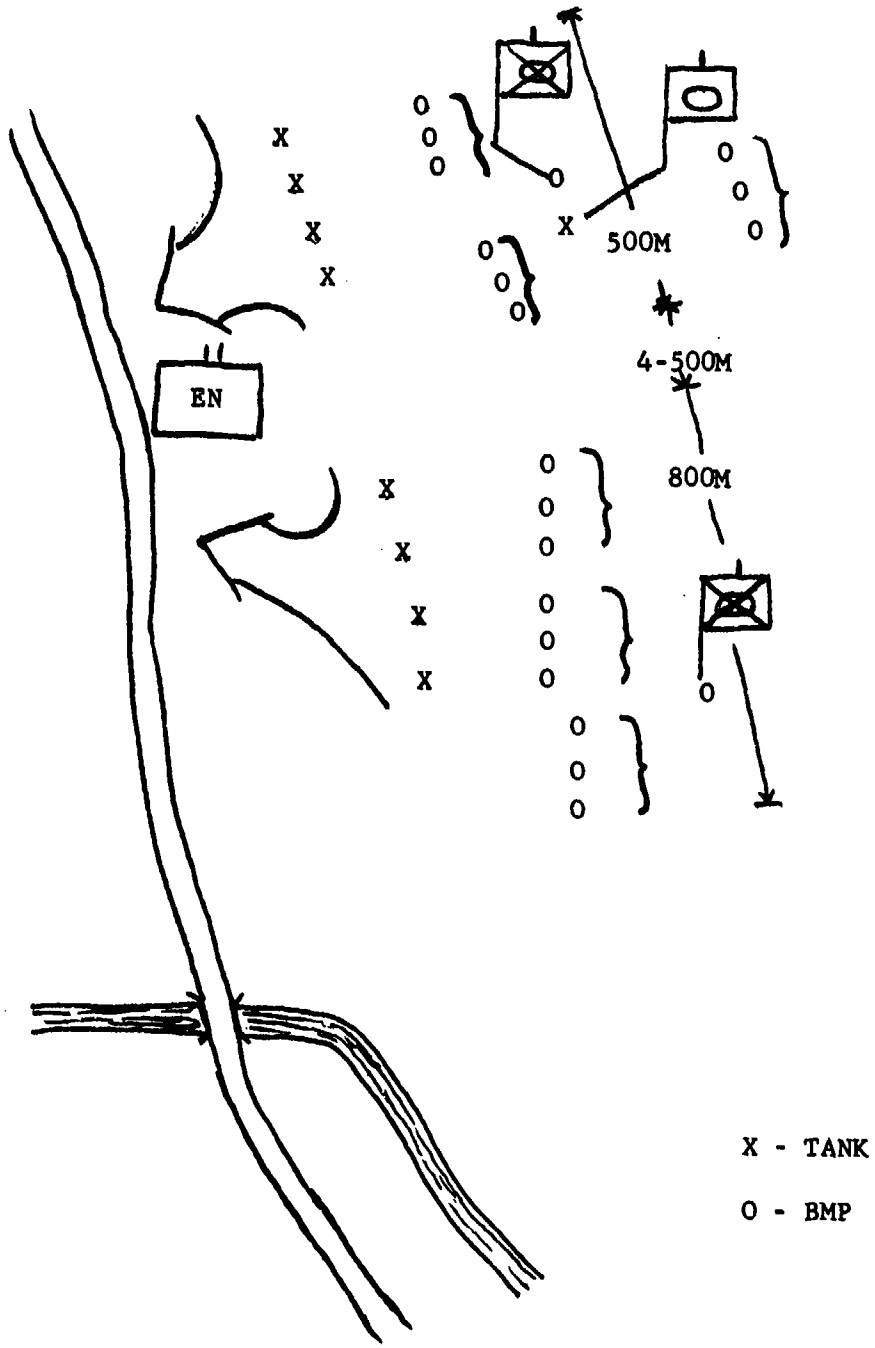
[95]Garbuz, The MRB on the March, p. 79. The distance may be reduced to approximately 100 meters if nuclear weapons have not been employed.

[96]Ibid., p. 79.

[97]A. Bondarenko, "Concerning the Employment of BMP in Combat," trans. for USA, Military Herald, no. 10-75, p. 109.

FIGURE 9

MOUNTED ATTACK



it is assumed the enemy fire is sufficiently strong to cause a dismounted attack. As the tanks approach to approximately 400 meters from the enemy position, the BMPs which have been trailing by the required distance suddenly rush forward to join the tanks; the infantry squad dismounts; and the BMPs follow the troops at about 200 meters, adding its fire power to the assault.[98] (Figure 10) If the assault is successful, the BMPs move forward to join with the tanks and pick up the members of the rifle squad to begin the pursuit operation.

If all has gone well, the forces involved should perform in the following manner:

> Artillerymen destroy the enemy's weapons, primarily antitank weapons, depriving them of the opportunity of offering organized resistance and hindering the swift advance of motorized rifle and tank podrazdeleniye. The artillerymen also neutralize personnel. Motorized rifle podrazdeleniya move behind the tanks and in turn do battle with antitank weapons, while with their fire and shock power, the tanks neutralize weapons which interfere with the advance of the motorized riflemen. Antiaircraft artillerymen cover the attackers against air attack, and combat engineer podrazdeleniye support the crossing of mine fields, natural and artificial obstacles, log obstacles and centers of fire.[99]

Command and Control

Recalling the previous chapter, one of the principles of operational art was that of coordination. In effect, how is the commander expected to maintain a close successful working relationship among the elements of this reinforced motorized rifle battalion?

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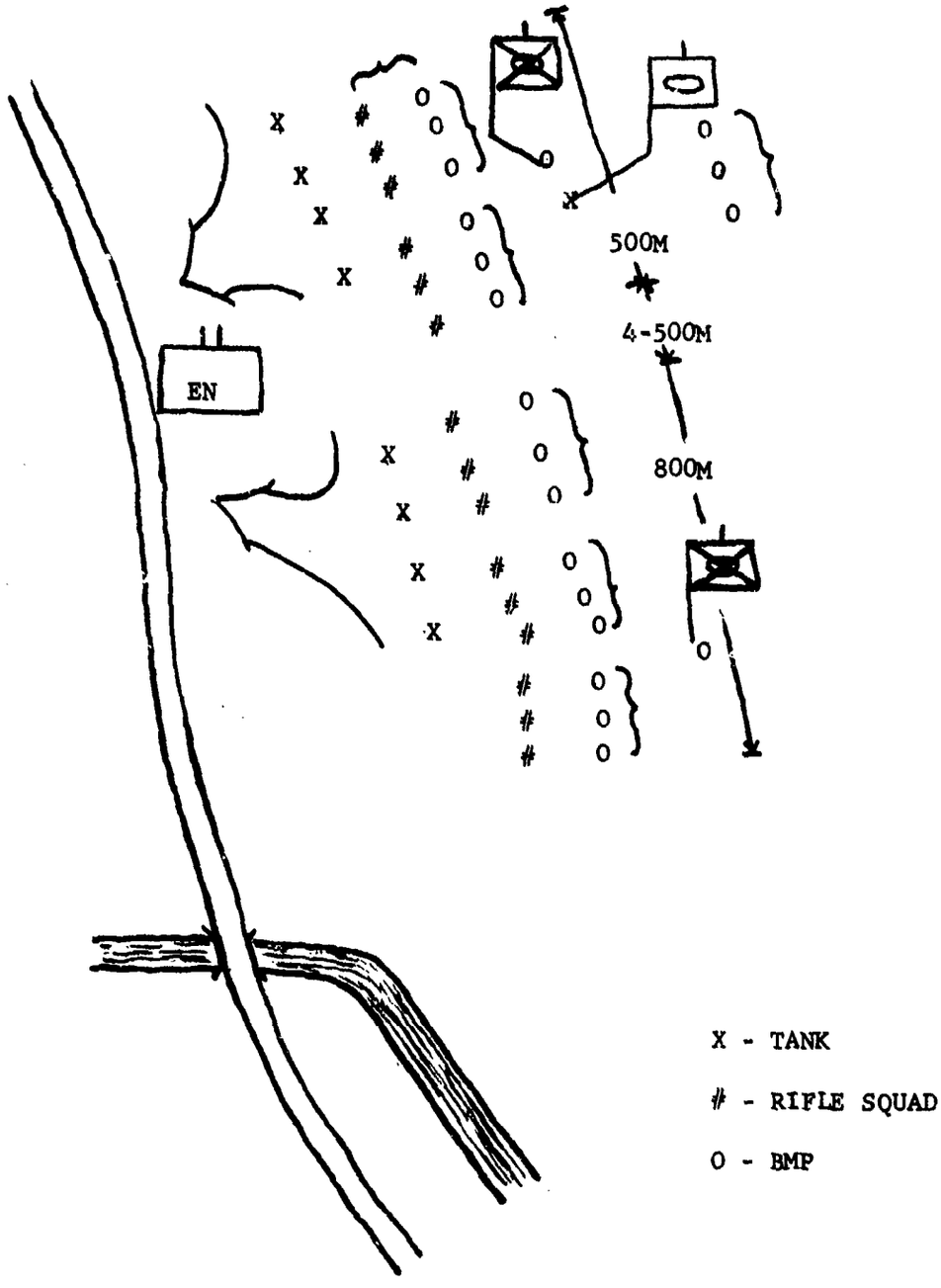
[98]Ibid, p. 110.

[99]Bogdanov, p. 55. Maj. Gen. Bogdanov was the deputy commander for combat training, Turkestan Military District, in 1975,

FIGURE 10

DISMOUNTED ATTACK



Maj. Gen. of Signal Troops Pavlov expresses that task in this manner, "High combat readiness of troops supposes constant, firm, and flexible control."[100]

The Soviet writers note that increases in mobility and maneuverability, rapid changes in situations, and the need for instant reactions have greatly increased the task of troop control. Thus, the Soviet training theme in this area seems to be one of constant repetition to the point that what the battalion does and what the enemy does no longer is unexpected; and, thus, the troops are not caught unprepared.

Command and control of the meeting engagement is a reflection of this preparedness theme in that it starts back at the point the battalion commander is given the mission. Upon the receipt of the mission, the planning sequence indicates the commander will provide the subunit commanders with initial guidance. One author indicates the following is provided by the battalion commander: the tasks which must be done and when they must be done, the length and composition of the column, and where and when the combat mission is to be supplied.[101] The battalion commanders' guidance is supplied by the senior commander (in this case, the regimental commander) in the following terms:[102]

> The plan of operation on meeting the enemy.
>
> The organization of the march formation and the distribution of forces and weapons.

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[100]Yu. Pavlov, "Tactics and Communications are Inseparable " trans. for USA, Military Herald, no. 6-74, p 165.

[101]N. Chernov, "Increasing the Rate of March" trans. for USA, Military Herald, no. 6-75, p. 82.

[102]U. S., Department of the Army, United States Army Infantry School, Opposing Forces Handbook ST-7-288, (FY77), p. 2-6.

The tasks of the forward detachment and the march security troops.

The tasks of all subordinate elements on the march.

The movements routes, initial line, and control points.

As a planning factor, Col. A. Demidov writes, "Experience has shown that a company commander requires up to two hours in order to evaluate a situation, make his decision, assign combat tasks and prepare the subunits for the march.[103] He was referring to the commander of the advance guard.

As Maj. Gen. Bogdanov further stated, organization of this coordination is only one side of the commander's job. The more difficult side is constantly to maintain the coordination in combat.[104] Missions are passed usually in person and in sufficient time to allow the units to maneuver outside the range of antitank weapons. As the advance guard is deployed into combat, the battle assignments come down in a way that allows the platoon commanders to receive missions by the time subunits arrive at the deployment line.[105]

Of primary importance is the position of the battalion commander. In the Soviet concept of one-man command, the key to the meeting engagement is the location of the command post. As was shown in the scenario, the commander moves forward as soon as the advance guard is in combat; for until he has a full understanding of the action, no other deployment takes place. Once he is in position to conduct the meeting

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[103]A. Demidov, "In a Forward Patrol of Advance Guard," trans. for USA, Military Herald, no. 11-73, p. 37-38.

[104]Bogdanov, p. 50.

[105]Garbuz, The MRB on the March, p. 88.

engagement, he assigns the fire mission to the artillery and maneuvers the rest of the force. Because of the great importance the Soviets place on artillery, the key to this problem of coordination seems to be one of insuring that both the motorized rifle battalion commander and the artillery battalion commander are fairly closely located and exchanging information. For the rest of the units, the emphasis seems to be on receiving information, not providing feedback.

Before a discussion of the manner of maintaining control through limited communications, it seems appropriate to discuss briefly the degree of flexibility available to the battalion. The Soviets point out the fact that the advance guard commander and the battalion commander are among the privileged few small unit commanders who have the opportunity to adjust the plans already given. Yet while they pretend to allow some initiative and flexibility, they caution the commanders with these words:

> The exhibition of initiative, as a rule, is connected with risk. However, risk does not mean operating at odds with the goal to be obtained. Risk leads to success only if it is based on knowledge of the nature of modern warfare, consideration of the condition and capabilities of the enemy podrazdeleniye and our own troops, if there is a profound analysis of the situation, proper calculations and firm belief in success. In short, risk is the highest manifestation of military mastery of the commander, his skill in predicting the development of events.[106]

Having thus explained the degree of preparation the Soviet commander makes to exercise control, what then about the communications used? During movement before the engagement, it is by a variety of means--radio with short, prearranged signals; signal flags; lights; and

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[106]I. Voloshin, "Initiative and Independence of the Commander in Combat," trans. for USA, Military Herald, no. 4-75, p. 96.

audio signals. However, caution is given concerning the systems used. The number of signals should be small, should consist of no more than six visual and six radio signals, and be so simple as to avoid confusion and misunderstanding. Once the meeting engagement has commenced, the visual signals and the short, prearranged radio signals can cease. Unrestricted use of the radio is allowed.[107] This non-restriction applies only to the radios of the battalion commander, his company commander (platoon and squad leaders will receive communications and only transmit in an emergency), and the commanders of the attached units.

The authors of the articles in Military Herald note the radio often is misused in heat of battle. They cite examples of commanders going off and leaving it behind, expecting it to provide guidance to the point of eliminating all decision making, failing to insure that all nets mesh together when working as a combined arms force, and finally not devoting the same degree of attention to the training of the operators that they do for the other combat elements.[108]

Such an approach to the command and control of the battalion and its attachments prevails for several reasons. Though the radio is available for use once the meeting engagement is initiated, the belief is that inadequate training is devoted to its use. This inadequacy (this author's evaluation) is condoned to some degree,

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[107]Garbuz, The MRB on the March, p. 39.

[108]Examples of such training can be found in the following articles: Voloshin, p. 98; B. Kutsenko, "In Step with the Times," trans. for USA, Military Herald, no. 1-75, p. 197; V. Kalinin, "But Where are the Tanks," trans. for USA, Military Herald, no. 1-75, p. 134; and B. Gudymenko and M. Voronov, "Commanders Work over the Radio," trans. for USA, Military Herald, no. 4-76, p. 181.

as the training system substitutes repetitiveness of combat drills, detailed planning, and limited use of initiative as a replacement for sufficient training and competent communications operations.

Fire Power Involved

Having brought a number of units into play during the course of the scenario, it seems appropriate to recapitulate the fire power the reinforced motorized rifle battalion has within its structure:[109]

Number	Description	Range in Meters
18	122mm Self-propelled howitzers	15,300
2	SA-9 Air defense weapons	7,000
2	ZSU-23-4 Air Defense weapons	3,000
13	T-62 Tanks with 115mm main gun	2,000
31	BMP-armored personnel carriers	
	73mm main gun	1,000
	SAGGER AT missile	3,000
9	BRDM SAGGER Missile launchers vehicles	3,000
2	BACKPACK SAGGER AT Missile	3,000
6	120mm Mortars	5,700
2	SPG-9 AT guns (72mm)	1,000
27	RPG-7 AT grenade launchers (40mm)	500
30	SGM Heavy machine guns	1,000
27	RPK Light machine guns	800

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[109]FM 30-40, Handbook on Soviet Ground Forces, (June 1975), pp. 6-11, 6-27, 6-43, 6-47, 6-51, 6-55, 6-61, and 6-71; RB 30-2, Selected US and Soviet Weapons and Equipment, (July 1976), p. 18; and RB 30-3, Soviet Artillery Doctrine, (May 1976), p. A-12.

CHAPTER III

COMBINED ARMS RELATIONSHIPS

> Another pattern (in the revolution in military affairs) is the ever increasing diversity and complexity of the methods for conducting combat and operations. This has . . . accelerated the development of such a trend as the necessity of coordinated efforts by different branches of arms . . .
>
> Maj. Gen. Voznenko[110]

The motorized rifle battalion commander charged with a mission of being the advance guard has approximately 500 additional people under his command. As has been described earlier, this includes the following units:

A tank company.

An artillery battalion.

An air defense element.

An antitank battery.

An engineer element.

An NBC element.

This attached force means six additional commanders have to be directed, including the artillery commander who could be as senior in rank as the rifle battalion commander. Because of the nature of Soviet combined operations, there is no cross attachment as is common

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[110]V. Voznenko, "The Dependency of the Methods of Conducting Combat Operations upon the Development of Weapons and Military Equipment," in The Revolution in Military Affairs, ed. N. A. Lomov, trans. for USAF, Soviet Military Thought Series, no. 3 (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1974), p. 133.

practice in the United States Army; but rather the additional units are simply added to the battalion. For example, in the previous chapter when the tank company minus and two motorized rifle companies attacked the flank of the advancing unit, the battalion commander had an additional company commander in the scheme of maneuver. This chapter is an attempt to determine if the reinforcement of such a large number of forces presents any real difficulty to the command and control structure of the reinforced motorized rifle battalion.

A. Mechanized-Tank Relationship

A Military Herald writer defines the relationship between the infantry and armor when he writes that armor protects the motorized infantrymen with its tanks and defends them with both machine gun and main gun fire, while motorized riflemen protect the tanks from antitank weapons, look for mine fields, and aid tank crews in overcoming various obstacles.[111]

Such an arrangement has worked well historically; however, with the introduction of the BMP with its speed and mobility, several Soviet writers are suggesting the meeting engagement may be a place where the BMP-equipped unit can ill afford to wait on the less maneuverable and slower tanks.[112] Such thoughts still seem to be in the concept stage. Descriptions of exercises noted in available literature do not indicate the maneuver forces practice piecemeal

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[111]M. Tychkov, "The Landing of Riflemen Mounted on Tanks," trans. for USA, Military Herald, no. 1-75, p. 119.

[112]An example of such writing is Lt. Gen. Bukharenko, p. 103.

commitment of the combined arms team. This conceptual thinking is reflected in a recently concluded series of articles that appeared in the Military Herald during the period June 1975 to March 1976 concerning the role of the BMP in combat.[113] Presently, the production rate of the BMP has allowed only one regiment per division to be equipped with the vehicle. As more are entered into the inventory, the Soviets seem to have difficulty deciding the role it will assume in relationship to the tank. The Soviets recognize the greater speed and maneuverability of the BMP over the tank; and, as Phillip Karber points out, "What is clearly illustrated in recent Soviet writings on antitank weapons is not so much concern over the survival ability of the tank, as of the operational viability of motorized infantry.[114]

Therefore, because of the concern for the survival of the BMP and the lack of strong evidence of use of the BMP ahead of the tanks, it still seems the two arms will work together in the meeting engagement. Where they do work together, it may be in either of the two ways illustrated in Figures 5 and 8 of the previous chapter. In one situation, the tanks provide a base of fire, and the BMPs maneuver. In the second situation, the tanks and BMPs maneuver and fire together as a single unit.

The command and control of the tank company with the battalion is worthy of discussion. The tank company, be it the ten or thirteen

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[113]The series of articles began with an article by V. Pishakov and L. Kirpach, "Infantry Combat Vehicle in Battle," trans. for USA, Military Herald, no. 6-75, pp. 72-79; and ended with an article by Merimskiy, pp. 32-37.

[114]Karber, p. 108.

tank variety, by necessity is to be divided during the course of the march and subsequent meeting engagement.[115] Because of the normal cohesion of this unit, the dividing of the tanks makes the communication between the two forces especially important.

Communications between the tankers and infantry include the normal radio signals, flares, and messengers. Under normal conditions, when the tank company is working as a single unit, the tank platoon leaders would be able to initiate conversation only in emergencies, due to strict traffic discipline. The individual tank crews will receive communications only. Also, this same VHF system in the company will allow the tank company commander to communicate with the motorized rifle commander.[116] Just as the tanker communications work downward, so does that of the motorized rifle battalion. The supporting artillery has the capability to enter the company nets of both the tank company and the motorized rifle battalion. When the troops are mounted, there is no company net, but a single battalion one.[117] The procedure as to who can initiate communications in the

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[115]Soviet tank battalions for a number of years contained thirty-one tanks--ten tanks per company and one in the battalion headquarters. As more tanks are made available to the force in the field, the number of tanks in the various tank battalions has changed. The tank battalion of the motorized rifle regiment has forty tanks. This increase has resulted in thirteen tanks to the company and one in the battalion headquarters. The tank battalions of the tank regiments still have thirty-one tanks. The independent tank battalion of the motorized rifle division has a total of fifty-one tanks. A difference in the three battalion organizations can be seen on pp. 2-5, 2-7, and 2-11 of HB 550-2. Where there is a company of thirteen tanks, each platoon contains four tanks as reflected in the diagrams and drawings of TC 30-102.

[116]DDI-1120-129-76, Soviet Tank Company Tactics, p. 5.

[117]U. S., Department of Defense, Defense Intelligence Agency, The Soviet Motorized Rifle Company DDI-1100-77-76, October 1976, p. 28.

rifle battalion is the same as that in the tank company. Obviously, there is need to make some modification to such a system during a meeting engagement when sub-elements of both the tank and motorized rifle units are separated. Such a modification is necessary to allow tank platoon leaders and motorized rifle company commanders to communicate with each other. There have been no data uncovered reflecting the modification, but the communications equipment is available. Therefore, it seems likely the tank platoon leader in the advance guard will be able to communicate directly with the motorized rifle company commander. The tank company commander will be able to communicate with the battalion commander and the other two motorized rifle company commanders. In the control of various elements, it should be noted that only the officers are equipped with maps; and such limited distribution may account for the way the communications procedure is structured. During the course of the assault if the infantrymen are forced to dismount, only the platoon leader and the company commander can maintain radio communications, both between themselves and with the tanks. Squad leaders will be forced to use other signal means, since they have no radios when dismounted.[118]

B. Mechanized-Artillery Relationship

A German writer in a recent article on Soviet artillery writes that the Soviets have done all possible to strengthen and modernize their artillery since World War II. Then he adds that with the build up of this material the problem of effective artillery operations

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[118]Ibid., p. 25.

still is not solved.[119] What the writer says seems to have some merit. Much has been written about the massive Soviet Army artillery fires, and no doubt there is every reason for NATO planners to consider this fire power. However, at the lower unit level, there do seem to be problems in combined arms operation.

For example, in the meeting engagement, there is a battalion of divisional artillery (122mm) attached to the motorized rifle battalion as was illustrated. When the operations of this battalion are examined, the Soviets artillery does not look nearly so formidable as it does when viewed en masse firing a preparation fire. There is no doubt that when firing pre-planned fire at both point and area targets, a tremendous amount of divisional artillery can be brought to bear on the enemy target with a high degree of accuracy. However, in the meeting engagement, pre-planned fire may not be possible, since the two forces may not meet at the location selected during the planning phase. When the actual contact point and the pre-planned point do not coincide, there seems to be no way effective fire can be placed on the enemy in a timely manner because of the lack of an adjustment mechanism. Such a lack during the meeting engagement greatly detracts from this formidable power capability.

The Soviet concept of one-man command seems most overworked in this particular relationship. There is just so much proficiency a middle-level grade officer can attain, and the complexity of

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[119]Erich Sobik, "The Concept of Artillery Utilization and Artillery Fire in the Soviet Land Forces," trans. for USA, Truppenpraxis (May 1976): p. 11.

artillery seems to create difficulties, according to writers in the Military Herald.[120] Contrary to the United States Army system in which the supporting artillery commander moves and shoots his artillery to support the maneuver force, in the Soviet Army this is the responsibility of the maneuver force commander. Col. Krysanov has this to say:

> Experience gained in combined exercises of motorized rifle and artillery units shows there are many deficiencies in the organization of their cooperation. Some commanders do not assign missions to the attached artillery at the proper time (especially in the meeting engagement) and do not always order displacement in time for the artillery to support the attack. As a result the attack is slowed, the pace of the offensive is slowed and unnecessary losses are encountered.[121]

Regardless of how effectively the motorized rifle battalion commander employs the artillery, numerous writers indicate that his command post and that of the supporting artillery battalion commander should be reasonably close together.[122] Since all writers reflect the need for the motorized rifle battalion commander to be near the front where he can direct the battalion, the artillery post will be equally close to the front. Of course, the artillery commander has to be as near the action as possible, for he has no forward observers to direct the artillery fire and must do so himself. Though this explanation has focused on the two battalion

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[120]Difficulties in using the artillery are noted by both V. Krysanov, "Artillery in a Tactical Attack Formation," trans. for USA, Military Herald, no. 12-75, p. 133; and R. Kiudmaa and V. Selyavin, "Supporting the Advance Party," trans. for USA, Military Herald, no. 8-74, p. 173.

[121]Krysanov.

[122]Kunitskiy, p. 118.

commanders, the same relationship will exist between the commander of the advance detachment and the supporting artillery battery.[123]

The apparent lack of a forward observer would seem to create enormous command and control problems.[124] If the battery and battalion commanders have to be with their counterparts at company and battalion to relay targets to the firing units from the maneuver force, one tends to wonder who really controls the firing units. Certainly it becomes a heavier responsibility for the unit chief of staff. The Soviets have what is referred to as an artillery scout or reconnaissance scout in the artillery organization; and, though he is trained to detect targets, he does not seem to be located with the maneuver force for the purpose of fire control. His role seems to be one of pure reconnaissance to provide information back to the artillery battalion control platoon. This control platoon is charged with the preparation of intelligence which is in turn shared with the combined arms unit to which the battalion is attached.[125] Thus, whatever has been perceived as a target by the scout is reported to the artillery battalion and passed through the motorized rifle battalion commander, who then tells the artillery to fire--obviously something the artillery would have done earlier if the system would have allowed it. If this procedure is ever utilized in a war, it

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[123]A. Sedykh, "Continuity of Attack by Fire on the Enemy," trans. for USA, Military Herald, no. 11-75, p. 164.

[124]Or maybe it is the failure of a western-trained mind to understand how or why it would be done any other way.

[125]M. Sidorov (Lt. Gen. of Artillery), pp. 124-130.

seems likely that those expedient measures always learned as soon as one is shot at will include a simpler way to get fire to the target.

Reznichenko, in his book Tactics, writes that it may take twenty-five to thirty minutes to prepare the firing batteries of the artillery battalion.[126] Lt. Gen. Kardashevskiy, in a much more recent article, writes that as much as fifteen to twenty-two minutes is required for the battalion to undergo full preparation to fire. The writer implies the timing is made possible by the use of "a specially equipped topometeorological vehicle (TMM) which contains a computer, a reconnaissance scout as an operator, and a dosimeter-chemical specialist."[127] The additional information in Kardashevskiy's article seems to suggest that his example involves all three batteries of the battalion. However, such a situation is not likely to be found, since one battery is forward with the motorized rifle company in the advance guard. If the commander does not prepare to fire until all batteries are co-located, the criticism of employing artillery in a timely manner seems valid. Reznichenko says the artillery must quickly set up firing sites along the march route regardless of convenience, however, insuring that the guns are not less than one half of their range from the enemy.[128] He also suggests that speed is so important that batteries should fire on their own in a matter of

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[126]Reznichenko, Tactics, p. 150.

[127]Kardashevskiy, p. 49.

[128]Reznichenko, Tactics, pp. 147-149.

eight to ten minutes. There is no available data to suggest the time the batteries need to prepare for firing. Nor is there data available to reflect the accuracy of this battery fire when not tied into some central battalion control mechanism.

Regardless of the timeliness of the initial firing, the battery currently uses one of three deployment schemes: on-line parallel to FEBA, in a "V", or in a "U" formation.[129] This deployment pattern, however, may be a topic under consideration for possible change. Two writers indicate the lessons learned in the Middle East War show the normal deployment pattern to be extremely vulnerable to counter-battery fire.[130]

Realizing there are problems associated with the artillery firing once the motorized rifle commander gives the order, it seems a matter of training before the problems are reduced. Part of this reduction can be overcome by accepting advice from the artillery commander and having a better knowledge of when to order deployment. Two authors suggest the rifle commander should never order deployment and fire on enemy reconnaissance; for if it is done, the artillery will be deployed too far to the rear to develop the attack in depth. Additionally, firing at long range is a waste of ammunition, because it is ineffective.[131]

Finally, a description should be added concerning the fire that

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[129]U. S., Department of the Army, United States Army Field Artillery School, The Threat, TO--CR TO 01CS, AT--QH, February 1976, p. 19.

[130]Ivanov and Nesterov, p. 147.

[131]Kiudmaa and Selyavin, p. 173.

is finally delivered. One author suggests that artillery delivered along the depth of the march where a meeting engagement will most likely begin prevents the enemy from using his weapons to the fullest.[132] Such a statement implies that fires other than from the attached artillery battalion will be made available to the rifle battalion commander. Such a situation does not seem likely because of the distance between the lead elements of this advance guard and the main body of troops.

In any event, regardless of where the artillery is located, the first rounds to be called for by the commander should be smoke.[133] This will better enable the artillery battalion commander to adjust the next salvo and at the same time possibly impair the enemy force in the effective use of their antitank weapons. Once the smoke rounds have been fired, the high explosive fires are maintained on the enemy until the distance between the troops is 300-500 meters. At that point, the fires are ordered to be shifted.[134]

Thus, it bears repeating: the Soviets have huge amounts of artillery and rifle troops; but in the meeting engagement there are some very real problems to be solved before effective coordination is attained. The problems involve the difficulty for the motorized rifle battalion commander in employing the artillery support properly;

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[132]Kunitskiy, p. 117.

[133]Koritchuk.

[134]Sedykh, p. 163.

the apparent lack of a forward observer, other than the commander, to adjust fires; and quite possibly the timely delivery of fire power once the command to deploy has been given.

C. Mechanized Air Defense Relationship

Col. Gen. of Artillery Levchenko, Chief of the Air Defense Troops of the Ground Forces, places this relationship in the Soviet perspective when he writes that the combined arms commander must continuously control the air defense weapons at his disposal and take all the steps necessary to insure the air defense battery is ready to open up timely and effective fire against the enemy.[135] In the scenario used, the air defense weapons of the attached element are moved from point to point with no clear indication that they are specifically positioned by the motorized rifle battalion commander. Whereas in United States Army doctrine the battalion commander would be given an overall mission to the air defense, the Soviet doctrine seems to direct the battalion commander to make the decisions on exactly where and how the guns are to be used.

Several writers, among them Maj. Gen. of Artillery Kutsenko, seem to reflect a new approach to assigning missions to air defense units.[136] In effect, these writers indicate it is no longer possible to base the operations of antiaircraft gunners solely on the air situation, but also on the ground activity as well.

As has been illustrated, the guns assigned to the battalion

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[135] P. Levchenko, "Problems of Modern Combat," trans. for USA, Military Herald, no. 4-76, p. 70.

[136] B. Kutsenko, "In Step with the Times," pp. 196-201. Other articles also appeared in Military Herald in early 1975.

are broken up and committed in pairs--one pair to the advance guard and one pair in the main body. This manner seems to be the ideal way of employment.[137] Once the battalion deploys for the meeting engagement, the battery can consolidate on a narrow front or spread wide depending on the desires of the rifle battalion commander. Distance can be adjusted within the restrictions imposed by the 400 meter depth and 150-200 meter separation distances.[138] Locating the entire element at a single firing position as reflected in the scenario makes it easier to control the fire and increases the effectiveness of the unit.[139] Where the enemy is using attack helicopters, it seems the air defense battery will move only one gun at a time during displacement. Such a procedure does not degrade the capability to a great extent, though it takes longer to complete the move.

Finally, as the battalion commander studies the deployment and utilization of this air defense element, a fact to be recognized is that there will be no friendly fixed-winged aircraft over his position within the range of these particular weapons. As he assigns the mission, the commander can give the unit a free-fire mission on all of this type of aircraft, for the Soviet doctrine does not use close air support inside the air defense umbrella. However, as more HIND helicopters are produced, it would seem likely this doctrine would be modified to allow close air support from these attack

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[137]V. Gatsolayev, (Lt. Gen. of Artillery), "When Helicopters Are Airborne," trans. for USA, Military Herald, no. 11-73, p. 123.

[138]Rodurov, p. 154.

[139]Ibid., p. 155.

helicopters.[140] The helicopter seems particularly valuable in a meeting engagement, where the motorized rifle battalion and its attached forces are out beyond the range of the weapons of the regimental artillery group (RAG).

D. Mechanized-Antitank Relationship

The use of the attached antitank battery seems to be the most confusing of all the attached forces. Both C. H. Donnelly and Garbuz and his fellow authors, in their respective articles, indicate the presence of an antitank battery in the march column of the motorized rifle battalion.[141] The only battery likely to be available is the antitank battery from the regiment to which the battalion belongs. Therefore, in the description of the battalion organization in the previous chapter, the entire battery is reflected as being attached to the battalion. As a force, this battery contains nine BRDM vehicles, each equipped with fourteen SAGGER missiles.[142] These nine vehicles are believed to be divided into three platoons of three vehicles

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[140] U. S., Department of the Army, Fort Leavenworth, Selected US and Soviet Weapons and Equipment RB 30-2 (July, 1976), p. 99. The HIND A and B are the first helicopter gunships deployed by the Soviets. The HIND-A is the antitank version that can carry the SAGGER antitank missile as part of its armament. The HIND-B carries rocket pods but not the SAGGER. Both versions can carry between eight and twelve troops in addition to their weapons load, and both have an automatic weapon in the chin turret (believed to be a 23mm weapon). The HIND A and B have an estimated cruising speed of 122 knots and a range of approximately 260 nautical miles. The closest US counterpart is the Cobra.

[141] Donnelly, "The 'March' in Soviet Tactical Doctrine," p. 79; and Garbuz, The MRB on the March, p. 33.

[142] FM 30-40, p. 6-61; and U. S. Department of the Army, Training and Doctrine Command, TRADOC Bulletin #2 (April, 1975), p. 8.

each.[143] The above organization varies with the organization shown in another Training and Doctrine Command publication, TC 30-102, in which only two BRDM SAGGER vehicles are noted operating with a motorized rifle company.[144] There is some evidence to support the former organization in the book Antitank Warfare.[145] The authors give an example of deployment using a three-vehicle illustration with vehicle capability approximating that of the BRDM/SAGGER.

In addition to this regimental battery, there are a number of antitank weapons available to the force. There are the tank company, the thirty-one BMPs, each containing one missile rail (four missiles), the twenty-seven RPG-7 antitank grenade launchers, and the organic antitank platoon with two SPG-9s.

Because there is so little documentation available on the organization and deployment of this battery and because of the number of antitank weapons of the battalion, the understanding of the employment of these weapons becomes somewhat of a "what if" situation. The authors of Antitank Warfare in their discussion of antitank combat in the meeting engagement write that there have to be sufficient antitank weapons in the advanced detachment to cause the enemy force to deploy.[146] If the battalion commander attaches his antitank platoon of SPG-9s to

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[143]Ibid., p. 17.

[144]TC 30-102, p. 11-13.

[145]G. Biryukov and G. Melnikov, Antitank Warfare, trans. by David Myshne, (Moscow, 1972), p. 97. (It should be noted that this book is not considered as authoritative as some of the other Russian books used as source material.)

[146]Ibid., p. 152.

the rifle company in the advance detachment and provides a platoon from the antitank battery, the requirement to have the enemy force deploy seems to have been satisfied. The remaining two platoons are free to deploy in the flanking movement with the rifle companies. Or they can be used, at least in part, to cover the gap between the advance detachment and the main body of the battalion when the gap exceeds five kilometers.[147] By filling the gap that exists, the platoons are able to move forward quicker to reinforce the blocking position established by the advance detachment.[148]

An alternate deployment scheme which could be utilized would be to attach only one platoon from the regimental battery to the motorized rifle battalion. Such an attachment would increase the survival of the battery by insuring that accurate or lucky counter-battery fire would not eliminate the entire regimental asset. Withholding a portion of the battery, the commander can position it at the head of the march column and rush it forward to support the battalion. Biryukov and Melnikov write that the motorized rifle company should be able to hold back an enemy tank battalion for one hour.[149] This delay would allow these remaining two platoons to be sent forward to reinforce the battalion force.

Viewing the command and control situation, it would seem to be more advantageous to the motorized rifle battalion commander if only one platoon were attached to the battalion. By attaching the platoon

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[147]Ibid.

[148]DDI-1100-143-76, p. 10.

[149]Biryukov and Melnikov, p. 52.

to a motorized rifle company, the battalion commander has one less commander to control. The one platoon concept must be balanced against the confusion which would occur when attempting to reinforce the battalion with the remaining elements of the battery once the meeting engagement begins. To attach or not attach the entire battery is one of those command decisions which must be made based on the situation and personalities involved.

E. Mechanized-Engineer Relationship

The motorized rifle battalion commander, in his effort to maintain the desired rate of advance, is greatly dependent for such purposes upon the engineer assets in the platoon attached to the battalion. Under condition of an anticipated meeting engagement, the combined arms commander has to insure he has requested, received, and positioned the correct engineer assets; for once he commits his various elements to battle from the march, there will be no time for any rearrangement of these particular assets.[150]

The attached platoon may have a number of squads and pieces of equipment. It is not likely to be a set organization. The base of the platoon comes from a platoon in the combat engineer company of the regiment, and is reinforced as needed with equipment and personnel from the engineer battalion at division. In the illustrated scenario of the previous chapter, only a portion of those missions of

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[150]I. F. Lysukhin, V. Ya. Plyaskin, and V. A. Rvinskiy, Engineer Support of Combined-Arms Combat (Moscow: Voyenizdat, 1970), trans. for USA, 1973 (FSTC-HT-23-1122-73).

engineer support as listed by Garbuz and his fellow authors will need to be performed.[151] They will include:

The reconnaissance and obstacle clearance of routes.

The preparation of terrain for cross-country movement.

The possible preparation for crossing contaminated areas.

The battalion moving forward will be moving across unfamiliar terrain. Therefore, in an effort to insure the desired rate of march, considerable equipment has to be available. Within the battalion there are the pioneer tools (crowbar, shovel, saw, and ax) on each vehicle. A power saw is available in each company. Attached heavy equipment includes a road grading machine, one half set of heavy mechanized bridges, a bulldozer equipped tank, three to six mine plows with blade sections, a mine plow with drag sections, and a truck-mounted crane.[152]

In order to obtain the proper utilization of engineer assets, the battalion commander will create a movement support detachment (MSD) commanded by the platoon leader of the attached engineer platoon. This MSD is organized into a reconnaissance group, a barricade-clearing group, and a highway-bridge group. These groups can be organized and positioned in the march column as the situation demands. Many times the reconnaissance group will consist of one engineer squad mounted on an APC and equipped with mine detectors, road sign kits, a mine-clearing claw, and a number of small high

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[151]Garbuz, MRB in the Meeting Engagement, p. 52.

[152]A. Belokin and V. Kalayda, Engineering Support of the Motorized Rifle (Tank) Battalion on the March and in the Meeting Engagement, trans. for USA, (Moscow, 1975), pp. 14, 67, 105.

explosive charges.[153] This squad will move with the reconnaissance element of the battalion. The barricade-clearing group may be with the reconnaissance or between the reconnaissance and the advanced detachment. This group will be part of the squad and be furnished mine detectors and a tank with a mine plow. It is also possible that the bridge-laying vehicle will be with this group. The highway-bridge group composed of the platoon minus the one squad holds the rest of the equipment. Its position and organization is highly flexible. It could move with the advance detachment or with the main body, or it could divide and move some equipment and personnel with each group.

A battalion conducting a meeting engagement at the end of a long march will have considerable equipment, and there is likely to have been considerable interplay between the commander and the engineer. In the scenario provided, there has been no nuclear exchange; and the meeting engagement to occur is likely to be on relatively uncluttered terrain, thus requiring little engineer effort. The meeting engagement will last at this level only two or three hours, which reinforces the need to get engineer effort organized right the first time. Once the battle commences, there is likely to be little or no interface between the battalion commander and his engineer. Engineer support requirements usually will be clear enough so as to need no further dialogue.

The Soviet concern for protection of equipment in training means that little of this engineer equipment will be used in routine

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[153]Ibid., p. 66.

training. Instead, the equipment and the functions it performs will be simulated, and therefore, no training in a combined arms relationship will occur.

F. Mechanized-NBC Relationship

The Soviet Army in recent years has shifted its doctrine for the conduct of war to include a non-nuclear phase in addition to the massive nuclear war. As such, they have shifted the training effort for the possibility of a non-nuclear phase. In the process, they seem to have increased NBC training and improved the equipment involved.[154]

In the battalion, NBC protection is limited to the protective suit and gas mask issued to individuals and to the qualitative improvement of many of its vehicles. At the regimental level, a twenty-seven man chemical defense company is available[155] from which a squad is dispatched to the battalion.

For a battalion expecting to become involved in a meeting engagement, a squad from the chemical defense company is provided. This squad is divided between the battalion reconnaissance and the advance detachment. The reconnaissance NBC representation is likely to be one BRDM-rhk--a vehicle with crew capable of monitoring the

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[154]However, because of the nature of the subject, either very little is known about actual operational aspects or it is highly classified. As a result a paucity of information is available in both US and USSR publications. For example, note the limited information found in the DIA reports The Soviet Motorized Rifle Company, DDI-1100-77-76 and Soviet Tank Company Tactics, DDI-1120-129-76; and in Garbuz, The MRB in Modern Combat.

[155]HB 550-2, p. 2-13.

surrounding area for NBC effects. At the advance detachment, there may be two of the same vehicles to continue to probe for NBC effects.

Because of the nature of the work of this squad, it will likely work in very close harmony with the engineer elements of the reconnaissance and advance detachment. This work is limited to providing support to the reconnaissance and security mission. The chemical scouts will attempt to assure the movement of the following units through the most direct route providing the least contamination. The engineers will supplement the work by adding the markers where contaminated areas are discovered and doing limited engineer work to degrade the effect of the NBC agent.

No clear indication is noted on the command and control of this squad. However, because of its size and mission, it will likely belong to the MSD and function under the control of the engineer platoon leader.

Interworking Summary

The size of the motorized rifle battalion more than doubles with the attachment of the six units reflected in Figure 2 and described in this chapter. Because there is no cross attachment in the Soviet Army, these added units also serve to nearly double the span of control. Each attached element is there not to support in an unsupervised method, but to be directed in all decision makings and tasks. Some attachments apparently are easier for the battalion commander to control than others. For some units, the mission is clear enough that the attached units can do it with little exchange of command level guidance. Other attached units

present real difficulties, and the commander often does not know how to use their assets. As will be noted in the next chapter, the amount of joint training between the battalion and the attached units makes a huge difference in determining how well a battalion commander functions when his unit increases from 441 to 940 personnel.

CHAPTER IV

TRAINING

> . . . it is apparent that during a meeting engagement special importance is attached to orienting oneself to the existing situation, being able to develop the plan in a rapid manner and acquainting the podrazdeleniye with their tasks, so that they will be able to carry out surprise strikes against the enemy and in the most vulnerable areas. Such actions require that all commanders be familiar with the nature of a meeting engagement and that they constantly improve their technical knowledge and their ability to employ that knowledge in actual practice.
>
> Lt. Col. V. Kokhanov[156]

Having described what the motorized rifle battalion does in one variation of a meeting engagement, there is then a question of how well is the battalion trained to do what it does. The answer to that question is that it does not do it very well. But then, no army does very well in training when measured against the capabilities of the weapons it uses, which is the only valid measurement one can use in a peacetime situation. This conclusion is not based upon a comparison with other services; rather it is based upon as subjective a judgment as can be made.

Col. Gen. Yakushin makes a sufficient attempt to define combat readiness when he says it is a very broad concept.[157] He then goes

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[156]V. Kokhanov, "Meeting Engagement of a Motorized Rifle Battalion," trans. for USA, Military Herald, no. 3-57, p. 103.

[157]V. Yakushin, "Staff and Combat Readiness of the Troops," trans. for USA, Military Herald, no. 2-75, p. 1.

on to make a list of many of the factors one has to evaluate in determining combat readiness.[158]

Without becoming involved in such a wide range of subjects, it still seems possible to determine the combat readiness of the average motorized rifle battalion. To do so seems possible from the standpoint of not what is right about the unit, but what is wrong and, therefore, where the weaknesses are likely to be. In order to make a determination, it seems reasonable to look at four areas of training:

Officer.

Enlisted.

Unit.

Combined Arms.

A. Officer Training

Two items immediately come into focus when examining the training received by the officers. One is the term one-man command and what it implies to the Soviet concept of training. The second is the dichotomy of the training goals found both in the junior officer schooling and in battalion level field training in which

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[158]In his article, Yakushin indicates the concept ". . . comprises a high moral-combat quality for all personnel, their instruction, discipline, organization, and physical hardening. Such questions enter here as the equipping of the chast' and podrazdeleniye with arms, combat equipment and their maintenance in precise condition; the coordination of companies, battalions and regiments; a high level of combat and special preparation of the commanding cadres, their ability to direct the troops, their skill in guiding their activities, and to organize and secure a regular supply of material facilities; and the readiness of political workers, party organization and all communists to inspire the troops in the fulfillment of combat tasks with words and by personal example."

one faction indicates that initiative and creativity are taught and another faction indicates none is allowed. Both items have an impact on the conduct of the battalion in the meeting engagement.

There has been an earlier reference to the theme of one-man command and to the possibility of that principle representing a weakness.[159] V. Drozdov, writing in the Soviet Military Review, characterizes one-man command as the most important principle in the development of Soviet Armed Forces.[160] He then goes on to

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[159]The term one-man command as used in this paper means centralized control, which is the conscious effort of the commander to retain for himself the authority to make all decisions affecting his subordinates. The evolution of the term had its beginning with the Soviet revolution of 1917 and the subsequent civil war. At that time, the Red Army had to rely on military commanders who could not be trusted politically. In an effort to counter this unreliability, the Soviets placed a Communist Party member in the unit with command authority equal to the tactical commander. By 1934, the Soviet officer corps was considered reliable; and the political commissar was removed. By 1937-38, the commissar was back; and over the next twenty years, the situation changed several times. At present, there is one-man command with a single commander and a deputy commander for political affairs or zampolit. There is a view that duel command exists because the zampolit is tasked with preparing political reports on both the commander and the unit and sending these reports up the chain of command of the Main Political Administration. However, it seems the command structure is willing to accept the prying eye of the zampolit so long as the zampolit does not attempt to exercise command over the subordinate unit commanders. In an effort to maintain the present situation, the tactical commanders insure that command authority is not relaxed at all for fear of the power of the political officer increasing. By not releasing this authority, the term one-man command can be used to describe this centralized control. (The United States Army also operates on the principle of one-man command, although its commanders delegate authority much better. The willingness to delegate is not hampered by the presence of forces seeking to gain more authority.)

[160]V. Drozdov, "The Soviet Officer Corps," Soviet Military Review, no. 2-77, p. 8.

write:

> . . . one-man command secures in the best possible way the unity of the personnel's actions, maximum flexibility, operational efficiency, and the strictest centralization of all links of the complicated army struggle from top to bottom . . . and combat readiness of troops.[161]

Drozdov's statement is an adequate summation of other writings which characterize the battalion commander as a one-man show. The commander is expected to be the senior trainer in the battalion or the company and as such should be able to perform all facets of the operation better than anyone else in the unit. As a trainer, he has to remain abreast of all the increased sophistication of weapons and tactics and be able to score excellent grades when evaluated. As a battalion or company trainer, it appears that there is little room for flexibility in what subjects are taught and when. Col. Ivanov, writing about the Port Arthur Guards Regiment, indicates the regimental commander meets every Tuesday with his commanders and provides detailed instruction on the training for the next week.[162] This control over the instructional content and technique of the training schedule is amplified by the Deputy Commander-in-Chief of the Infantry for Training, Col. Gen. Salmanov, who points out four items necessary to insure quality training methodology:

> Knowledge of subject matter.
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> Knowledge of personal examples of senior officers who have training experience.

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[161] Ibid.

[162] V. Ivanov, "Port Arthur Regiment Wins Socialist Competition," trans. for USA, Military Herald, no. 12-75, pp. 31-33.

Constant daily supervision by senior officers.

Testing and instructional session critiques with the officers involved.[163]

If the officer is undergoing such training himself, the question of "When does he train his troops?" is certainly a valid one. Though a battalion has a number of officers in its headquarters staff, this function still rests solely with the battalion commander and the various company commanders and platoon leaders in the organization. Nowhere does there appear to be a training specialist such as a master gunner instructor for tank training as advocated by Maj. Gen. Gorman for United States armor forces.[164] In addition to the military training, the commander is charged with the political training of his unit. At battalion level, there is the political officer or zampolit, as he is called; but the commanders within the battalion are charged with the training.[165] Thus, for the commander, it becomes necessary to walk a very fine line to balance these two diverse subjects. As a member of the Communist Party, or as a candidate member for the Party, depending on the age of the leader, he realizes the need to insure a demonstrated loyalty

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[163]G. Salmanov, "Mastery of Training Methodology by Officers," trans. for USA, Military Herald, no. 12-75, pp. 4-5.

[164]P. Gorman, "How to Win Outnumbered," USA Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC), 8 January 1974. (Xeroxed.) (MSS).

[165]M. Fainsod, How Russia is Ruled (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), pp. 490-496. In his book, Fainsod notes the friction generated by the conflict of the two subjects and how the zampolit can report the political situation through the Main Political Administration chain of command. The commander knows of this reporting system and of this perceived party loyalty on his military advancement.

to the party. Yet, at the same time, this training must be balanced by the requirement to succeed in military subjects and strive for an outstanding unit award and for a quota of specialists of various ranks.

Salmanov notes elsewhere in his article that the training system is overworked and has problems. Apparently both commanders and political organs are either unaware of or ignore the need to improve the methodology. Simplification and slackness are permitted in exercises, little or no attention is devoted to maneuvers, and firing is done on ranges where the target position is known in advance.[166] The dependence on one man for the entire operation, be it at company or battalion level, is underscored in further comments concerning initiative and field training exercises.

The second part of the officer training (and maybe the area which portends the greatest training weakness) is the dichotomy over the use of initiative. Col. Gen. Ivanov, Commander-in-Chief, Southern Group of Forces (SGF), writes that the greatest disservice that can be placed upon the professional honor of an officer is to accuse him of failing to display the required degree of initiative. When such an expression appears in a fitness report, it implies that he is unable to perform in battle as an organizer and leader.[167]

At the opposite extreme is the reaction of a first lieutenant, who upon being asked about initiative, replied, "What initiative

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[166]Salmanov, pp. 2-3.

[167]B. Ivanov, "If a Plan is Adopted or an Order is Issued," trans. for USA, Military Herald, no. 1-75, pp. 68-69.

can we talk about? . . . The range of our operations was defined by the combined arms commander, and no deviation was allowed.[168]

The two examples present a real dichotomy in the training of the junior officers found at battlaion and below and represent a major weakness in the training of officers who will be commanding units involved in meeting engagement. John Erickson notes in one of his articles the contradiction between initiative and strict conformity which indicates a commander's lack of confidence in his subordinates.[169] Certainly a lack of confidence in a commander's ability to make proper judgments portends trouble for the required coordination. This would be particularly true for a battalion commander whose battalion is involved in a meeting engagement as a result of being the advance guard of a first echelon regiment. Yet, numerous incidents can be found in which initiative is sacrificed for discipline.

From an historical perspective, Raymond Garthoff, in his book Soviet Military Doctrine, notes that German accounts of World War II suggest a significant lack of initiative on the part of Soviet officers.[170] More current examples of this lack of initiative can be found in numerous articles of the Military Herald as typified by

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[168]A. Sedykh, "There are no Instructions for Initiative," trans. for USA, Military Herald, no. 7-75, p. 134.

[169]J. Erickson, "The Training of the Soviet Soldier," Journal of the Royal United Services Institute for Defense Studies 116 (December 1971), p. 46.

[170]R. Garthoff, Soviet Military Doctrine (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1953), p. 213.

the following quotes. From the commander of the Rocket Troops comes the comment, "Therefore, in training exercises more initiative should be accorded platoon leaders and battery commanders . . . "[171] This can be countered by the Head of the Main Staff of the Ground Troops who writes, "The daily routine is the law of military life . . . The least deviation from the demands of the regulations can be the cause of gross violations."[172] Finally, the Commander-in-Chief of Ground Forces seems to contradict himself in one paragraph when he writes, " . . . the commander is called upon to create an imaginative enthusiasm," and tempers the call by adding, "and be guided by state interest in matters large and small . . . "[173]

This listing could continue, but the volume would only reinforce the existence of the dichotomy of initiative by showing that much is written about the need for the display of initiative, when, in fact, the Soviet military establishment discourages initiative, particularly at the lower spectrum of command.[174]

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[171]G. Peredel'skiy, "The Main Directions in the Training of Rocket and Artillerymen Gunners," trans. for USA, Military Herald, no. 2-74, p. 109.

[172]Yakushin, p. 10.

[173]Pavlovskiy, p. 9.

[174]This dichotomy on the use of initiative seems particularly noticeable in the peacetime force. In a wartime situation, there might be some improvement, but there is a question as to whether the war will last long enough for the improvements to be learned and applied. In most issues of Military Herald, there are examples of acts of initiative on the part of individual soldiers during World War II. There is a trend of thought existing in United States analytical circles which indicates this lack of initiative weakens command and control at division and below. At army and higher level, there is adequate display of initiative. Phillip Karber, in his articles "The Soviet Anti-tank Debate", certainly alludes to this weakness and the level of command where it is a problem area.

Therefore, in a meeting engagement, as portrayed in the scenario created in Chapter I, the battalion commander is faced with a fundamental dilemma. In a march column, he is far enough forward (approximately twenty-five kilometers) of the regiment's/division's main body to have to make timely decisions as to the deployment and conduct of the motorized rifle battalion and its attached units. When all activities go according to plan, the battalion is organized and equipped to give a credible performance. However, how often is the initial plan free from modification as the battle progresses? When modifications have to be introduced, the battalion commander is in trouble. Because of the heavy responsibilities placed on the battalion commander and the increasing complexity of control caused by sophisticated weapons and the large number of attached units, the battalion commander, perhaps more than any other commander, will be hard pressed just to follow the plan, let alone show initiative. All will wait for the motorized rifle battalion commander because he is the one with all responsibility. Much the same can be said about the use of initiative and bold action on the part of the commander. Having never been allowed to show any initiative on the training field, why is he suddenly expected to do so in battle? It is not likely to be done, at least initially.[175]

Here it should be mentioned that there is the possibility that the Soviets do not intend for any initiative to be displayed, at

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[175]R. Hammel, "Lack of Initiative and Independence: A Weakness in the Soviet Officer Corps," Fort Leavenworth, February, 1977. (Xeroxed) (MSS).

least at lower levels of command. The void created by the lack of initiative might be filled by the mass of troops and equipment. However, such a possibility is not likely to be the case, since if initiative were not desired, the issue would never be raised in publications such as the Military Herald, or at least not to the extent that it is.

B. Enlisted Training

The Soviet Army's attitude toward their enlisted troops has been summarized in an excellent statement by Maj. R. Frasche when he writes, " . . . many junior officers do not properly utilize their NCOs, that is, they assume leadership in everything, large or small, command individual soldiers, suggest ready-made decisions to the sergeants, and attempt to do everything themselves."[176]

The theme of enlisted training is rote memory and no independent action. There are articles in Military Herald in which the training of soldiers and noncommissioned officers (NCOs) is discussed. While one may discuss the attention being devoted to the creative and intense training,[177] many more articles will be found which imply simplified training conditions.[178]

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[176]DDI-1100-77-76, The Soviet Motorized Rifle Company, p. 40.

[177]G. Moiseev, "The Effectiveness of Tactical Training," trans. for USA, Military Herald, no. 6-74, p. 109.

[178]Peredel'skiy, p. 112. Other examples of this simplification include S. Bulyzhkin, "Preparation Fire of the Antiaircraft Podrazdeleniye," trans. for USA, Military Herald, no. 6-76; A. Bessarab, "High Efficiency for Driving Classes," trans. for USA, Military Herald, no. 6-76; G. Salmanov, "Improve Training of Sergeants," trans. for USA, Military Herald, no. 8-76; and _____, "Increase the Cohesiveness of Small Podrazdeleniye," trans. for USA, Military Herald, no. 5-76.

It is a recognized fact that over the years the Soviet Army has had to train a number of soldiers who were not particularly mechanically minded. As their economy and living standards have improved, so has the caliber of their new recruits. However, the training institution has not changed as rapidly; and, to some extent, training methods are outdated. Officers assigned to the United States Military Liaison Mission accredited to the Group of Soviet Forces, Germany (GSFG), often speak of seeing soldiers standing around while out at the training sites. The training seems to be done in a rotating style from one instructional area to another where an inordinate amount of time is devoted to the very basics of the tactics and skills. The troops become bored and lose even more interest in learning.[179]

In an effort to receive the unit award and reach the training goal, the unit commander will often insure training is done under very simple conditions. In addition, the squad or platoon selected to represent the unit will be filled with the most skilled soldiers. Often, when all troops have to compete, the pencil score satisfies the requirement.[180] Where this kind of training is conducted, a writer in Military Herald illustrates the results. "Teachers . . . checked on this. The results indicated eighty percent of the trainees could not overcome the three most difficult obstacles, ten percent

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[179]For those who have access to the publication, the Special Research Detachment has assembled a multi-volume work, Soviet Tank Crew Training, done in 1975/76 and classified CONFIDENTIAL, which delves in considerable depth into the training of the tank crew.

[180]In many cases, grades recorded have no actual relationship to that score actually obtained, except by accident, according to a former Soviet soldier.

violated the rules at all points, and only ten percent succeeded in getting a high score."[181]

In an article elsewhere in Military Herald, an incident is related in which a lieutenant had scored his troops even though no test had been given. When questioned as to where the scores were obtained, his defense was limited to the statement that he knew his men.[182] If this kind of a problem is not a source of concern, it is doubtful if these articles would ever be published in writings available for widespread Soviet consumption.

Therefore, in the meeting engagement, the NCOs, not trained to function as leaders, will not likely do so under the stress of the battle. Certainly, where the officers are present, there will be a hesitancy to do anything without being told.

C. Unit Training

Again referring to various conversations with former members of the United States Military Liaison Mission, the impression is gained that the Soviet Army units do a great deal of unit training in the field. The question to be answered is how good is this unit training? Apparently, the answer depends on both the source and the particular facet of training being discussed.

In an article entitled "The Battalion at the Training Center," the author writes that the conduct of training sessions at the

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[181] N. Bal'shem, "Driving Over Obstacles and Through Narrow Gaps," trans. for USA, Military Herald, no. 12-75, p. 119.

[182] V. Postriganov, "How They Achieved Success," trans. for USA, Military Herald, no. 12-75, p. 47.

battalion level with the units going out to the training centers permits the best utilization of the training process.[183] The realization of this author and others like him is that troop training in the field makes the training more effective and of better quality. Probably for the most part, this is correct. However, there remain incidents in which serious deficiencies exist in the unit training, which once again reflect on the role of the units in a meeting engagement. In fact, Col. Gen. I. Ivanov characterizes the field training this way:

> It would be frivolous to maintain that deficiencies in field training have been eliminated throughout. To this very day individual officers fail to struggle persistently to improve training quality, tolerate simplifications and indulgences, and conduct exercises at times on a low level, running through combat operations according to a plan completely worked out in advance.[184]

Note the author does not question the amount of time in the field engaged in unit training, but rather he is concerned about how it is done. What has been summarized can be found individually in various articles as indicated by these examples:

> Experience gained . . . shows the individual commanders . . . often reduce everything to stereotyped orders concerning the operation.[185]

> Often firing is done by the best riflemen and not the entire platoon . . . Targets often come in the same sequence and officers and NCOs coach so as to get high scores.[186]

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[183] N. Karabut, "The Battalion at the Training Center," trans. for USA, Military Herald, no. 6-75, p. 103.

[184] B. Ivanov, "Skill is Forged on the Field," trans. for USA, Military Herald, no. 1-76, p. 65.

[185] _____, "Improving Organization for Combat," trans. for USA, Military Herald, no. 10-75, p. 6.

[186] I. Krepyshev, "Imaginatively Train Troops in Fire Exercise," trans. for USA, Military Herald, no. 11-75, p. 175.

> Commanders do not teach gunners to engage at longer ranges because the scores will be lower.[187]
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> At artillery practice some commanders pamper the young officers. In an attempt to obtain high grades, the officer is placed under easy conditions.[188]
>
> Combat training experience has revealed that . . . commanders are unaware of the true status of these subunits, (second echelons and reserves) . . . they often completely forget about them. As a result they often lag behind during a battle, communications with them is lost and finally when a requirement exists for introducing them into the battle, they are tardy in moving out to the appropriate line.[189]
>
> . . . too many officers, not thinking, using poor tactics because of notional enemy.[190]
>
> There still are instances when units (antiaircraft) arrive at the firing positions long before the appearance of planes in the air. They slowly deploy into a battle formation. The readiness of the physical stage for firing is checked several times and, furthermore, young commanders are placed by officers.[191]

These examples should be tempered somewhat by the conclusion that there are obviously units which do well in unit training because the commander is properly organized.[192] There seems to be no

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[187] Ibid., p. 178.

[188] V. Ivanov, "Battery Commanders Must be Trained," trans. for USA, Military Herald, no. 3-74, p. 129.

[189] V. Onisyuk, "New Manual on Tactical Training," trans. for USA, Military Herald, no. 11-73, p. 21.

[190] N. Akimov, "The Value of Foresight," trans. for USA, Military Herald, no. 1-76, p. 67.

[191] V. Pashkovskiy, "Fire While Carrying out a Complex Mission," trans. for USA, Military Herald, no. 1-75, p. 157.

[192] Karabut, pp. 104-106. In his article, Col. Karabut uses the tank company of a battalion commanded by Lt. Col. Kirienko to demonstrate a proper way of organizing the unit training. He writes, "The battalion was allotted three days . . . When drawing up the plan for the sessions in the training center, Lt. Col. M. Kirienko provided for carrying out the following tasks: conduct combat firing of the platoons (fifty per cent day and fifty percent night),

question of the various units involved in the meeting engagement spending a great deal of time in the field. What becomes apparent is that not a great deal of that time includes tactical training.

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check the coordination of the platoons in offensive and defensive aspects of tactical training, work out norms for the personnel of the platoon for OMP (weapons of mass destruction) and defense from them and for engineer and technical training, and to carry out among the members of the platoon an exercise in driving combat vehicles.

The plan also provided for throwing grenades, completing a firing exercise with automatic rifles, conducting a cross-country three kilometers charge while firing their individual weapons, and sprinting for six kilometers after completing all training sessions and when returning to the location of the chast'.

An examination in more detail of the content of one-day sessions revealed the following: The first tank company under the command of Lt. V. Brusov occupied three training sites. The first platoon trained at the first site. Here the chief of the chemical service of the chast' checked the way the tankers satisfied the norms of OMP.

At the second--the chief of the engineer service of the chast' checked the second platoon in engineer training, and the third site, the third platoon practiced the throwing of combat grenades. Here the inspector was one of the officers of the chast'.

The exchange of training sites took place in the following sequence. The first platoon went to the site of the second--to that of the third, and third--to that of the first.

The second tank company under the command of Sen. Lt. V. Lobov occupied the fourth through sixth training sites. At the fourth, the chief of staff of the battalion checked the first platoon for tactical training on a model of the terrain. The second platoon conducted subcaliber firing on the fifth training site (the inspector was the battalion commander). The third platoon ran the three kilometers cross-country charge while firing. The sports organizer of the battalion who was not on the regular staff calculated the results.

The third tank company under the command of Sen. Lt. N. Alenin occupied the seventh through ninth training sites. At the seventh the first tank platoon carried out an exercise in driving combat vehicles. The deputy commander of the battalion for technical affairs did the checking. At the eighth, an officer of the chast' staff checked the tankers of the second platoon. They were working at the norms for technical training. At the ninth, the third platoon fulfilled tactical norms on the equipment. Here the inspector was the deputy chief of staff of the chast'."

For troops such as those stationed in East Germany, the lack of tactical training may be influenced by the lack of nearby adequate facilities. There, many units are seen moving from barracks to field locations; but once moved, the training is often oriented more toward the individual rather than the unit. Where unit training is conducted in a tactical simulation, the weakness caused by individual deficiences becomes apparent, and the unit does not appear to train well to do the job it is supposed to do.

D. Combined Arms Training

The success of the meeting engagement is greatly dependent upon the success of the various units belonging to and attached to the motorized rifle battalion and how they work with each other. A review of the available material reveals few instances of a combined arms meeting engagement that lacks deficiencies. Once again, it seems appropriate to defend such a statement by saying that the Military Herald would not contain articles of criticism unless senior commanders found the various illustrations used were prompted by major deficiencies in the training of the troops.

Military Herald contains a number of articles relating to combined arms training, and again, personal accounts of those who have had the opportunity to observe the Soviet forces in training indicate a large amount of combined arms training. What is missing, however, is any indication of how often the units repeat the training. It would seem likely, though it cannot be supported, that units train with the units they are likely to be associated with in combat situations. Therefore, a particular motorized rifle battalion would

train with the same artillery, tank, or engineer unit so as to become a more cohesive working force.

In any event, regardless of how the units are combined, the same problems are encountered enough times to be described in the literature. The one theme that comes out most forcefully is the failure of the motorized rifle battalion to plan in sufficient time the manner in which the attached units are to be employed; therefore, they are often left behind or committed too late.

Maj. Gen. Bogdanov of the Turkestan Military District writes that as a result of inadequate prior planning " . . . matters of supporting the unit with artillery fire . . . are often omitted, and infantry combat vehicles and combat engineer units are not always employed intelligently."[193]

Gen. Pavlovskiy describes an incident in the Kiev Military District by writing " . . . march training practiced during daylight was not conducive to secrecy . . . insufficient study was made of the terrain which caused vehicles to lag behind, traffic control points worked in a slipshod way, and the engineers could not cope . . . "[194]

Cd. Gen. Grinkevich, Chief of Staff, Group of Soviet Forces, Germany (GSFG), describes an incident in which the commander forgot the principle of combined arms combat; therefore, the actions of the attacking forces were not coordinated in time, location or objective.[195]

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[193]A. Bogdanov, "Coordination in Combat," trans. for USA, Military Herald, no. 9-75, p. 57.

[194]Pavlovskiy, p. 6.

[195]D. Grinkevich, "Control of Troops at the Level of Modern Demand," trans. for USA, Military Herald, no. 4-76, p. 80.

Maj. Gen. Akimov writes of a demonstration in which the troops were so successful they became careless. In their carelessness, the commander of the motorized rifle battalion incorrectly appraised the situation and had major errors in his march plan. The consequences of such action might have been overcome had not the commander also failed to organize reconnaissance and send out a security detachment.[196]

Finally, one more incident applies, which is an excellent example of the results of poor combined arms training. The battalion commander was given ninety minutes to turn his unit nearly ninety degrees and make a thirty kilometer march.[197] Instead of being able to do so on the move, the commander stopped the unit, and spent forty minutes issuing the necessary instructions before attempting to make a combined arms attack on the flank of the enemy. This illustration points out a major weakness in Soviet field training, and that is the fear of making a mistake. In order to preclude the mistake, the commander becomes extremely cautious. Maj. A. McMullan, in his report Soviet Tactics: The Meeting Engagement, indicates there is likely to be at least an hour between the time of the reconnaissance element's initial contact with the enemy and the decision to initiate a meeting engagement.[198] However, he then says once the decision has been made, the initiative of subordinates is critical

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[196]Akimov, p. 67.

[197]Grinkevich, pp. 79-80.

[198]DDI-1100-143-76, Soviet Tactics: The Meeting Engagement, p. 6.

to the launching of the attack.[199] Thus if the commander is so concerned about making a mistake that he cannot become involved in critical decision making, the meeting engagement is not going to be successful.[200]

E. Training Summary

The Soviet Army's offensive is built to a large degree around the principle of speed and, thus, the all-important rate of advance. In principle, the reinforced motorized rifle battalion's training appears to be in tune with the offensive concept. In practice, that training falls considerably short of the goal. Initiative is so stifled as to preclude independent action, which appears to be a

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[199]Ibid.

[200]In a recent symposium at Fort Leavenworth (Command and General Staff College, Symposium on Officer Responsibility in Training, 19-20 April 1977) some eighty discussion groups selected key training issues for discussion. Of the ten key issues most discussed, seven were:

(1) Inability of field grade officers to manage resources.
(2) Commanders have no program for development of subordinate leaders and trainers.
(3) Unit commanders oversupervise rather than take a chance of failing a test or looking bad.
(4) Junior officers and NCOs weak in training management skills.
(5) Personnel turbulence and shortage of qualified NCOs.
(6) Training realism weakness exists.
(7) Mental capacity of soldiers.

These seven issues are used to show a comparison of the training deficiencies of the Soviet motorized rifle battalion and its attached forces as compared to the training deficiencies the students of the 1976-77 CGSC class perceived as existing in the United States Army.

There are many conclusions which can be made from such a comparison. For this paper, it is sufficient to suggest once again that armies do not train very well, not even the armies of the world's superpowers.

keystone of the meeting engagement. Unit training, to include combined arms training, is designed to meet a training norm. The pressure for that success is so strong that commanders will often train the unit as if that norm were the ultimate goal instead of tactical proficiency on the battlefield.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

A. Summary

This paper on the motorized rifle battalion in the meeting engagement focused on three questions:

What is the doctrine for the employment?

Does it train to comply with the doctrine?

How well does it train?

The three questions were addressed and the research was conducted against a scenario setting on the North German Plains in which the battalion was the lead battalion of a regimental march column upon the initiation of hostilities. The evaluation of that research permits the following responses to the questions posed.

The doctrine for the employment of the motorized rifle battalion in the meeting engagement can be determined with a reasonable degree of accuracy. The battalion commander envisions meeting the enemy force often in an unexpected manner in which the battle will be violent, subject to sudden change, and last only a few hours. During the course of the battle, the commander will attempt to seize and hold the initiative in order to defeat the enemy, even a numerically superior one. The battalion acting as an advance guard will be reinforced with six additional units (armor, artillery, air defense,

antitank, engineer and NBC), thus increasing the personnel from 440 to approximately 940.

The battalion commander will have his forces spread approximately twenty-five kilometers along the selected route and divided into a reconnaissance element, an advance detachment, the main body, and both rear and flank guards. The reconnaissance element will be organized and equipped to provide advance warning of both approaching enemy and impending engineer/NBC obstacles. The advance detachment is organized to conduct a security mission and stop the advance of the lead elements of the enemy force. The main body of the battalion contains the preponderance of the fire power and is capable of advancing to meet the enemy in a frontal or flanking attack. Unless stopped by terrain obstacles or the enemy, the motorized rifle battalion commander will attempt to conduct a flanking attack with the forces from the main body, while the advance detachment serves as a base of fire.

The goal of the reinforced motorized rifle battalion is to destroy the enemy force in sufficient time to prevent a delay in the rate of advance of the following regimental force. Failing to do that, hopefully it will succeed in the secondary mission of forcing the enemy to deploy and halt its forward movement.

Generally, the training the motorized rifle battalion does to prepare for the meeting engagement follows the doctrine for that form of offensive action.[201] Various articles written in the Military Herald

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[201]Examples of the training conducted can be found in the following articles: I. Vasko and A. Tyshechenko, "In the Interest of a Forward Detachment," trans. for USA, Military Herald, no. 5-74, pp. 207-211; K. Serikbayev and Yu. Kontsevoy, "A Company as an Advance Party," trans. for USA, Military Herald, no. 12-74, pp. 147-155; and V. Kokhanov, pp. 95-103.

describing training activities indicate organizations and formations similar to those organizations and formations described in the publications designed to present the doctrine.[202] The most frequent grouping of arms noted in the literature on training includes the motorized rifle, artillery, and tank units. Articles indicating the combined training of the antitank, air defense, and engineer/NBC troops with the motorized rifle battalion are considerably more scarce. There are at least three possibilities for this apparent lack of joint training: (1) perhaps the doctrine has been misinterpreted, but that does not seem likely; (2) perhaps the training areas are so crowded that there is neither room nor time to exercise with these elements, (3) or quite possibly, there is not the emphasis on the training of the battalion with the smaller attached units. In the accounts of the training conducted between the major units of this reinforced battalion, the most frequently observed abnormality is the attaching of an artillery battery instead of an artillery battalion to the motorized rifle battalion. This variance may well be explained by the size of the training area available to the unit involved. Frequently, in the Group of Soviet Forces, Germany, the local training areas are quite small because of the crowded population near the unit's location. Therefore, when articles depicting an artillery battery attached to a motorized rifle battalion appear in literature, it may be that the writer is suggesting such an

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[202]Examples of these doctrinal publications include Garbuz. The MRB on the March; Garbuz, The MRB on the March and in the Meeting Engagement; Savkin, Operational Art; Belokin and Kalayda, Engineer Support of the MRB; Concannon, The Soviet Concept of the Meeting Engagement.

arrangement is an alternative training method.

Though the personnel of the motorized rifle battalion train to comply with the doctrine for the conduct of the meeting engagement, most reports indicate that they do not train very well. In terms of leadership, there are two problems. First, there is the idea of one-man command in which neither authority nor responsibility is delegated. Consequently, few subordinates do anything until told to do so by a superior. Nor does the superior usually want anything done until he so directs. Secondly, there is a dichotomy in the training of all leaders. The division is over the term initiative. One thought is that initiative is allowed, and therefore, taught. The other thought is that no initiative is allowed. The latter thought seems to be the correct one, at least at battalion level. Separated from the regiment by a geographical distance and possibly isolated by communications pitfalls, it would seem the battalion commander would be a much better leader if allowed to display initiative. Noncommissioned officers and soldiers, as a general rule, improve in quality as each year passes. However, the poor quality of the instruction and the techniques used tend to make the training very boring and inefficient.

The fire power available to the battalion is formidable in terms of both direct and indirect artillery, tank, and antitank fires. Artillery fire, considered to be quite good when viewed en masse, seems to have some shortcomings when viewed at the battalion level firing at unplanned targets. These shortcomings--lengthy time to initiate fire and poor adjustment of fire--seem to result from the apparent lack of an artillery forward observer with the maneuver forces.

The battalion in the meeting engagement is expected to maintain a high rate of advance. However, in order to demonstrate the capability to do so, training is made rather simple and few obstacles are placed in the way. Such artificial conditions may very well give a false sense of success to the battalion. Field training does seem to be conducted often enough to allow the units to practice the required maneuvers. Both tank and motorized units train to conduct the expected on and off-road movements needed by the reinforced battalion in both the march and meeting engagement.

B. Conclusions

This study was designed to isolate a very small segment of the Soviet Army performing a particular function--a motorized rifle battalion in a meeting engagement--and to provide a better understanding of that segment and the way in which it operates. The paper has in no way attempted to focus on one particular battalion, but rather represents a type unit. In an actual situation, it would be unusual to find all the characteristics described in this paper in any one of the 1,132 motorized rifle battalions in the Soviet Army.[203]

Considering the large number of battalions in the Soviet Army, there will be battalions that are curve busters at one end of the curve or the other. Therefore, combat commanders and their intelligence officers should realize the descriptions and insights provided serve only as a guide to understanding the actions of a potential foe.

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[203]This total is based on 110 motorized rifle divisions and 49 tank divisions (Military Balance, 1975-76, p. 8) and nine motorized rifle battalions per motorized rifle division and three motorized rifle battalions per tank division (HB550-2, pp. 2-1, 2-2, 2-9, and 2-10).

Command and Control

The span of control for the motorized rifle battalion commander is too large to be controlled effectively. Normally, the battalion commander would have six subordinates; but by attaching the six additional units, the total is now twelve. The total size of the force has more than doubled. If a cross-attachment procedure were utilized, the commander could lose one motorized rifle company commander when he gains a tank company commander. Because he only gains, he is presented with the situation shown in Figure 8 in which the force attacks with two companies abreast; and the scheme of maneuver has to somehow accommodate a third commander.

The term one-man command (in this context, meaning centralized control) can be used to describe the situation whereby no one in a unit moves without direct instruction from the commander.[204] In an effort to insure that only he commands, the motorized rifle battalion commander apparently retains not only all responsibility, but all authority as well. Such a policy may well account for the numerous incidents in descriptions of training exercises in which the commander reacted too slowly or failed to employ a force in a timely manner. The reason for such a failure may simply be the inability of the commander to be everywhere at once.

Little or no initiative is allowed the various commanders from the battalion commander downward. Much is written about the creative thought that is taught; when, in fact, very little display of creativity is tolerated. This seems particularly true the further down the chain

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[204]See f.n. no. 159.

of command one happens to be. Under current training conditions, the various commanders in the battalion, as well as the motorized rifle battalion commander himself, are not allowed to make any significant decisions requiring judgment. Thus, in battle when the battalion is well forward of the regiment and the communications-electronics condition makes radio communications practically impossible, the battalion commander may find it difficult to seize or hold the initiative.

The communication practiced has both its good and bad points. The Soviet units apparently do an excellent job enforcing radio silence. Because they do, the forces learn to use a number of non-electronic signal devices. This method of training may assist in overcoming the difficulties of operating through the communication-electronic environment on the battlefield. Realizing their dependence on the signal devices, NATO forces should consider using volumes of smoke and high explosive artillery to force Soviet forces to keep vehicles hatches closed. Where the radio is used, there may well be detrimental effect on command and control due to the need to wait for all instructions to be provided before undertaking any action.

Maneuver

The reinforced motorized rifle battalion is well organized to advance ahead of the main body and attempts to clear the route of advance. Its major combat forces move on modern equipment designed to operate on both a nuclear and a conventional battlefield. The BMP has no equal at present. A new generation tank, the T-72, is being introduced into the force, as well as new self-propelled 122mm artillery. The attached antitank capability is also quite mobile and

and contains much fire power.

The distance this battalion operates ahead of the main body may entail significant risk. It has support weapons, but these may be too few in number to protect the force against a strong antitank force or an air attack. The force seems particularly vulnerable to the air attack. There are only four air defense weapons (there are, of course, the 7.62mm and 12.7mm machine guns on certain vehicles); and the battalion might count on little support from regiment because it is operating near the maximum range of the SA-6 which might be attached to the regiment. It is also operating at the outer limits of the artillery pieces contained in the regimental artillery group (RAG).

The BMPs of the three motorized rifle companies create difficulties in employment. They are superior to the tanks and artillery in both speed and maneuverability, but not built with the armor plating of the tanks. Writers within the doctrinal development areas of the Soviet Army have considered allowing these BMPs to move independently of the armor and artillery.[205] However, as the noted author Jac Weller once pointed out, "The BMP is not a tank; and until Soviet junior officers realize such a fact, an unacceptable number will be lost in combat."[206]

The physical relationship of this reinforced motorized rifle

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[205]Typical of such writers is Lt. Gen. Bukharenko. Bukharenko, pp. 103-104.

[206]Mr. Weller's comment was made to this author in February, 1974, following Mr. Weller's visit to Israel after the Arab-Israeli War of October, 1973.

battalion to the reconnaissance forces from both division and regiment seems to provide little warning to the battalion. This conclusion is reached based on the absence of any known communications between the reconnaissance elements and their respective headquarters which can be monitored by the radios in the battalion. In addition, no indication of such a monitoring effort was noted in description of the various exercises contained in available literature. If reconnaissance reports have to be passed to the parent unit and then down the chain of command to the battalion, the battalion will be upon the enemy or obstacle before the reconnaissance report arrives.

Fire Power

The battalion contains a tremendous amount of fire power, but possibly insufficient fire control mechanism. The attachment of an entire artillery battalion, up to a BRDM antitank battery and a platoon equivalent of air defense weapons, places a tremendous burden on a battalion staff that normally operates only two SPG-9 antitank weapons and six 120mm mortars. If the battalion were going to attack a defensive line and had the time to make detailed plans against stationary enemy units, this additional fire power could be handled easier. However, since both sides are moving and fire is more of an on-call arrangement than pre-planned, the motorized rifle battalion commander and staff are overtaxed to control this fire adequately.

This lack of control is further compounded by the lack of a forward observer from the artillery dedicated to each maneuver company. The battery or artillery battalion commander apparently acts as the forward observer. Command functions may not be properly carried out

under such conditions, or so it would appear.

Finally, the artillery fire is needed on a timely basis against targets of opportunity; and such does not seem possible. The Soviet artillery force apparently does not practice a hip-shot method to get off quick fire. If such a conclusion is correct, the United States artillery should be able to fire first for greater effectiveness.

If the antitank forces attached to the battalion have been depicted correctly, there may be a problem of overkill. The regimental commander is not likely to allow all of his available antitank assets to be committed by the battalion, thereby leaving himself with no BRDMs to influence the battle. The decision by the regimental commander will be influenced by the presence of the BMPs. The thirty-one BMPs in the battalion used throughout this paper negate the need for large amounts of additional weapons from the antitank battery. On the other hand, if this advance guard in a regimental march were a motorized rifle battalion equipped with the older APC models, the regimental commander might attach the entire antitank battery to the motorized rifle battalion.

Training

The training tests are often simplified in order to insure a high grade. There is considerable pressure on each unit to score well in the ever-present socialist competition--a form of stakhanovism present in the armed forces even today. Under the pressure to exceed the norms, the unit commander will insure the established training does not require his subordinates to take risks that might lead to

failure. Instead, the learning curve is maintained on a moderate, but safe, incline.

Far too much simulation is allowed to present a realistic setting for the meeting engagement. In an effort to prevent wear and tear of the equipment, small caliber inserts are placed in the main gun barrels of tanks, artificial models are fabricated, and simulated motion is applied. In an effort to attain the desired rate of advance, engineer obstacles are played down; and where they are introduced, the terrain and the technique needed to overcome the obstacles are so well known that realism is not possible.

Training methodology stresses repetitiveness to the point of boredom. The small details are practiced over and over. This may be a way of overcoming the apparent lack of initiative and creative thought.

Soviet soldiers spend a great deal of time with their equipment, both in the garrison and in the field. This often gives the impression of training when, in fact, it is frequently very routine and inefficient maintenance that is under way. Additionally, a considerable amount of time is devoted to driving and road marches which does not really improve training under combat conditions.

Finally, one of the better features in Soviet ground forces training is the NBC training. The forces have a great deal of NBC equipment, and they train with the equipment in an NBC environment.

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