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## COMMUNIST AREA

● USSR

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### MILITARY MANPOWER DEBATE REMAINS OPEN

A recent article in Krasnaia zvezda,<sup>1</sup> the Soviet military daily, indicates anew that some Soviet officers have serious misgivings about the effects of past and/or future reductions in the number of the USSR's armed forces. Written by G. Miftiev, a lieutenant-colonel in the reserve and a candidate of economic science, its general subject is the relationship of manpower resources, both civilian and uniformed, to the strategic revolution that has transformed military planning in the past two decades. The article is one of a series that has delved, since the turn of the year, into the "revolution in military affairs."

After a certain beating around the bush that seems to be characteristic of most military, as opposed to many economic publicists, the author establishes that 1) the technological developments of the atomic missile age have by no means reduced the importance of human resources for the preparation and conduct of war; and 2) in contrast to earlier periods, the present state of the art requires that material and human resources required for general war be deployed before hostilities begin. So far, this constitutes mere repetition of well-worn postulates of Soviet military doctrine.

As he begins to elaborate, however, Miftiev's tone becomes increasingly critical. A pivotal issue, he points out, is the "rational distribution of personnel contingents between the front and the rear, between the armed forces and the economy in conditions of thermonuclear war." How this matter is

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1) 4 June 1965.

decided depends to a large extent on the qualitative as well as the quantitative composition of the armed forces in peace- and war-time." [Emphasis Supplied]. He continues:

In the press the role of the fire-power of the armed forces is often underscored; it is said that military power is determined first of all by the quality of arms and not by the numerical magnitude of the army. Certainly, in modern conditions the technical equipment of troops has radically improved. However, new arms and military technology in no way diminish the demand for people, for manpower. In order to secure a high-level defense capability for the country and successfully to conduct war, it is necessary to possess a quantitatively adequate number of combatants.

As envisaged by Soviet doctrine, general war will (from the start) encompass many theaters and will be spread over enormous areas of the globe. For the conduct of war in these conditions, the Soviet Union will require "very numerous and varied aggregates of troops, huge human reserves, and enormous material resources."

Miftiev displays an unusual forthrightness in explaining this need for large numbers of men under arms. A characteristic argument of the "modernists", or those who favor reduced manpower and more advanced equipment, has been that the new technology allows fewer men to do more damage. But to this argument, the author poses the caveat which troubles all soldiers who must plan for nuclear war:

It is completely understood that the application in a future war of rocket-nuclear arms will be accompanied by significant losses of manpower. In addition, the possibilities for replacing these losses will, all in all, be narrowed. Thus the problem of organizing reserve formations and replenishing the ranks becomes extremely complicated.

The required number of troops, in short, must either be under arms when hostilities commence or be capable of muster at extremely short notice.

Moreover, the author points out, the technical revolution has enormously expanded the requirement for service personnel, and the relative weight of combat forces in the total composition of the military establishment has correspondingly decreased.

Thus X-number of men in uniform does not mean nearly the number of men in the line that it use to.

While Miftiev offers no explicit judgment as to the size of the armed forces required by the Soviet Union, he leaves the reader with little doubt that he regards their present level as somewhat too low. Looking to the West, he observes:

It is necessary to mention that the imperialist countries, particularly the USA, already today maintain very large armies. Over the past twenty-five years the numerical magnitude of the American armed forces has risen by at least a factor of eight. Other members of the North Atlantic bloc also maintain armies of significant size. The American secretary of defense, R. McNamara, boasts that NATO 'maintains under arms more military manpower than the Soviet Union and its European allies combined'.

After this rather striking quotation, the author makes no effort to reestablish a balance, by arguing, for example, that Soviet troops are man-for-man better than NATO's, or that Soviet peaceful intentions are reflected in a lower level of military manpower. He just states a military fact which, in the light of his other observations, he clearly views with discomfort. He concludes:

In conditions of constant threat that war will be unleashed by the imperialists, our Party is required in the construction of the armed forces to adhere to the principle of a regular cadre army which in its composition, size, and preparation would be able from the outset of war rapidly to repel an attack and to destroy the aggressor.

[Emphasis supplied. The wording here appears to be purposely ambiguous. Rather than say 'our Party adheres to' (priderzhivaetsia), the author says 'is required to adhere to' (vynuzhdena priderzhivat sia), which almost means 'must' or 'ought to'. He also says 'would be able' (mogla by), not 'is able' (mozhet).]

The fact that this particular lieutenant-colonel has voiced a dissenting opinion in the pages of Red Star hardly signifies a ground swell of military opposition to the



budgetary policies of the present Soviet regime. This paper has long served as a sounding board for contention as well as an organ for the official line. It is significant, however, that Brezhnev and Kosygin face the same difficult problems of resource distribution that plagued Khrushchev. In spite of their much-vaunted devotion to "objective" and "scientific" decisions, they are proving no more capable of satisfying every claimant in the defense establishment than was their predecessor.

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