

Document No. 83: Soviet Statement at the Chiefs of General Staff
Meeting in Sofia, June 12–14, 1978

As part of the continuing effort to establish a war time chain of authority and procedures within the Warsaw Pact, Soviet Gen. S.F. Romanov tries to explain to his counterparts why a statute on these matters is needed. His statement starts with a repetition of the standard Soviet view that a future war will be a decisive confrontation between the two systems, that it will most likely be fought with all available weapons and that the goal of the Warsaw Pact side will be complete victory. (By this time NATO had already abandoned that goal in favor of terminating war as quickly and advantageously as possible.) Among other points, Romanov emphasizes the importance of centralizing command in one person—naturally a Soviet officer—who would have the right to issue binding orders. The responsibility of national military commands, he says, is to fulfill operational tasks, secure materiel and provide technical support. As a sign of Moscow's eagerness to satisfy the interests of loyal allies, the Soviets incorporated numerous changes into the final text. The Poles alone reportedly presented as many as 60 amendments for consideration.

[...]

In conformity with the resolution of the Political Consultative Committee, the Committee of the Ministers of Defense of the member-states of the Warsaw Treaty decided in December 1977 [...] to work out draft principles for the Unified Armed Forces of the member-states of the Warsaw Treaty and for their unified command (in war time).

[...]

A comprehensive analysis of the problems of *common defense* [...] leads to the conclusion that a future war, if unleashed by an imperialist aggressor, becomes a pivotal conflict between the classes of the two opposing social systems, the capitalist and the socialist one.

[...]

Most likely, the full arsenal of available means of destruction will be used in such a war.

[...]

In the course of a modern strategic operation, it is possible to successfully counter an aggression by the enemy, to annihilate his main units on the territory of the entire theater of war, while delivering strikes on a wide front, conducting combat operations with all modern components of the armed forces, aggregating efforts concerning goal, place, and time, ensuring their steadfast leadership, and maintaining continuous cooperation. The use of strategic and tactical nuclear weapons can be the main instrument to annihilate the enemy.

Within the Soviet military forces, this new form of strategic action has been elaborated and analyzed for more than 15 years. During these years, a number of strategic command post exercises were conducted and a certain experience was gained. The strategic command post exercise "Zapad 77", which took place under the direction of the minister of defense of the USSR, Marshal of the Soviet Union [Dmitrii] F. Ustinov, and in which operational staffs of all allied armies in the western theater participated, received special importance in this connection. The ministers for national defense, the army generals [Wojciech] Jaruzelski, [Heinz] Hoffmann, and [Martin] Dzur, actively participated in the conduct of the exercise.

[...]

In addition, in the past few years, the Unified Command of the member-states of the Warsaw Treaty has been very busy analyzing the problems of strategic operations in the continental theater of war.

It will suffice to name such exercises as "Shield 76," "Soiuz 77," "Wal-77," "Soiuz 78," and others that have been conducted under the leadership of the supreme commander of the Unified Armed Forces, comrade Marshal of the Soviet Union [Viktor] Kulikov. All of them generated rich material for general and practical conclusions. At present, one can say that the views about goals, character, and methods of leading a strategic operation in a theater of war have emerged in essence. The main tasks of the Unified Armed Forces in a strategic operation in a theater of war are defense against aggression by the enemy, the thwarting of his nuclear strike, achievement of the strategic initiative by destruction of the main groupings of nuclear missiles, ground, tactical air, and naval forces of the adversary in the theater of war, and achievement of complete victory over the enemy.

[...]

It seems appropriate that *the first paragraph* of the draft of the principles in war time should reflect above all the material base, that is, define in what composition and at what time the Unified Armed Forces are at the disposal of the Unified Command.

[...]

We have already stated that a future war will demand the utmost exertion of all military, economic, and spiritual forces of the socialist coalition. Objectively, the conduct of such a war will only be feasible through a single body, equipped with full political, administrative, and military power, that is, through the highest politico-military leadership of the coalition.

Accordingly, the leadership of the Unified Armed Forces in strategic operations in a theater of war has to be centralized and has to be exercised by one person, who is directly responsible to the highest politico-military leadership.

[...]

According to our view, this person should be the supreme commander of the Unified Armed Forces in the Western and Southwestern theaters of war.

[...]

In this context, we must not overlook the high degree of readiness of the leadership bodies and systems of our likely enemy, the NATO forces, which have been developed and functioning for years.

[...]

I merely allow myself to point out that at the regular NATO Council meeting of May 30 and 31 of this year in Washington, NATO's heads of state and government, during their survey of the extensive and long-term program for the increase of armaments in Europe, paid close attention to the enhancement of what they call the command level, coordinated leadership of the allied forces, and improvement in the work of the staffs deployed in Europe.

At the same time, a series of specific recommendations has been accepted for the improvement of the communications and automation systems and particularly for the initiation of the second stage of NATO's comprehensive intelligence system.

[...]

The principle of centralized leadership of the armed forces in a strategic operation implies the right of the supreme commander of the Unified Armed Forces in the theater of war, starting from the moment of his appointment to the official position, to give commands, directives, orders, and instructions, the fulfillment of which is mandatory for all the troops and fleets belonging to the Unified Armed Forces in the theater of war.

In other words, the Supreme Command of the Unified Armed Forces in the theater of war must exercise the immediate and direct leadership of the fronts, the fleets, the separate armies and operational and tactical units, for which it is directly responsible, regardless of which allied state has assigned them to the Unified Armed Forces.

[...]

[Source: VA-01/40363, pp. 90-108, BA-MA. Translated by Christian Nünlist.]