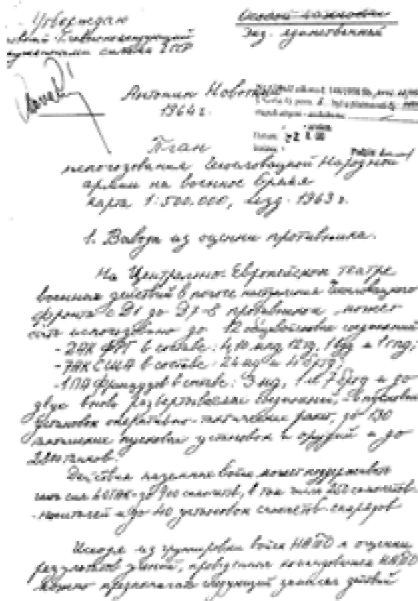


PARALLEL HISTORY PROJECT ON NATO AND THE WARSAW PACT (PHP)

Taking Lyon on the Ninth Day? The 1964 Warsaw Pact Plan for a Nuclear War in Europe and Related Documents



[Detail of the 1964 War Plan]

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This publication is part of a publications series by the Parallel History Project on NATO and the Warsaw Pact (PHP). The PHP provides new scholarly perspectives on contemporary international history by collecting, analyzing, and interpreting formerly secret governmental documents. Since its establishment in 1999, the project has collected thousands of pages of material on security-related issues of the Cold War, published a large number of online documentaries on central issues such as mutual threat perceptions and alliance management, and organized several major international conferences on war planning, intelligence, and intra-bloc tensions. Further information is provided at the PHP Website: www.isn.ethz.ch/php.



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1. *"Planning for the Unplannable", by Vojtech Mastny*

The 1964 Soviet plan for the invasion of western Europe, which inaugurates the PHP website, is the first war plan from the era of the NATO-Warsaw Pact confrontation that has come to light thus far from either side. It is the 'real thing' - the actual blueprint for war at the height of the nuclear era, spelling out in detail the assignments and expectations of the "Czechoslovak Front" of forces of the Soviet coalition.

Earlier American plans have been published, and from the Soviet side we now have at least one earlier plan - the Polish document from 1951, included here for comparison. The PHP has also acquired hundreds of pages of documents on military exercises of the Warsaw Pact - though not yet of NATO - since the 1960s, mainly from the former East German and Czechoslovak archives. Such documents are illustrative of the alternatives that were being considered in anticipation of war, but the plan itself is unique in showing what the command actually wanted to do if war came.

We have further evidence about the thinking that underlay the military planning of both alliances from other sources. Among them, the confidential account of the Soviet military doctrine by the chief of Soviet military intelligence Gen. Petr I. Ivashutin stands out because of its explicitness. Contemporary to the 1964 plan, it was prepared for Marshal Matvei V. Zakharov, at that time the head of the Soviet General Staff Academy. Portions of this revealing document were copied from the Russian military archives by late Gen. Dmitrii Volkogonov and included in his papers subsequently donated by his family to the Library of Congress in Washington.

The Ivashutin's study, whose most important parts are published here for the first time as well, assumed that:

- NATO's defensive preparations were a sham,
- only a swift offensive operation could guarantee success for the Warsaw Pact,
- the operation was feasible regardless of Europe's nuclear devastation,
- technically superior Soviet air defenses could destroy incoming NATO missiles before these could cause unacceptable damage,
- the Soviet Union could prevail in a war because of the West's greater vulnerability to nuclear devastation.

The war plan is introduced and analyzed by PHP associate Petr Luňák, who discovered it in the Central Military Archives in Prague while conducting research there for the Project in February 2000. Added is his interview about it with Col. Karel Štěpánek, who served in the Czechoslovak army's operations room at the time the plan was valid. Comments by other important witnesses of the time have been requested and will be put online as soon as they have been received.

In trying to make sense of these extraordinary relics of the Cold War, today's reader might wonder whether the plan for unleashing a nuclear inferno in Europe could possibly have been meant seriously. What were the chances of its being implemented and what message does it contain for us in our contemporary security environment which, though happily different, still includes a

profusion of nuclear weapons as the Cold War's most durable and disconcerting legacy. The following observations suggest answers to these questions.

How Serious Was the Plan?

There is no reason to doubt that the plan was meant to be implemented in case of war - as were similar U.S. and NATO plans for massive use of nuclear weapons of whose existence we know. The weapons were on hand and the command structure necessary to make them fly, in this instance the Soviet general staff and its subsidiaries, was also in place, ready to push the buttons if the political leadership gave the appropriate signal. Throughout the Cold War, both sides consistently assumed that the action that would trigger the signal would be aggression by the other.

There was an important difference, however, between NATO and Soviet preparations. The Western alliance anticipated fighting mainly on its own territory, with but diversionary strikes behind the advancing enemy forces in order to slow them down and eventually stop them. For its part, the Warsaw Pact envisaged a massive thrust deep into Western Europe after the putative NATO invaders had been quickly brought to a halt, and forced to retreat in disarray.

The fact that the Soviet Union and its allies not only accused NATO publicly of aggressive intentions but also took those intentions for granted in their most secret assessments has been something of a revelation once the archives of the former Warsaw Pact countries began to open their doors as a result of the fall of communism in 1989-91. Their assumption that the war would start with a Western surprise attack was mainly justified in Marxist-Leninist terms by the implacable hostility of an inherently 'imperialistic' capitalist system. This was but one illustration of the sway ideology continued to hold over leaders whom many Westerners wishfully came to regard as 'normal' practitioners of power politics, presiding over a state like any other.

The Soviet generals, however, were no fools. They knew well enough that NATO was preparing for a defense against them. But they were so mesmerized by their still vivid memories of the very nearly successful German surprise attack on their country in 1941 that they could not imagine any other reliable strategy than that of striking at the enemy before he could strike at them. In fairness to them, it should be noted that this was the same strategy NATO was trying to develop to fend off the dreaded Soviet surprise attack, although it never figured out how this could be done without launching a pre-emptive strike, which the alliance was structurally unable to do even if it wanted to. The difference between the two strategies was on the ground - the Soviet unabashedly offensive, the Western unavoidably defensive.

Not only did the Soviet and the Western strategies differ but also the Soviet plans varied at different times. The 1951 plan for Poland, drawn up at a time when Soviet marshal Konstantin K. Rokossovskii served as Poland's minister of defense, differed significantly from the 1964 plan for Czechoslovakia. Ironically at a time when NATO was haunted by the nightmare of armed communist hordes sweeping all but unopposed through Europe, the 1951 plan was unequivocally defensive. Taking Western readiness to invade for granted - by Stalin's lights not a wholly unreasonable retaliation for the invasion of South Korea he had sponsored the year before, especially since advancing Western forces were likely to be received in eastern Europe as liberators - the plan sought to contain rather than exploit the enemy invasion. Its authors had peculiar misconceptions about the Allied forces - their use of the not yet existing West German

army, their amphibious equipment supposedly kept ready ever since the 1944 Normandy landings. The overestimation by each side of the other's capabilities was remarkable though understandable, given the limitations of intelligence gathering and the extreme mutual hostility at the time.

If Stalin was reluctant to entrust his satellite armies with any but defensive tasks in a war he could hardly believe he could win, the 1964 Czechoslovak plan shows how drastically the situation had changed a decade later. The Soviet Union had been catching up with the United States in the possession of strategic nuclear weapons and their means of delivery, while NATO had been catching up with the Warsaw Pact in building up its conventional forces, backed by an array of tactical nuclear weapons. And, in contrast to the previous wild guesses, both sides were now in a position to know the other's order of battle fairly accurately.

Yet precisely because of this knowledge, the discrepancy between the assumptions underlying the 1964 Warsaw Pact plan and the contemporaneous NATO planning is striking. While the Soviet generals came to believe they could take Lyon within two weeks of the outbreak of hostilities, their NATO counterparts had by this time become confident of being able to stem the Warsaw Pact advance already near West Germany's eastern borders rather than, as previously, along the Rhine, the English Channel, or the Pyrenees, if at all.

Such sharp difference in expectations makes it difficult to avoid the conclusion that, in estimating what would happen after nuclear weapons had been dropped, neither side really knew what it was talking about. The plan of operations against western Europe did not even consider the possibility of the Soviet Union being simultaneously paralyzed by American strategic strikes. The reasoning of Soviet generals may have been cruder but not any less fanciful than the seemingly sophisticated calculations of U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara and his 'whiz kids,' who pretended to know how to micromanage a nuclear war toward a satisfactory conclusion at an acceptable cost.

Ivashutin's study of the "art of war under the conditions of a thermonuclear war according to the current notions" is the most revealing internal account we have so far of the philosophy that underlay Soviet strategy. Sent to the head of the General Staff Academy at his request, the material was probably meant to be used in the school's courses for high-ranking military officers. The argumentative language of the document, replete with references to the Western press and statements by Western officials, shows a desire to justify Soviet strategy to insiders expected to implement it.

Accordingly, the author goes into extraordinary contortions to insist that the West's defensive posture is a sham, alleging that "by no means are NATO forces preparing for defense." Its command presumably figures that after its nuclear first strike "its troops would immediately be able to rush deep into the territory of the socialist countries." Yet these advancing troops, according to the Soviet scenario, will have already "suffered enormous losses from [Soviet] nuclear strikes, which means that at the very beginning of the operation there may be mutual encounters in several directions," not excluding the possibility that "enemy forces will conduct defensive operations."

Not only does the document use specious reasoning to show that the Warsaw Pact's offensive strategy is right but it also adduces specious evidence of the presumed superiority of Soviet arms to convince skeptics that the strategy is feasible. It makes the unwarranted assumption that most of the incoming enemy missiles could be destroyed before causing unacceptable damage.

Handwritten marginal notes on the text seem to indicate that its recipient, Marshal Zakharov, was himself skeptical. Yet the self-confident tone of this product of the nation's presumably best informed military man hardly leaves a doubt that the strategic design it outlined was intended to be applied, as was the 1964 war plan.

The design presupposed that the detonation of an undetermined number of nuclear warheads by both belligerents would not prevent Warsaw Pact troops from marching unscathed through the wasteland while on the home front the surviving civilians, if there were any, continued going about their daily business fit enough to help bring the war to a victorious conclusion. Believing in fighting a war according to such a blueprint was believing in fairy tales. Yet people do believe in fairy tales and sometimes even act upon them until it might be too late.

How Likely Was the Plan To Be Acted Upon?

The 1964 plan did not appear out of nowhere. It was an outgrowth of the 1958-62 Berlin crisis, which is now understood to have been much more serious than its apparent defusion after the erection of the Berlin Wall in August 1961 previously seemed to suggest. Other archival documents obtained by the PHP show that the crisis prompted the Soviet Union to start preparing for the military confrontation that might result from its decision to conclude a separate peace treaty with East Germany - a measure which would have denied the Allies the right of access to the western part of the city. Even after the construction of the Berlin Wall, Soviet leader Nikita S. Khrushchev allowed his subordinates to proceed on the assumption that such a treaty would be signed, although eventually he shelved the idea as not worth the risk.

Once started, however, the intensified planning for a war in Europe continued - as did tension between Khrushchev and the Soviet military as a result of his drastic reductions of conventional forces, which cost many officers their jobs. The tradition-bound military did not share Khrushchev's belief in the adequacy of nuclear weapons in waging war or his reliance upon such weapons not only to deter war but also to score political points through diplomatic pressure or even blackmail. Obedient though Russian generals always were to their country's autocratic rulers, they nevertheless proceeded to map out operations in which conventional forces would play a secondary role to massive nuclear strikes in bringing about a quick victory, thus trying to adapt theory to reality or, as it were, reality to theory. The 1964 plan is an authentic specimen of that exertion.

As a result of the Berlin confrontation that Khrushchev had gratuitously provoked and then mishandled, his earlier efforts at "demilitarizing" the Cold War were reversed. The war plans that were drawn up did not by themselves make their implementation more likely; preparing for the worst is the business of the military anywhere. What did make Soviet planning more worrisome than Western planning was Khrushchev's more casual handling of nuclear weapons than was the case with his Western counterparts. The weapons were part of "a game which no one will win" but which could be played so that the other side "would talk to us," he had explained to a secret gathering of Polish communists as he was about to unleash the Berlin crisis in 1958. He seemed unaware that the game was also one in which everyone could lose, until his attempted deployment of nuclear missiles in Cuba - in 1962 - not only the medium-range kind that the Americans discovered at the time but also the then undiscovered tactical nuclear weapons ready to be fired

had the U.S. invaded the island - threatened an unprecedented disaster.

The Soviet leader, though an impetuous man, was not a reckless one, and he learned the lesson. Yet the 1964 plan was completed after Cuba - at a time Khrushchev was bent on accommodating the West by concluding the partial test ban treaty and perhaps even proceeding in the direction Gorbachev would take quarter of a century later. Just what exactly would have made the plan operational is not easy to imagine for outsiders but, as evident from the authoritative Ivashutin document expressing the thinking behind it, was certainly imaginable to people led to believe by their doctrine in the ultimate incompatibility of capitalism and socialism.

By the time Ivashutin's study had been completed, its core concept of a war conducted and won mainly by nuclear weapons had become increasingly controversial in the Soviet Union. It had been disputed between Khrushchev, who used it in support of further reductions of Soviet conventional forces, and those within the Soviet military who, wedded to the more traditional 'combined arms' concept, opposed the reductions on both professional grounds and as demoralizing for the officer corps. Veiled criticism of Khrushchev's ideas emanated particularly from the General Staff Academy, which he consequently wanted to abolish. In the same month that the Academy received Ivashutin's study, Khrushchev reaffirmed his line by dismantling the separate command of the ground forces and a month later by scathing public criticism of the utility of tanks in warfare.

Without further documentation about the origins of Ivashutin's paper, we cannot reliably determine how it fits into this tug of war between Khrushchev and his generals. Why did Marshal Zakharov, who had become the head of the academy slated for abolition after he had lost his more important job as the Chief of General Staff, commission the document in the first place? It conveyed Khrushchevian notions about the supremacy of nuclear over conventional war that the marshal did not share. Was his commissioning the exposition of an unworkable strategy somehow related to the subsequent overthrow of Khrushchev, with decisive support by the military, which then allowed Zakharov to resume his former position as the Chief of General Staff? These are some of the questions that can only be answered by complementing the PHP documents with the still inaccessible records from Russian military archives.

Khrushchev was overthrown on the very day the plan for the offensive of the Czechoslovak 'front' was formally approved -- 14 October 1964. His ouster cast doubt upon the plan's continued validity during the subsequent period when the strategy it embodied was replaced by that which assigned conventional forces more important place in conducting the war in Europe and possibly winning it without the use of nuclear weapons. This was the same goal, though independently arrived at, as that of the U.S. strategy of 'flexible response,' which had been widely discussed since the early 1960s before being finally adopted by NATO in December 1967. It may thus seem that common sense was beginning to prevail on both sides, causing the threat of Europe's nuclear devastation to recede. Unfortunately, however, this was not necessarily the case.

In the second half of the 1960s, the Czechoslovak command voiced to Moscow its growing misgivings about a strategy that spelled the obliteration of not only the country's army but, because of its geography, also the country itself. The Soviet General Staff therefore became more reluctant to entrust to the Czechoslovaks an important role in the prospective march on Lyon, and after the 1968 'Prague Spring' had to suspend their role altogether because of the effective disintegration of

their army as a fighting force. But the concept of waging war in Europe with massive use of nuclear weapons did not disintegrate; it remained an integral part of the Warsaw Pact's as well as of NATO's strategy until the end of the Cold War. And regardless of the concept's dubious feasibility, the ostensibly more 'realistic' plans for using conventional forces in a 'limited' war made the chain of events leading toward a nuclear holocaust more rather than less likely.

Although the planning of both alliances in the 1970s and 1980s increasingly envisaged a war in Europe without resort to nuclear arms, it did not preclude the use of such arms. Whereas Western strategists tried to maintain the fiction of being able to control nuclear escalation, their Soviet counterparts were rightly skeptical that this was possible, yet were nevertheless more prone to risk the escalation. As the extensive records of the exercises of the East German army show particularly well, the Warsaw Pact kept practicing the thrust into western Europe, with or without nuclear weapons, in ever greater detail, the perfectionist East Germans even printing in advance occupation currency and preparing new street signs with congenial names.

Although the hypothetical NATO attack remained on paper the necessary trigger of the war, the part of the exercises devoted to repelling it became an increasingly perfunctory ritual. In fact, in attributing to NATO a readiness to launch a 'surprise' attack with grossly inadequate, even inferior forces, the artificial scenario was sometimes so ludicrous that hardly any general in his right mind would consider it. The Warsaw Pact's preparations for offensive warfare at a time when the Kremlin was not only preaching détente but also regarding it to be in its own best interest were all the more disconcerting since the Soviet command was far better informed than before about NATO's true intentions and capabilities. The proficient East German spies, among others, saw to that.

If none of the latter-day variations on the 1964 plan was ever put into effect, this was not for any lack of preparation by believers in 'realistic' planning. The Soviet military had much more room for doing what they considered appropriate for purely military reasons during the Brezhnev 'era of stagnation' than under the tighter rein of Khrushchev, not to speak of Stalin. The new developments that finally rendered their plans obsolete were coming from the West rather than from the Kremlin, and concerned not so much the all but discredited utility of the nuclear weaponry as the rediscovered utility of conventional forces of the kind the Soviet Unions did not have.

The acquisition by NATO of high-performance conventional military technology which the Soviet Union could not hope to match made a radical reassessment of its standard assumptions about the efficacy of 'offensive defense' all but inevitable. Simultaneously, the Western strategists' increasingly esoteric and contrived assumptions about war in a political vacuum simply became meaningless as the Cold War petered out for reasons unrelated to the calculations of military balance. The superpower confrontation was first defused because of the Soviet system's progressing internal paralysis, and then disappeared altogether along with the division of Europe into hostile blocs. But nuclear weapons have not disappeared from the world, not even from Europe, nor has NATO followed the Warsaw Pact into oblivion, thus giving the plans of the defunct alliance an abiding relevance.

What Do the Documents Tell Us Today?

A sobering conclusion to be drawn from the records of the Warsaw Pact concerns the validity of the concept of nuclear deterrence - the centerpiece of Western strategy during the Cold War. None of the documents we have gives an indication that the Soviet military planners considered themselves deterred by the West's nuclear arsenals. They were beholden to the fallacy that one could plan for a winnable nuclear war. If they nevertheless did not act upon this misconception, this was ultimately because their political superiors did not have any more intention than their Western counterparts to start a war. Whether the mere existence of nuclear weapons was the main reason for their restraint has been debatable and is likely to remain so.

The 1964 documents show, however, that the vast nuclear arsenals of both superpowers were not only useless for fighting war - as was later generally accepted - but also not necessary to deter war - as some people still insist they were and are. On the contrary, their possession in quantities defying common sense had the effect of skewing strategy in dangerously fanciful directions, making sound planning for real-life contingencies of the post-Cold War era - humanitarian intervention, peacekeeping - difficult if not impossible. Accordingly, the further dismantling of the still vast American and Russian nuclear stockpiles makes sense, among other excellent reasons, because it helps restore proportionality between any conceivable military aims and the means employed toward their attainment. For that purpose, however, even the residual 1,500 or so nuclear weapons the two countries want to keep as allegedly indispensable for their security are far too many to make a clean break with the mentality exemplified by the 1964 documents, whose futility is now so obvious.

Similarly the nonproliferation and nuclear test ban treaties are steps in the right direction since they foster the awareness of the dubious benefits of nuclear armaments and of the wisdom of proceeding toward deliberate policies to ensure their obsolescence. Very small numbers of the weapons are sufficient to keep the probability of their being used in a surprise attack correspondingly small. If the record of the Cold War and its aftermath is an indication, modern conventional forces - and the willingness to use them - provide much more reliable protection against this and an array of more probable security threats. In the war over Kosovo, NATO demonstrated how effective such forces can be - and how unprepared it was to use them.

Reflecting on the legacy of the Cold War makes obvious the merits of a mainly non--nuclear NATO, operating in a pre-nuclear fashion though with post-nuclear technology. But it also highlights the merits of the Partnership for Peace, with its innovative formula of giving both friends and potential adversaries the opportunity to cooperate in military matters as much or as little as they find it to be in their best interest. These are the ways of preventing the rise of such disastrous misconceptions as those which the documents inaugurating our website convey so eloquently.

2. The Warsaw Pact War Plan of 1964, by Petr Luňák

The 1964 operational plan for the Czechoslovak People's Army (Československá lidová armáda or ČSLA) was the result of the reevaluation of Eastern Bloc military strategy after Stalin's death. While the Polish plan of 1951 reflects plain defensive thinking whereby the Polish army was not supposed to leave Polish territory and no reference was made to nuclear weapons, a decade and a half later, according to the ambitious imaginings of the then Czechoslovak and Soviet military planners, the ČSLA was expected to operate on the territory of southeastern France within a few days, turning Western Europe into a nuclear inferno.

The principles on which the Polish and Czechoslovak armies based their strategies in the 1950's and 1960's mirrored Soviet thinking of the time. Most important question raised by comparing the two plans is this: when did the change in military thinking in the Eastern bloc occur and why?

Further, it is necessary to ask when exactly did it take on the characteristics contained in the plan of 1964? Naturally, precise and definitive answers cannot be given until military archives of the former Soviet union are made accessible. In the meantime, material from East European sources can at least hint at some answers.

The Advent of Nuclear Weapons

During the first years after the formation of the Eastern bloc, the Czechoslovak People's Army – probably like all other communist armies after World War II – concentrated on planning the defence of Czechoslovak territory. The designs for military exercises held in the first half of the 1950's illustrate this. While exercises on maps as well as involving troops in the field did also occasionally include offensive operations, they almost never took place outside Czechoslovak soil. In a small number of cases, advancing into foreign territory was considered, but only in the larger framework of a successful pushback of an enemy offensive and the subsequent breakthrough of their defence.[1]

The vagueness of Czechoslovak thinking vis-à-vis operations abroad is also apparent in the military cartographic work of this period. The first mapping of territory on the basic scale of 1 : 50 000, begun in 1951, covered Czechoslovak territory only. When, under the newly adopted Soviet system, the plan for drawing up military maps of foreign territories was presented a year later, the Czechoslovak cartographers were expected, by the end of the 1950s, to have mapped only parts of southern Germany and the whole of Austria. During the following years, the mapping was indeed based on this schedule.[2]

The change from defensive to outright offensive thinking, which came after Stalin's death, is connected with a reevaluation of the role of nuclear arms. While Stalin himself did not overlook nuclear weapons and made a giant effort to obtain them in the second half of the 1940's, he did not consider them to be an important strategic element due to their small number. As a consequence, his so called „permanently operating factors“ (stability of the rear, morale of the army, quantity and quality of divisions, armament of the army and the organizational ability of army commanders), which were, in his view, to decide the next, if not any, war, remained the official dogma until his death. This rather simplistic concept completely ignored any other factors. First and foremost, it did not take into account the moment of surprise and the importance of taking the initiative.

Only after dictator died was there room for discussion among Soviet strategists on the implications of nuclear weapons which, in the meantime, became the cornerstone of U.S. massive retaliation doctrine.[3] Consequently, nuclear arms were gradually included in the plans of both the Soviet army and those of the satellite countries. For instance, in the 1952 combat directives of the Soviet Army, nuclear weapons were almost entirely left out. When these directives were adopted by ČSLA in 1954 translated word for word, a special supplement on the effects of nuclear weapons had to be quickly created and added.[4]

The extent to which the Czechoslovak leadership was informed of Soviet operational plans remains an open question. In any case, its members were in no way deterred by the prospect of massive retaliation by the West. Alexej Čepička, the Czechoslovak Minister of National Defense and later one of the few „victims“ of the Czechoslovak destalinization, saw nuclear weapons like any other, but with greater destructive powers. In 1954 , he declared that „nuclear weapons alone will not be the deciding factor in achieving victory. Although the use of atomic weapons will strongly affect the way in which battles and operations are conducted as well as life in the depths of combat, the significance of all types of armies [...] remains valid. On the contrary, their importance is gaining significance.“[5]

Given the nuclear inferiority of the East, such a s casual handling of nuclear weapons was tantamount to making a virtue out of necessity. In all fairness, however, it should be noted that although Western leaders verbally stressed the radical difference between nuclear and conventional weapons, military planners in both the East and West did their job in preparing for the same scenario – a massive conflict with the use of all means at their disposal.

There were, however, fundamental differences in the understanding of this nuclear conflict and its potential consequences. In the thinking of the Czechoslovak and probably of the Soviet military headquarters of the time, nuclear weapons would determine the speed of war but not its entire character. Since nuclear arms considerably shortened the stages of war, according to the Eastern logic, it became necessary to try to gain the decisive initiative with a powerful strike against enemy forces, making use of the moment of surprise. Contrary to the U.S. doctrine of massive retaliation, the Soviet bloc's response would have made use not only of nuclear weapons, but, in view of Soviet conventional superiority, also of conventional weapons. This massive retaliation, in the Soviet view, did not make planning beyond it irrelevant. Contrary to Western planners of the time, Soviet strategists assumed that their massive strike would only create the conditions for winning the war by the classic method of seizing enemy territory. Once persuaded by the preposterous idea of winning a nuclear war, Eastern bloc operational plans looked upon such a war a realistic scenario thereby downgrading any Western deterrent and making a war perilously more realistic as a prospect.

The idea that offense is the best defense quickly found its way into Czechoslovak plans for building and training its armed forces. From the exercise season of 1954/1955 the „use of offensive operations ... with the use of nuclear and chemical weapons“ became one of the main training topics and the ČSLA prepared itself almost exclusively for offensive operations.[6] Defence was now supposed to be organized in such a way that the change to counter-offensive operations, making use of moment of surprise, could be swiftly undertaken in all circumstances.[7]

Taking the use of nuclear arms into consideration, a military mapping of southeastern Germany stretching to the German-French border was undertaken, from 1955 onwards, on a scale 1:100 000, which was considered adequate for this kind of operation.

It should be noted that the planning of operations using nuclear weapons from the first day of conflict posed difficulties for the Czechoslovak military staff who proved reluctant to engage in such a risky business. In reality, complaints along these lines to the highest representatives of the Ministry of National Defense had no real basis, since the Czechoslovak military staff had neither access to nuclear weapons, nor were any nuclear weapons placed on Czechoslovak territory.[8]

Deep into Enemy Territory

The introduction of nuclear weapons into the military plans of the Eastern bloc and the emphasis on achieving the moment of surprise greatly influenced the role and understanding of ground operations. The main task of ground forces now was to quickly penetrate enemy territory and to destroy the enemy's nuclear and conventional forces on his own soil, thus protecting a great part of their own territory and population.

The ambition to reach take Lyons on the 9th day of the conflict, as outlined in the 1964 plan, did not appear overnight. Until the late 1950s, offensive operations of the ČSLA during exercises ended around the 10th day of fighting no further west than the Nuremberg-Ingolstadt line.[9] These exercise designs show that the so-called Prague-Saarland direction (Prague-Nuremberg-Saarbrücken) was clearly favoured over the Alpine direction Brno-Vienna-Munich-Basel.[10]

With the aim of enhancing the mobility of the army and coming closer to the ambitions reflected in the 1964 plan, the Czechoslovak military staff, upon order of the Soviet military headquarters, began a relocation of military forces in 1958 which concentrated the maximum number of highly mobile tank divisions in the western part of the country.[11] Also as one of the lessons of the ongoing Berlin crisis, the military institutionalization of the Warsaw Pact led to the creation of individual fronts. In this new framework, the CSLA was responsible for one entire front with its own command and tasks set forth by the Soviet military headquarters.[12]

Before these organizational changes were implemented, they were already applied in military exercises where the newly created fronts were to be synchronized. While the designs of the exercises and the tasks of the participants cannot be considered an exact reflection of operational planning, they show that the time to reach certain lines on the western battlefield had been gradually shortened and that the depth reached by Czechoslovak troops had been enhanced. In one of the first front exercises in 1960, the ČSLA was already supposed to operate on the Stuttgart-Dachau line the 4th day. The operational front exercise of March 1961 went even further in assuming that the Dijon-Lyon line would be reached on the 6th-7th day of operations. At the operational front exercise in September 1961, the Czechoslovak front practised supporting an offensive by the the front made up of Soviet and East German forces. In this framework the line Bonn-Metz -Strasbourg was to be reached on the 7th and 8th day. An exercise conducted in December 1961 gave the Czechoslovak front the task of reaching the Besancon-Belfort line on the 7th day of operations.[13]

From the early 1960s onward, massive war games with similar designs were undertaken in Legnica, Poland, in the presence of commands of individual fronts. The assumed time span and territory covered in these exercises already reflected the thinking of the 1964 plan.

The Czechoslovak was not given the main strategic task on the Central European battlefield which was represented in the Warsaw Pact plans by the Warsaw-Berlin axis. For instance, during the joint front exercise VÍTR (Wind) besides taking Nancy, France, the Czechoslovak front was „to be prepared to secure the left wing of the Eastern forces [the Warsaw Pact – P.L.] against the neutral state [Austria – P.L.] in case its neutrality was broken.“[14]

Due to the greater number of nuclear weapons in the Soviet hands, the Soviets became more cautious in the way they planned to use them. If the military planners initially considered the use of nuclear arms right from the beginning of conflict, which was supposed to be set off by a massive strike from the West, gradually the term ‘preemptive nuclear strike’ entered into the operational considerations of the ČSLA. A massive nuclear strike was supposed to be used only if three sources confirmed that the enemy was about to use nuclear weapons.

Although still far from nuclear parity with the U.S., due to the greater number of nuclear weapons they possessed, the Soviets began to regard them not merely as weapons like any other. For N.S.Khrushchev, who in 1957-1958 succeeded in his power struggle, nuclear weapons were both a tool to exert political pressure and a military deterrent which would discourage the other side from using them. Thus a further demilitarization of the Cold war could be achieved through cuts in ground forces. Consequently, nuclear weapons acquired an even more prominent role in planning for massive retaliation. The Czechoslovak military headquarters of this period hinted at this as follows:

For the states of the Warsaw Treaty and specifically for the ČSSR, it is important not to allow the enemy to make a joint attack and not to allow him to gain advantageous conditions for the development of ground force operations and thus gain strategic dominance. Basically, this means that our means for an atomic strike must be in such a state of military readiness that they would be able to deal with task of carrying out a nuclear counter strike with a time lag of only seconds or tenths of seconds.[15]

Flexible Response à la Warsaw Pact

The US move from massive retaliation to flexible response during the early 1960s brought changes to the strategy of the Warsaw Pact. Somewhat later, the new thinking also entered the exercise plans of the ČSLA. According to the training directives of 1964, the ČSLA was supposed to carry out training for the early stages of war not only with the use of nuclear weapons but, for the first time since mid-1950s, also without them. At a major joint exercise of the Warsaw Pact in the summer of 1964, the early phase of the war was envisaged without nuclear weapons.[16]

However, flexible response as conceived by the Warsaw Pact was not a mere mirror-image of the Western version. The U.S. attempt to limit conflict to a supposedly acceptable level by introducing „thresholds“ and „pauses“ resulted from an agreement between political leaders and the military

who pretended to know how to prevent it from developing into a nuclear nightmare. In the East, on the other hand, the concept was based only on a military – and probably more realistic – assessment according to which a conflict was, sooner or later, going to escalate into a global nuclear war. In the words of the the Minister of National Defense Bohumír Lomský:

All of these speculative theories of Western strategists about limiting nuclear arms use and about the spiral effect of the increase of their power have one goal: In order to start a global nuclear war, they want to stay in the advantageous position for the best timing of a joint nuclear attack in the given balance of power circumstances. We reject these false speculative theories. Each use of nuclear arms by an aggressor will be answered with a joint nuclear offensive using all the means of the Warsaw Pact countries, on the whole depth and aiming at all targets of the enemy coalition.

We have no intentions to be the first to resort to the use of nuclear weapons. Although we do not believe in the truthfulness and the reality of these Western theories, we cannot discount that the imperialists could try to start a war without the immediate use of nuclear arms on our battle fields. That is why we must also be prepared for this possibility.[17]

In line with this crude thinking, the Czechoslovak, and most probably the Soviet generals assumed that there was only one threshold, i.e. that between conventional and nuclear war. Warsaw Pact thus stood somewhere between massive retaliation and flexible response.

According to some contemporary accounts, it was in this period that the term of preemptive nuclear strike appeared in Warsaw Pact plans. A massive nuclear strike was supposed to be used only if three sources had confirmed that the enemy was about to employ nuclear weapons.

All exercises carried out in the following years make it clear that the use of nuclear weapons was expected no later than the third day of operations. However, exercises that counted on the use of nuclear arms from the very beginning were also no exception.[18] In any case, the Czechoslovak war plan of 1964 shows how little the Eastern planners believed in relevance of Western flexible response. Not only does it not consider the possibility of a non-nuclear war, but it assumes that the war will start with a massive nuclear strike by the West.

The Czechoslovak Plan of 1964

Considering the great degree of secrecy surrounding these documents, only a few people in the 1960s had direct experience or contact with the 1964 Czechoslovak plan. However, several sporadic accounts make at least some sort of conclusions possible. The plan was the first of its kind to have been drawn up in the ČSLA, in the aftermath of the Berlin crisis. According to the late Václav Vítanovský, then Chief of Operations, the plan came about as a result of directives from Moscow.[19] These directives were then worked into operational plans by the individual armies. Vítanovský explained: "When we had finished, we took it back to Moscow, where they looked it over, endorsed it and said yes, we agree. Or they changed it. Changes were made right there on the spot." [20]

The orders for the Czechoslovak front stated that the valleys in the Vosges mountains were to be

reached. Undoubtedly, this was meant to prepare the way for troops of the second echelon made up of Soviet troops.

The 1964 plan remained valid until at least 1968 and probably much later.^[21] However, already in the mid-1960s, a number of revisions were undertaken. According to contemporary accounts, the Soviet leadership was afraid that the Czechoslovak front was not capable of fulfilling its tasks and, accordingly, the territory which was assigned to ČSLA shrank. To support the ambitions of the 1964 plans, since 1965 Moscow were trying to impose the stationing of a number of Soviet divisions on Czechoslovak territory. Furthermore, in December 1965, the Soviets forced the Czechoslovak government to sign an agreement on the storage of nuclear warheads on Czech soil. Both these measures only became feasible after the Soviet invasion in 1968.

Notes

[1] According to these rather theoretical considerations, the ČSLA was to reach the Alps 17 days after pushback of the enemy attack. Cf. exercises of the ČSLA air force command of July 1952 on the topic Air support for striking operations of the army, Vojenský historický archiv Vojenský ústředního archivu (VHA VUA - Military Historical Archive of the Central Military Archives, Prague, Czech Republic), fond Ministerstvo národní obrany (MNO - Ministry of National Defense), 1952, box 280, sig 83/1-4, c.j. 46577.

[2] During the existence of the Eastern bloc, the ČSLA used the largest scale of 1: 25 000 exclusively to map the territory of Czechoslovakia and some operationally difficult areas in Western Europe, i.e. the Rhine and Main river valleys and other major rivers in West Germany. Cf. Summary of maps of the 1: 50 000 scale in the 1946 system. Planned outlook of cartographic works at 1: 50 000 – foreign territory, VHA VUA, MNO/Operations, 1952, box 369, sig. 97/2, c.j. 2131.

[3] The change in strategic thinking and ensuing discussions among Soviet strategists, taking place in the journal *Vojennaja mysl*, are described by Herbert S. Dinerstein in his book *War and the Soviet Union: Nuclear Weapons and the Revolution in Soviet Military and Political Thinking*, New York, 1959 and by R. Garthoff, *Soviet Strategy in the Nuclear Age*, New York, 1958.

[4] VUA, MNO, 1954, box 22, sig. 80 5/1-57, c.j. 0037.

[5] Statement of the Minister of National Defence, Alexej Cepicka in an analysis of the joint troop exercises on September 29, 1954, VHA VUA, MNO, 1954, box 446, sig. 832/1 – 130, c.j. 3600 – GS/OS.

[6] Guidelines for the operational preparation of generals, officers and the staff of all types of services for the training period of 1955/56, VUA, MNO, box 596, sig. 83, c.j. 5800.

[7] Analysis of the command-staff exercises of June 1958, VHA VUA, MNO, box 310, sig. 17/2 – 28, c.j. 4813 – OS. Theses on the organization of the defense operations command at the level of army divisions. VHA VUA, MNO, 1957, box 327, sig. 17/7 – 32, c.j. 2395 – 08/1957. VHA VUA, MNO, 1957, box 326, sig. 17/1 – 13, c.j. 1803 - OU.

[8] Guidelines for operational-tactical preparations of the generals, officers and staff of all types of forces. VHA VUA, MNO, 1958, box 310, sig. 17/3-8, c.j. 5000-08/1958.

[9] The design of the mutual and two-tiered exercise of the commanders and staff in March 1958, VHA VUA, MNO, 1958, box 311, sig. 17/3 – 28, c.j. 1730. Analysis of the military staff exercises

from June 1958, VHA VUA, MNO, 1958, box 311, sig. 17/2-28. Analysis of the operational exercises of the commanders of April 1959, VHA VUA, MNO, 1959, box 300, sig. 17/3-8, c.j. 9083. [10]This is also reflected in the recommendations of the Czechoslovak military cartographers and strategists in 1959. See Zapadni teatr vojennych dejstvij, VHA VUA, MNO, 1959, box 300, sig. 17/7-9, c.j. 8576 – OS/59.

[11]See Principles for the new relocation of the Czechoslovak People's Army, VUA, MNO, box 312, sig. 18/3-14, c.j. 3764 – OS/1958. See also sig. 18/3/67, c.j. 4395/OS.

[12]The formation of the front included almost all Czechoslovak ground troops: 15 mobilized divisions arranged into 3 armies, the air force, an airborne brigade and the accompanying technical and rear equipment. The command was given to the general staff of the ČSLA; the chief-of-staff became the commander of this front.

[13]Analysis of joint exercises at the Ministry of National Defense in 1960, VUA, MNO, 1960, box 394, sig. 6/5, c.j. 17989-OS/1960, VUA, MNO, 1961, box 347, sig. 17/1-4, c.j. 1659/OS-1961. VUA, MNO, 1961, box, 347, sig. 17/2-24, c.j. 4135. VUA, MNO, 1961, box 348, sig. 17/2-31, c.j. 4922/21.

[14]Exercise Wind (Vitr), VHA VUA, MNO, 1962, box 304, sig. 17 2/13, c.j. 12650/1962. VHA VUA, MNO, 1962, box 305, sig. 2-15, c.j. 12130.

[15] Lecture On the Character of Present-day War, VUA, MNO, 1961, sig. 4 1-6, c.j. 16196 - NGS.

[16]Based on experiences with the Sputnik exercises, one of the main tasks for the exercise season of 1965/66 was set to be the training of operations without the use of weapons of mass destruction. See Guidelines for the preparation of generals, officers and warrant-officers of the Ministry of National Defence in 1965, VUA, MNO, 1964, box 269, sig. 17/1-5, c.j. 1400/19.

[17]Exercise Sputnik, VUA, MNO, 1964, box 270, sig. 17/2-3, c.j. 11500/108-54/1964.

[18]Conclusions from the exercise October Storm on October 16-22, 1965, VUA, MNO, 1965, box 242, sig. 4/4, c.j. 17841.

[19]In the 1960s, Václav Vitanovský was considered a guru of Czechoslovak military thinking. In 1964 he published a textbook on the theory of strategy and doctrine. He was deposed already in 1967 for coming into conflict with the Soviet generals, who pressed the Czechoslovak military headquarters to raise military expenditures and number of troops.

[20]Minutes of the analysis of General Major Václav Vitanovský of November 20, 1990. Institute of Modern History, collection of the CSFR's Government Commission for the analysis of the years 1967-70, R-105. Unfortunately, half of the interview have been lost. Colonel Karel Štěpánek, Chief of the Operations Room at the General Staff at the time and another participant in the preparation of the 1964 plan, also confirmed this procedure in an interview with the author.

[21]The mapping of Western Europe during the 1970s and 80s also seems to confirm that the 1964 plan was valid until the second half of the 1980s. It is apparent from the plan of map renewal in the 70s and 80s for individual Warsaw Pact countries, that the CSLA was still responsible for the same area as during the 1960s. The same goes for the scale of 1: 100 000. See Plan utocnenija sovместnyh rabot geograficeskich sluzb armij gosudarstv-uscastnikov Varsavskogo dogovora po obnovlenii topograficeskich kart na 1972-1975 gody, VHA VUA, fond Varsavska smlouva (VS), Topo, c.j. 004/75-12. Also see, Plan utocnenija ucastnikov Varsavskogo dogovora po obnovlenii topograficeskich kart na 1976-1980 gody, VUA, VS, Topo, c.j. 5643/4.

“Approved”
Supreme Commander
of the Armed Forces of the ČSSR
Antonín Novotný
1964

Single Copy

Plan of Actions of the Czechoslovak People’s Army for War Period

Map 1: 500,000, published 1963

1. Conclusions from the assessment of the enemyThe enemy could use up to 12 general military units on the Central European military theater for advancing in the area of the Czechoslovak Front from D1 to D 7-8.

- The 2nd Army Corps of the FRG [Federal Republic of Germany] including: 4th and 10th mechanized divisions, 12th tank division, 1st airborne division and 1st mountain division,
- the 7th Army Corps of the USA including: the 24th mechanized division and 4th armored tank division;
- the 1st Army of France including: 3rd mechanized division, the 1st and 7th tank divisions, and up to two newly deployed units, including 6 launchers of tactical missiles, up to 130 theater launchers and artillery, and up to 2800 tanks.

Operations of the ground troops could be supported by part of the 40th Air Force, with up to 900 aircraft, including 250 bombers and up to 40 airborne missile launchers.

Judging by the composition of the group of NATO troops and our assessment of the exercises undertaken by the NATO command, one could anticipate the design of the enemy's actions with the following goals.

To disorganize the leadership of the state and to undermine mobilization of armed forces by surprise nuclear strikes against the main political and economic centers of the country.

To critically change the correlation of forces in its own favor by strikes against the troops, airfields and communication centers.

To destroy the border troops of the Czechoslovak People’s Army in border battles, and to destroy the main group of our troops in the Western and Central Czech Lands by building upon the initial attack.

To disrupt the arrival of strategic reserves in the regions of Krkonoše, Jeseníky, and Moravská Brána by nuclear strikes against targets deep in our territory and by sending airborne assault troops; to create conditions for a successful attainment of the goals of the operation.

Judging by the enemy's approximate operative design, the combat actions of both sides in the initial period of the war will have a character of forward contact battles.

The operative group of the enemy in the southern part of the FRG will force the NATO command to gradually engage a number of their units in the battle, which will create an opportunity for the Czechoslovak Front to defeat NATO forces unit by unit. At the same time, that would require building a powerful first echelon in the operative structure of the Front; and to achieve success it would require building up reserves that would be capable of mobilizing very quickly and move into the area of military action in a very short time.

2. Upon receiving special instructions from the Supreme Commander of the Unified Armed Forces, the Czechoslovak People's Army will deploy to the Czechoslovak Front with the following tasks:

To be ready to start advancing toward Nuremberg, Stuttgart and Munich with part of forces immediately after the nuclear strike. Nuclear strike against the troops of the enemy should be targeted to the depth up to the line Würzburg, Erlangen, Regensburg, Landshut.

The immediate task is to defeat the main forces of the Central Group of the German Army in the southern part of the FRG, in cooperation with the [Soviet] 8th Guards Army of the 1st Western Front; by the end of the first day—reach the line Bayreuth, Regensburg, Passau; and by the end of the second day—move to the line Höchststadt, Schwabach, Ingolstadt, Mühldorf, and by the fourth day of the attack —reach the line Mosbach, Nürtingen, Memmingen, Kaufbeuren.

In the future, building upon the advance in the direction of Strasbourg, Epinal, Dijon, to finalize the defeat of the enemy in the territory of the FRG, to force a crossing of the river Rhine, and on the seventh or eighth day of the operation to take hold of the line Langres, Besançon.

Afterward develop the advance toward Lyon.

To have in the combat disposition of the Czechoslovak Front the following units:

- the 1st and 4th Armies, 10th Air Army, 331st front missile brigade, 11th, 21st and the 31st mobile missile support base in the state of combat alert.
- the reserve center of the Army, the 3rd, 18th, 26th, and 32nd mechanized rifle divisions, 14th and 17th tank divisions, 22nd airborne brigade, 205th antitank brigade, 303rd air defense division, 201st and 202nd air defense regiments with mobilization timetable from M1 to M3.
- the formations, units and facilities of the support and service system.

The 57th Air Army, arriving on D1 from the Carpathian military district before the fifth or sixth day of the operation, will be operatively subordinated to the Czechoslovak Front. If Austria keeps its neutrality on the third day of the war, one mechanized rifle division of the Southern Group of Forces will arrive in the area of České Budějovice and join the Czechoslovak Front. The following forces will remain at the disposal of the Ministry of National Defense: the 7th air defense army, 24th mechanized rifle division and 16th tank division with readiness M20, reconnaissance units, and also units and facilities of the support and service system. Under favorable conditions two missile brigades and one mobile missile support base will arrive some time in advance in the territory of the ČSSR from the Carpathian military district:

- 35th missile brigade—past Český Brod, past Říčany, Zásmuky,
- 36th missile brigade – past Pacov, past Pelhřimov, past Humpolec,
- 3486th mobile missile support base – woods 5 kilometers to the East of Světlá.

Formations and units of the Czechoslovak People's Army, on permanent alert, upon the announcement of combat alarm should leave their permanent location in no more than 30 minutes, move to designated areas within 3 hours, and deploy there ready to carry out their combat tasks.

Formations, units and headquarters that do not have set mobilization dates, leave their locations of permanent deployment and take up the identified areas of concentration in the time and in the order determined by the plan of mobilization and deployment. The following disposition of forces is possible in the area of operations of the Czechoslovak Front for the entire depth of the operation:

- in divisions – 1.1 to 1.0
- in tanks and mobile artillery launchers – 1.0 to 1.0
- in artillery and mine-launchers – 1.0 to 1.0
- in military aircraft – 1.1 to 1.0, all in favor of the Czechoslovak Front.

In the first massive nuclear strike by the troops of the Missile Forces of the Czechoslovak Front, the front aviation and long-range aviation added to the front must destroy the main group of troops of

the first operations echelon of the 7th US Army, its means of nuclear attack, and the centers of command and control of the aviation.

During the development of the operation, the troops of the Missile Forces and aviation must destroy the approaching deep operative reserves, the newly discovered means of nuclear attack, and the enemy aviation.

Altogether the operation will require the use of 131 nuclear missiles and nuclear bombs; specifically 96 missiles and 35 nuclear bombs. The first nuclear strike will use 41 missiles and nuclear bombs. The immediate task will require using 29 missiles and nuclear bombs. The subsequent task could use 49 missiles and nuclear bombs. 12 missiles and nuclear bombs should remain in the reserve of the Front.

Building on the results of the first nuclear strike, the troops of the Front, in coordination with units of the 1st Western Front must destroy the main group of troops of the 7th US Army and the 1st French Army in cooperation with airborne assault troops, force the rivers Neckar and Rhine in crossing, and defeat the advancing deep strategic reserves of the enemy in advancing battle, and by D7-8 take control of the areas of Langres, Besançon, and Epinal.

Upon completion of the tasks of the operation the troops must be ready to develop further advances in the direction of Lyon.

The main strike should be concentrated in the direction of Nuremberg, Stuttgart, Strasbourg, Epinal, Dijon; part of the forces should be used on the direction of Straubing and Munich.

The operative structure of the troops of the Czechoslovak Front is to be in one echelon with separation of two tank and five mechanized rifle divisions for the reserve as they arrive and are deployed. The first echelon shall consist of the 1st and 4th armies and the 331st front missile brigade.

The reserve of the front includes: Headquarters of the 2nd Army (reserve), mechanized rifle division of the Southern Group of Forces by D3, 14th tank division by D3, 17th tank division by D4, 3rd mechanized rifle division by D3, 26th mechanized rifle division by D4, 18th mechanized rifle division by D5, and 32nd mechanized rifle division by D6.

Special reserves include: 22nd airborne brigade by D2, 103rd chemical warfare battalion by D2, 6th engineering brigade by D3, and 205th antitank artillery by D4.

3. On the right – the 8th Guards Army of the 1st Western Front advances in the direction of Suhl, Bad Kissingen, and Worms and with part of its forces to Bamberg.

The separation line with the Army is the ČSSR-GDR border as far as Aš, then Bayreuth, Mosbach, and Sarrebourg, Chaumont (all points exclusively for the Czechoslovak Front).

The meeting point with the 8th Guards Army should be supported by the forces and means of the Czechoslovak Front.

On the left – the Southern Group of Forces and the Hungarian People's Army will cover the state borders of Hungary.

The dividing line with them: state border of the ČSSR with the Hungarian People's Republic, and then the northern borders of Austria, Switzerland, and Italy.

4. The 1st Army (19th and 20th mechanized rifle divisions, 1st and 13th tank divisions, 311st artillery missile brigade) with 312nd heavy artillery brigade, 33rd antitank artillery brigade without 7th antitank artillery regiment, the 2nd bridge-building brigade without the 71st bridge-building battalion, the 351st and 352nd engineering battalions of the 52nd engineering brigade.

The immediate task is to defeat the enemy's group of the 2nd Army Corps of the FRG and the 7th US Army in interaction with the 8th Guards Army of the 1st Western Front, and to develop advance

in the direction of Neustadt, Nuremberg, Ansbach, and with part of forces in interaction with units of the 8th Guards Army in the direction of Bamberg, by D1 to take control of the line Bayreuth, Amberg, Schmidmühlen; and by the end of D2 to arrive on the line Höchststadt, Schwabach, Heiden. The further task is to advance in the direction of Ansbach, Crailsheim, Stuttgart; to defeat the advancing operative reserves of the enemy, and by the end of D4 take control of the line past Mosbach, Bietigheim, Nürtingen.

Subsequently to be ready to develop the advance in the direction of Stuttgart, Strasbourg, Epinal. The dividing line on the left is Poběžovice, Schwandorf, Weissenburg, Heidenheim, Reutlingen (all the points except Heidenheim, are inclusive for the 1st Army).

Headquarters – in the forest 1 kilometer south of Stříbro.

The axis of the movement is Stříbro, Grafenwöhr, Ansbach, Schwäbisch Hall.

5. The 4th Army (2nd and 15th mechanized rifle divisions, 4th and 9th tank divisions, 321st artillery missile brigade) with 7th antitank artillery brigade and 33rd antitank artillery brigade, 71st bridge-building battalion of the 2nd bridge-building brigade, 92nd bridge-building battalion and 353rd engineering battalion.

The immediate task is to defeat the enemy group of the 2nd Army Corps of the FRG in cooperation with the troops of the 1st Army and to develop advance in the direction of Regensburg, Ingolstadt, Donauwörth, and with part of forces in the direction Straubing, Munich; and by the end of D1 to take control of the line Schmidmühlen, Regensburg, Passau; by the end of D2 – Eichstätt, Moosburg, Mühldorf.

The subsequent task is to advance in the direction of Donauwörth, Ulm, to defeat the advancing formations of the 1st French Army and by the end of D4 to take control of the line Metzingen, Memmingen, Kaufbeuren.

Subsequently to be ready to develop advance in the direction of Ulm, Mulhouse, Besançon.

Headquarters – 6 kilometers northwest of Strakonice.

The axis of movement is – Strakonice, Klatovy, Falkenstein, Kelheim, Rennertshofen, Burgau.

6. The Missile Forces of the Front must in the first nuclear strike destroy the group of forces of the 7th US Army, part of forces of the 2nd Army Corps of the FRG, and part of the air defense forces of the enemy.

Subsequently, the main efforts should be concentrated on defeating the advancing operative and strategic reserves and also the newly discovered means of nuclear attack of the enemy.

In order to fulfill the tasks set to the front, the following ammunition shall be used:

- for the immediate task--44 operative-tactical and tactical missiles with nuclear warheads;
- for the subsequent task--42 operative-tactical and tactical missiles with nuclear warheads;
- for unexpectedly arising tasks--10 operative-tactical and tactical missiles with nuclear warheads shall be left in the Front's reserve.

The commander of Missile Forces shall receive special assembly brigades with special ammunition, which shall be transferred to the Czechoslovak Front in the following areas: 2 kilometers to the East of Jablonec, and 3 kilometers to the East of Michalovce.

The use of special ammunition—only with permission of the Supreme Commander of the Unified Armed Forces.

7. Aviation. The 10th Air Force— the 1st fighter division, 2nd and 34th fighter-bomber division, 25th bomber regiment, 46th transport air division, 47thair reconnaissance regiment and 45th air reconnaissance regiment for target guidance.

Combat tasks:

With the first nuclear strike to destroy part of forces of the 2nd Army Corps of the FRG, two command and targeting centers, and part of the air defense forces of the enemy.

Upon the beginning of combat actions to suppress part of air defense forces of the enemy in the following regions: Roding, Kirchroth, Hohenfels, Amberg, Pfreimd, Nagel, and Erbenndorf.

To uncover and destroy operative and tactical means of nuclear attack, command and control aviation forces in the following regions: Weiden, Nabburg, Amberg, Grafenwöhr, Hohenfels, Regensburg, and Erlangen.

During the operation to give intensive support to combat actions of the troops of the front: on D1 – 6 group sorties of fighter bombers, from D2 to D5 – 8 group sorties of fighter bombers and bombers daily, and from D6 to D8 – 6 group sorties of fighter bombers and bombers daily. The main effort should be concentrated on supporting the troops of the 1st Army.

In cooperation with forces and means of the air defense of the country, fronts and neighbors – to cover the main group of forces of the Front from air strikes by the enemy.

To ensure the landing of reconnaissance troops and general airborne forces on D1 and D2 in the rear of the enemy.

To ensure airborne landing of the 22nd airborne brigade on D4 in the area north of Stuttgart, or on D5 in the area of Rastatt, or on D6 in the area to the east of Mulhouse.

To carry out air reconnaissance with concentration of main effort on the direction of Nuremberg, Stuttgart, and Strasbourg with the goal of locating means of nuclear attack, and in order to determine in time the beginning of operations and the direction of the advancing operative reserves of the enemy.

In order to fulfill the tasks set for the front, it will be required to use the following weapons:

- for the immediate task -- 10 nuclear bombs;
- for subsequent tasks – 7 nuclear bombs;
- for resolving unexpectedly arising tasks – 2 nuclear bombs shall be left in the Front's reserve.

The 57th Air Force, consisting of the 131st fighter division, 289th fighter-bomber regiment, 230th and 733rd bomber regiment and 48th air reconnaissance regiment, arriving by D1 from the Carpathian military district, is to remain under operative subordination to the Czechoslovak Front until the fifth to sixth day for 5 army sorties.

The Army has determined the limit of: combat sets of air bombs – 3, combat sets of air-to-air missiles – 2, combat sets of aviation cartridges – 2, and fuel – 3 rounds of army refueling.

Combat tasks:

- in cooperation with the 10th Air Force to find and destroy the means of nuclear attack of the enemy, its aviation and command and control centers with concentration of main efforts on the direction of Nuremberg, Strasbourg;
- to support combat actions of the troops of the Front when they force the rivers Naab, Neckar, Rhine, and when they counter attack of the enemy;
- to support combat actions of the 22nd airborne brigade in the areas of its landing;
- to protect the troops of the front from air strikes by the enemy;
- to carry out air reconnaissance with concentration of the main effort on discovering the means of nuclear attack and deep operative and strategic reserves of the enemy.

The 184th heavy bomber regiment of long-range aviation should use nuclear bombs in the first nuclear strike against headquarters of the 2nd Army Corps of the FRG, 7th US Army, 2nd/40 Corporal artillery battalion, 2nd/82 Corporal artillery battalion, 5th/73 Sergeant artillery battalion, and the main group of forces of the 4th mechanized division and 12th tank division of the 2nd Army

Corps of the FRG. Total use of nuclear bombs – 16. Use of special combat ammunition –only with permission of the Supreme Commander of the Unified Armed Forces.

8. Air Defense

7th Air Defense Army of the country – 2nd and 3rd air defense corps.

Combat tasks:

- in cooperation with air defense forces of the Front and the air defense of the neighbors in the united air defense system of countries of the Warsaw Treaty to repel massive air strikes of the enemy with concentration of main effort on the direction Karlsruhe, Prague, Ostrava.
- not to allow reconnaissance and air strikes of the enemy against our groups of forces, especially in the area of the Czech Lands, against aircraft on the airfields, and against important political and economic centers of the country, as well as communications centers. The main effort should be concentrated on protecting the areas of Prague, Ostrava, Brno and Bratislava;
- upon the beginning of combat actions, troops of the Czechoslovak Front with anti-aircraft missile forces to continue to defend most important areas and objects of the country, with forces of fighter aviation to defend objects of the Front after the advancing troops.

Air Defense troops of the Front

Combat tasks:

- Upon the beginning of combat action of the Front, to take part in the general air defense system of the Warsaw Treaty countries with all forces and resources to cover the main group of the Front's troops.
- During the operation, in cooperation with the 7th Air Defense Army, units of 10th and 57th Air Force and the air defense of the 1st Western Front, to cover the troops of the front from the air strikes of the enemy in the process of their passing over the border mountains, and also during the crossing of the rivers Neckar and Rhine to cover the missile forces and command and control centers

9. The 22nd airborne brigade is to be ready to be deployed from the region of Prostějov, Niva, Brodek to the region north of Stuttgart on D4 or to the region of Rastatt on D5, or to the region to the east of Mulhouse on D6 with the task of capturing and holding river crossings on Neckar or Rhine until the arrival of our troops.

10. Reserves of the Front.

The 3rd, 18th, 26th, and 32nd mechanized rifle divisions of the Southern Group of Forces, the 14th and 17th tank divisions are to concentrate in the regions designated on the decision map in the period from D3 to D5.

The 6th engineering brigade by D3 is to be concentrated in the region of Panenský Týnec, and Bor, past Slaný, to be ready to ensure force crossing of the rivers Neckar and Rhine by the troops of the Front.

The 103rd chemical warfare battalion from D2 to be stationed in the region of Hluboš, past Příbram, past Dobříš. The main effort of radiation reconnaissance should be concentrated in the region of Hořovice, Blovice, and Sedlčany.

Objects of special treatment should be deployed in the areas of deployment of command and control centers of the Front, the 331st front brigade, and also in the regions of concentration of the reserve divisions of the Front.

11. Material Maintenance of the Rear The main effort in the material maintenance of the rear of the troops of the Front should be concentrated throughout the entire depth of the operation in the area of the 1st Army's advance.

To support the troops of the 1st Army, the 10th and 57th Air Forces should deploy to the forward front base number 1 and the base of the 10th Air Force in the region to the West of Plzeň by the end of D2; troops of the 4th Army should deploy the forward front base number 2 in the region to the south of Plzeň.

Field pipeline is to be deployed in the direction of Roudnice, Plzeň, Nuremberg, and Karlsruhe and used for provision of aircraft fuel.

Rebuilding of railroads should be planned on the directions Cheb-Nuremberg or Domažlice-Schwandorf-Regensburg-Donauwörth.

Two roads should be built following the 1st Army, and one front road throughout the entire depth of the operation following the 4th Army.

The Ministry of National Defense of the ČSSR will assign material resources, including full replacement of the ammunition used during the operation for the troops of the Czechoslovak Front. Support for the 57th Air Force should be planned taking into account the material resources located in the territory of the ČSSR for the Unified Command.

Use of material resources should be planned as follows:

- ammunition – 45,000 tons
- combustible-lubricating oil – 93, 000 tons
- including aircraft fuel – 40, 000 tons
- missile fuel:
- oxidizer—220 tons
- missile fuel – 70 tons

Automobile transportation of the Front should be able to supply the troops with 70, 000 tons of cargo during the operation.

Transportation of the troops should be able to carry 58, 000 tons of cargo. By the end of the operation the troops should have 80% of mobile reserves available. In D1 and D2 hospital bed network for 10 to 12 thousand sick and wounded personnel is to be deployed.

By the end of the operation the hospital bed network should cover 18% of the hospital losses of the Front.

12. Headquarters of the Front should be deployed from the time "X" plus 6 hours –5 kilometers to the east of Strašice. The axis of movement – Heilbronn, Horb, Epinal.

Reserve Command Post – forest, to the north of Březová

Advanced Command Post – forest 5 kilometers to the east of Dobřany

Rear Command Post – Jince-Obecnice

Reserve Rear Command Post – past Dobřany, Slapy, past Mníše

Headquarters of MNO – object K-116, Prague.

Minister of National Defense of the ČSSR

General of the Army [signed] Bohumír Lomský

Head of the General Staff of Czechoslovak People's Army

Colonel General [signed] Otakar Rytíř

Head of the Operations Department of the General Staff
Major General [signed] Václav Vitanovský
11 October 1964

[Rectangular seal:]
Ministry of National Defense
General Staff – Operations
Department
Section: Operations Room
Received: 20.10.1964
No. 008074/ZD-OS 64, 17
sheets

Executed in one copy of 17 sheets
Executed by Major General Jan Voštera
[signed] Gen. Voštera
14 October 1964

[Translated from the original Russian by Dr. Svetlana Savranskaya, Research Fellow, National Security Archive, George Washington University, and Anna Locher, Research Assistant, Center for Security Studies and Conflict Research, Zurich.]

3. Plan of Actions of the Czechoslovak Army for War Period, 1964



Created by Marcin Rojszczak, AtomInfo

4. Record of Conversation with Colonel (retired) Karel Štěpánek

Q: What were the circumstances leading to the 1964 plan?

Col. Štěpánek: In 1964 I was appointed chief of the operations room of the General Staff. There the work was on an operational plan, the basic questions concerning its use and the buildup of the army. I would like to say that this operational plan was obviously the result - and I can only talk about the period after 1964 - a result of what had developed at the beginning of the 60's after the events in Berlin and Cuba. In this context there also arose the staff of the Czechoslovak front, and the official readying of this front for the fulfillment of its tasks in the event of war began. The staff was perfectly organized, materially secure and gradually trained so that it was able to take part in the war games, which took place in Legnica in Poland. These war games were prepared by the general staff of the armed forces of the USSR and were personally directed by the Minister of Defense of the USSR. When I think of these war games, which were later repeated, I come to the conclusion that the operational plan, which we now have in front of us here and which I saw in the operations room and took part in the preparation of, is the first official document of its kind. This operational plan demonstrates and confirms the position of the Czechoslovak front in the first strategic line of the troops of the Warsaw Pact. Its role was in cooperation with its neighbors - that was the first front (i.e. the 8th Guards Army) which was to attack northwards from the Czechoslovak front - taking advantage of the effects of a nuclear first-strike against enemy troops to begin an offensive operation in the direction of Nuremberg - Stuttgart - Dijon and to reach the area of Dijon within 7 to 8 days and to then be ready for further offensives in the Saône and Rhône valleys in the direction of Lyon.

Q: What were the circumstances and how was the Czechoslovak General Staff assigned to the Soviet General Staff?

Col. Štěpánek: I can only state what I know from my experience. The representatives of the Czechoslovak army - sometimes the Minister of Defense, but mainly the Chief of the General Staff and chief of the operations administration and chief of the operations department - were invited to the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the USSR where they obtained the guidelines for the Czechoslovak front. The Czechoslovak General Staff thought out this operation, and it then was confirmed by the General Staff of the USSR - at that time it was Marshal Zakharov - after arriving in Prague. This plan was worked on in detail as a document for the session of the military council, and it was then approved in the operations room. In connection with this, the question of building-up the army was also approved, i.e. a protocol about the buildup of the army in which the extent and nature of this buildup was given in the operational plan so it could be carried out. This protocol about the buildup of the army was discussed and approved by the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the USSR.

Q: If I have understood you correctly, Colonel, this was the first plan of this nature to be developed?

Col. Štěpánek: I can state that if such documents existed earlier, then they were documents which did not necessarily have this range of strategic operational use of the Czechoslovak army.

Q: Colonel sir, could you return to how the plans and thinking of the Czechoslovak and Soviet General Staffs changed in the 1950's?

Col. Štěpánek: I must say that in the 50's I was an ordinary officer in the operations department, so I can only judge by the extent of my observations and knowledge. In fact up until the establishment of the Warsaw Pact no active use of the Czechoslovak army was planned. Czechoslovak thinking was limited to the defense of the Czechoslovak territory, from the Czechoslovak territory. But with the establishment of the Warsaw Pact, our army became part of the first line of troops of the Warsaw Pact; and then it did not depend on us but on the command of the Warsaw Pact (i.e. the USSR.) Decisions were never made by the staff of the Strategic Armed Forces of the Warsaw Pact but by the General Staff of the Soviet Army, whether they liked it or not. Well, the staff of the Warsaw Pact was made up of 30 officers and generals, who were exclusively Soviet; and from the other armies, such as the Polish or Hungarian, there was only ever one single representative who carried out the function of liaison officer. The staff of the Strategic Forces of the Warsaw Pact could not even resolve these problems.

Q: The whole thing was directed from Moscow?

Col. Štěpánek: The Warsaw Pact was the official reaction to the entry of the Federal Republic of Germany into NATO. In my opinion it was really about the legalization of the use of the troops of the satellite countries in the case of an outbreak of war.

Q: You, then, cannot say from your military experience exactly when there was a change from a plan of territorial defense to the thinking implied in the plan of 1964.

Col. Štěpánek: I cannot.

Q: How long could it take to develop such a plan?

Col. Štěpánek: If it were a question of a time, of tension on the edge of conflict, then it would be a matter of days. However, if it were a process between general staffs then it would be a matter of months because the plan must be developed by all services. Then it must be gone over by the appropriate chiefs, commanders of the forces, and service chiefs, and then it must be "brought" to the troops . . . that is to the front line of the army.

Q: With a little courage to speculate: they must have started working on the plan only in 1964?

Col. Štěpánek: That could be said.

Q: How often should the plan have been updated, and what was its shelf life?

Col. Štěpánek: It could be said that its validity never changed. It was just updated. This resulted from an evaluation of the bi-lateral ratio of strength between NATO and the Warsaw Pact. The space widened or shrank a bit, but basically the objective (up to Dijon) did not change. At least not until 1968.

Q: Did anything in the operation plan change after the fall of Khrushchev in 1964?

Col. Štěpánek: No.

Q: How did the thinking change in 1968? And did that result in any concrete plan?

Col. Štěpánek: It did happen, even before 1968. Of course - I can't say officially - there were certain hints already in 1966, 1967 when there was pressure on our general staff to further increase the strength of the army and extend its tasks. But because there were not then the means, the state did not then have to position further divisions or further special troops so there was disagreement when discussing the operational plan, which became evident in a loss of faith in our general staff after 1966. In 1967 it led to a change of the plan in the sense that the Czechoslovak front no longer had as its task operations on the River Rhine. It's not by chance that in our country, in northern Bohemia and in Moravia, a strong Soviet army was supposed to be installed, several divisions with their own aircraft and nuclear weapons. It was definitely to replace those that had been withdrawn from the Czechoslovak front.

Q: What happened to this plan after 1968?

Col. Štěpánek: Unfortunately I don't know.

Q: What could have been filed in the command room?

Col. Štěpánek: I suppose that... written plans up to 1968 were filed in a special place and they were all worked on again.

Q: Do any records exist about the change in thinking from territorial defense to the plan of 1964?

Col. Štěpánek: The completion of the task had to be reflected in the deployment of forces. So then in switching to an active, that is an aggressive, concept of battle, the dislocation must have changed too. This basic change (i.e. the basic change in deployment) occurred at the turn of the 50's and 60's. At that time the majority of troops were relocated to the territories of Bohemia and Moravia. Here is a concrete example of the divisions - in Bohemia six divisions were deployed, in Moravia two and in Slovakia one.

Q: Colonel, what was the role of Austria and France in the strategic thinking and exercises of the 60's?

Col. Štěpánek: I can only speak from the experience of the war games that took place along the entire strategic front line of the forces of the Warsaw Pact, and I have to state that in all exercises the neutrality of Austria was consistently maintained. One more interesting thing - although the plan counted on operations in France, in the strategic games we only exercised in the territory of the Federal Republic of Germany, at the most creating a bridgehead at the River Rhine. I cannot recall exercises of war formations on French territory.

Q: Was 1966, the year when France left the military structure of NATO, a turning point in the thinking of the Warsaw Pact?

Col. Štěpánek: That can be seen in the war games that took place in 1962. All was played out as I have said - the neutrality of Austria and no exercises on French territory. But a battle with the First French army was expected on German territory. However, I must say that the plan that I have in my hand is the plan of the actions of the first line. This does not dismiss the possibility of battles on French territory and to the west of the Rhine being carried out by units of the second line.

Q: What was the timetable of the first and second line?

Col. Štěpánek: First line to D+7-8, then the second line.

Q: Do you have any knowledge as to what the forces of the conquered territories should do?

Col. Štěpánek: This question was never discussed or exercised, at least as far as I know.

Q: You mentioned military-strategic games. When did these begin and what was the outcome in connection with our plan of 1964?

Col. Štěpánek: These games had the aim of solidifying the whole front line of forces of the Warsaw Pact. I don't know how it was prior to 1962 when the games began. I imagine it was then that the Soviet command began to be interested in making use of the East European armies in a European war.

Q: Thank you for your time.

[conducted by Petr Luňák on 28 March 2000]

5. Comment on the 1964 Warsaw Pact War Plan, by Gen. William E. Odom

“The Plan of Actions of the Czechoslovak People’s Army for War Period, “ dated 1964, is of special interest to me. During 1955-58, I served as company grade officer in a mechanized infantry battalion in the 6th Armored Cavalry Regiment in Germany, and also in the tank battalion of the 11th Airborne Division. The armored cavalry screened the Czech border from Hof in the north to Passau in the South. The 11th Airborne Division operated behind the reconnaissance screen of the armored cavalry and planned to fight delaying actions, slowing down and frustrating advancing Warsaw Pact forces. Having spent months on the border, seeking any sign of an impending invasion by Soviet and Czech forces, and having practiced delaying operations beginning on a line slightly northeast of Amberg-Regensburg-Landshut-Deggendorf, falling back over days and weeks to successive north-south lines of Augsburg-Weissenburg, Ulm-Crailsheim, Heilbronn-Stuttgart, and finally to the Rhine River, this recently published Czech war plan has a very personal impact.

I and my fellow officers naturally wondered if we had a serious chance to achieve our mission in the late 1950s. Judgments were mixed. Most of us realized that we needed many more armored units to deal with the swift offensive the Warsaw Pact forces were obviously preparing. Instead of tanks, we received a reorganization and tactical nuclear weapons. The 11th Airborne was converted to a “pentatomic” division with a flatter command structure and five “battle groups” instead of three regiments with three battalions each. It was to canalize enemy attacking columns and strike them with low-yield nuclear weapons, such as the “Honest John” (a short range rocket system) could deliver.

Whether these tactical nuclear weapons would have been effective is debatable, but had the 11th Airborne Division been a tank division, the odds would have been greatly improved. Back at the Armored School in 1959-60, I learned that a great deal of a nuclear weapon’s effects, such as blast, heat, and radiation, could be mitigated by armor-protected vehicles—considerably more than the popular image at the time and especially today would have it. Not only could armored forces greatly reduce potential casualties from tactical nuclear strikes; they could also move through contaminated areas rather safely, keeping their troops from suffering radiation exposure at dangerous levels. While these realities made use of tactical nuclear weapons far more conceivable, even advantageous, other realities, such as tree blow-down, residual radiation, fires, and other collateral damage, promised that they would complicate military operations for the side that used them. In other words, they were a mixed blessing, but even the undesirable effects – creation of unintended obstructions – might contribute to slowing a Soviet-Warsaw Pact offensive.

In the late 1950s, we supposed that Warsaw Pact forces did not have tactical nuclear weapons. That began to change in the 1960s. In 1963, while I was a student at the US Army Russian Institute in Germany, I recall the excitement caused by the publication of *Voennaya strategiya* [Military Strategy] under the editorship of Marshal V. D. Sokolovsky. Upon reading it, I realized for the first time the essence of Soviet military thinking about nuclear weapons use. Western “deterrence theory” was very new, and it was not taught at army schools. Thus I had no preconceptions other than US Army tactical nuclear doctrine when I confronted the Sokolovsky volume, a compendium of chapters summing up a decade of internal study of nuclear weapons by the Soviet military.

From the moment I read this book, I recognized what must have been the breathtaking scope and speed of Soviet war plans for invading Western Europe. The authors were quite clear on how the speed of warfare could be increased by nuclear weapons use, how concentration of nuclear fires could achieve objectives swiftly that required weeks and months during World War II. Big gaps could be created in minutes in NATO defense lines, and large armored formations could rush through, moving to great depths before halting to consolidate their positions. These Soviet concepts pressed the limits of the conceivable, but I could not dismiss them. In fact, my experience in Germany made them seem quite sensible, even if and breathtakingly daring.

In 1964-66, I served with the US Military Liaison Mission to the Group of Soviet Forces in Germany. This allowed me to travel weekly throughout most of East Germany, periodically observing Soviet forces in field exercises, albeit uninvited. Their patterns of operations were highly consistent with the concepts found in the Sokolovsky volume. Moreover, during this period, virtually all Soviet divisions were re-equipped as either "tank" or "motor rifle." The new T-62 tank with a 125mm main gun was appearing in large numbers to replace the older T-54/55 with a 100mm gun, and armored fighting vehicles for infantry – BTR 40s and BTR 60s – were also coming into more units, providing armor protection and motor transport for infantry units. Self-propelled artillery pieces with armor protection were not as numerous, but they were appearing. These things, as well as many others, reflected the requirements elaborated in general terms in the Sokolovsky book. I realized that I was witnessing a huge modernization process, one designed to exploit battlefield use of nuclear weapons.

Reading the Czechoslovak war plan, I am not the least bit surprised at its bold outlines, certainly not its heavy dependence on nuclear weapons. And whether or not it could have succeeded, I am fairly confident that the Soviet forces involved would have acted according to it. By the mid-1960s Soviet units in Germany had the new armor and motorized capabilities essential for such operations. The East German forces were not as modern but probably able to keep up with Soviet forces if they were winning. Whether the Czech forces could have played their part according to the plan is far more questionable in my view.

A decade later I would learn that the Soviet forces probably did not have adequate motor transport – i.e., trucks – to supply the scale of deep operations envisioned in this Czech war plan. By the late 1970s, however, that assessment was revised to suggest that they had acquired enough trucks to give such war plans a serious chance of success.

For anyone who really wants a sense of what the US military was facing in Central Europe, this Czechoslovak plan is important. Corroborating documents exist in the East Germany military's files that were taken over by West German officials upon reunification in October 1990. Thus the plan cannot be dismissed as an exception or an aberration. It may have been a fantasy, far beyond what the Czechoslovak military could execute, but it certainly strikes me as valid evidence of how Warsaw Pact planners viewed their missions and what Soviet military theorists thought was possible with nuclear weapons.

This kind of evidence, of course, does not confirm the widely held view in Western circles that the Warsaw Pact and its Soviet leadership understood or adhered to Western "deterrence theory" as constructed for the use of nuclear weapons. On the contrary, it shows how wildly misplaced such assumptions about Soviet thinking on nuclear weapons really was. This is not to argue that Soviet

leaders took a reckless view of their use. On the contrary, abundant evidence exists showing how awed they were by nuclear weapons. But they had to decide what they would do with such weapons if war actually broke out. And this Czech war plan shows that they decided to use them like big artillery, to support and speed up a traditional ground invasion of NATO territory. They did not cultivate self-vulnerability, as the United States and NATO did after the 1950s, assuming that battlefield use was irrational and therefore would not occur. Too many students of military affairs have forgotten that the US military initially took a similar view of nuclear weapons as useful battlefield artillery well into the 1960s.

By that time, the US Army was so deeply engaged in Vietnam that it lost interest in tactical nuclear weapons. And Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara introduced his “assured destruction” concept that left no place for tactical nuclear use. Meanwhile, the ideas of “deterrence theory” were capturing the university and think tank worlds in the United States, creating a blind spot for what the Soviet military was thinking and doing.

Only after the end of the Vietnam War did the US Army turn full attention once again to NATO and the Central Front. It was astounded at the size and speed of Soviet operational concepts and forces, now modernized within the context of the thinking in the Sokolovsky volume. Air-Land Battle was the US Army’s response to Soviet war plans which were more breathtaking than the 1964 Czech plan. Air-Land Battle, however, was not based on tactical nuclear weapons but rather the so-called “emerging technologies” and “smart weapons” made possible by microcircuitry technology and lasers. They permitted the production of highly accurate, longer range, artillery and rocketry for NATO’s FOFA, i.e., “follow-on forces attacks .” They also made possible the huge increase in tactical speed and agility provided by M-1 tanks, Bradley Fighting Vehicles, and a number of other new systems allowing fairly deep ground counterattacks and spoiling attacks. Thus the Soviet general staff faced the prospect of a series of NATO deep attacks that might unhinge Soviet offensive operations.

This qualitative military competition between NATO and the Warsaw Pact was too little understood during the 1970s and 80s. It was beginning to make tactical nuclear weapons appear much less attractive to Soviet planners, but as Marshal N. V. Ogarkov and others acknowledged in early 1980s, Soviet industry could not provide this new generation of higher technology weaponry being fielded by NATO. Actually, Soviet planners believed they were woefully short of tactical nuclear weapons until the late 1970s and early 1980s when artillery-delivered nuclear weapons and nuclear warheads for improved tactical ballistic missiles began to arrive in the Soviet forces in East Germany. East German war plans recovered by West German authorities dictated surprisingly large numbers of nuclear weapons for use in the first few days of a war, e.g., as many as 40 warheads to be dropped in the Hamburg vicinity.

This longer term perspective, viewing force developments over three decades, raises interesting questions about the 1964 Czech war plan. The Soviet military simply did not have an adequate menu and inventory of small-yield nuclear weapons in the early 1960s. How, then, was the 1964 war plan to be implemented? Presumably with very large yield weapons – 20 kilotons and larger, not 10 kilotons and smaller, down to less than one kiloton yields, the range for US tactical nuclear weapons in the late 1950s.

An equally important question is whether non-Soviet Warsaw Pact forces, such as those in Czechoslovakia, had adequate armored and motorized forces at the time to execute the massive and rapid ground offensive envisioned by the 1964 war plan.

Both of these questions – about tactical nuclear weapons and about ground forces – need to be answered if we are to make clear sense of the 1964 Czech war plan. Was it practical for Warsaw Pact forces to implement at the time? Or did it express an aspiration considerably beyond both Soviet and Czechoslovak military capabilities at the time?

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