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RUSSIAN MILITARY THOUGHT DURING THE FIRST CHECHEN WAR: THEORY AND PRACTICE ¹

In foreign and Russian historiography, the First Chechen War has been primarily studied through the prism of military affairs and innovations of both sides of the conflict. However, the main drawback was the availability of unused electronic archival resources, as well as the memoirs of the conflict participants. In terms of methodology, attention was paid to the descriptive method (actually reconstructing the clashes and their features), while the analysis of military theory was relegated to the background.

The study traces the development of Russian military thought during the First Chechen War. The author analyzes the strategy as a multifaceted component (ranging from economic and political to military factors). Traced the theoretical foundations and practical implementation of Soviet/Russian doctrine during the aforementioned military conflict. A separate object of study is military tactics as a fundamental element of the implementation of the strategy of the Russian command.

Keywords: Chechen war/wars, Russian, Soviet, tactics, strategy.

Historiography and methodology¹

The topic of the operational and tactical art of the Russian army during the Chechen wars has been repeatedly covered by foreign researchers. Among the individual works, we can highlight the research of Efim Sindler on the first battle for Grozny² or a general study of the Russian style of warfare by Lester Grau and Charles Bartels³. Separate research studies on the experience of urban battles in the Chechen war was carried out by representatives of the RAND (Research and Development) analytical center⁴. Certain aspects of fighting in urban and rural areas during the Chechen wars, as well as the role of the Russian Air Force in this conflict, have been mentioned in the works of Dodge Billingsley and Pavel Bayev⁵.

This topic (especially in the last 10-15 years) has been mainly glorified in Russian historiographical

thought. Such studies focused not so much on scientific research as on reconstructing events “as they were”. A typical example is the research by writer Serhiy Halytskyi⁶ or the sketch by journalist Yevhen Norin⁷. At the same time, in the late 1990s and early 2000s, there were some attempts (mainly by specialized military publishers or initiative groups of veterans) to analyze the actions of the Russian army. The examples are the textbook “Malaja vojna (Organizacija i taktika boevyh dejstvij malyh podrazdelenij)” (1998)⁸ or the intelligence report “Kak vyzhit i pobedit’ v Chechne. Master-klass luchshih voennyh professionalov” (2014)⁹.

Nevertheless, the shortcomings of the current foreign and Russian historiography are also evident. Foreign researchers and analysts are not always able or willing to use Russian-language sources. Usually, this situation is caused by the language barrier or, more specifically, by the genre (e.g., short research or nonfiction), which does not provide a comprehensive analysis of certain events. Resources/sources from the Russian side are often selective, which does not allow for a full qualitative coverage of the topic. Finally, the modern research methodol-

¹ The paper was prepared based on the results of an individual research project within the Invisible University for Ukraine program of the Central European University with the support of the University of Jena and DAAD.

² Efim Sandler, *Battle for Grozny*, vol. 1 (Warwick: Helion and Company, 1994), 5–65.

³ Lester Grau and Charles Bartels, *The Russian Way of War: Force Structure, Tactics and Modernization of the Russian Ground* (Grant Hall: Foreign Military Studies Office, 2016), 24–390.

⁴ Olga Oliker, *Russia’s Chechen Wars 1994-2000. Lessons from Urban Combat* (Santa Monica: RAND, 2001), 1–76.

⁵ Dodge Billingsley and Lester Grau, *Fangs of the lone wolf: Chechen tactics in the Russian-Chechen wars, 1994-2009* (Warwick: Helion and company, 2013), 10–200; Pavel Baev, “Russia’s airpower in the Chechen War: Denial, punishment and defeat,” *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 10:2 (1997), 1–18.

⁶ Sergei Galickij, *Oni zashishali otiechestvo* (Moscow: Pirs, 2006), 1–50.

⁷ Eugenii Norin, *Chechenskaya vojna*, vol. 1 (Moscow: Chernaya sotnia, 2021), 30–120.

⁸ Anatoly Taras, “Malaja vojna” (*Organizacija i taktika boevyh dejstvij malyh podrazdelenij*) (Minsk: Harvest, 2003), 10–500.

⁹ *Kak vyzhit’ i pobedit’ v Chechne. Master-klass luchshih voennyh professionalov*, ed. by Michail Boltunov (Moscow: Ecsmo, 2014), 18–390.

ogy envisages a view of military history not only as an object of detailed reconstruction but also as a theoretical component that includes the analysis of tactics/strategy, social background, military traditions/practices, and the actor's own experiences. In Russian historiography, as noted above, the problem is the excessive glorification of events, as well as the outdated event-descriptive approach. Some studies aimed at scrupulously analyzing the Russian wartime experience have not received their logical continuation, not to mention that they rely on the outdated sources.

Our research will be based on several approaches. The first of them will focus on military theory. According to the military historian Jeremy Black¹⁰, the importance of theory is to trace practical changes in the strategy and tactics of a particular actor. In other words, it is a kind of comparative analysis of the theory (ideas) and practice (implementation) of the military art of the army system within a particular army. The other approach is identical to the first one but focuses on the peculiarities of local military practices in a certain period. In other words, the *zeitgeist* ("spirit of the times")¹¹. Finally, in our opinion, Soviet and early Russian military thought are integral to each other (especially in the context of the First Chechen War). Considering the short period between the fall of the USSR and the invasion of Chechnya, the initial neglect of the army by the political leadership of the Russian Federation, and the frequent overlap between elements of Soviet and Russian military practice during the First Chechen War (as discussed below), it is worth considering the above theory of these two entities as a single whole.

Theory of Soviet strategy and its realization in Russia

In analyzing Soviet strategy, it is better not to associate it exclusively with military tactics. For the military theorists of the Soviet Union, strategy existed as a multidimensional object. Its main components were the so-called "sociopolitical" and "military" factors. The former were mainly related to the political course of the state and the development of the Soviet Union's economy, while the latter were related to the operational and tactical activities of the armed forces¹².

The roots of the "military" component of Soviet strategy were under the direct influence of one of

the founders of the Soviet Union, Vladimir Lenin. Lenin, being familiar with the theoretical work of Clausewitz and Machiavelli, believed that war "is simply a continuation of politics by other (violent) means"¹³. The only exception was that he saw the labor "class" as its main actor, not states. In addition, the experience of foreign intervention in 1918-1921 and the immediate neighborhood with recent enemies gave rise to the idea of the Soviet Union being surrounded by a "tight ring" of "imperialist countries," supplemented by the ideological postulate of "classes" confrontation¹⁴. Thus, the military component significantly dominated Soviet politics.

At the same time, the concept of "the rear" ("tyl") was fundamental to Soviet strategy. It was linked to the country's social and economic power. The roots of the latter can be traced to the party ideology of the Soviet Union. Lenin's doctrine was based on the thesis of the unchanging development of societies, scientific progress, and the subsequent class struggle caused by these factors¹⁵. At the same time, such attention to the economic factor of the strategy was caused by the actual practical experience of the Soviet Union. The latter had a fairly successful practice of five-year plans ("pyatiletki") that increased the overall level of industrialization and militarization of the country. In wartime, "the rear" was understood as a kind of second "front" that combined not only economic (industrial centers, logistics, communications) but also social (a place of personnel creation, the core of the party leadership, public support) needs of the country¹⁶.

The third element of the Soviet Union's strategy was the political vision of the "working masses" and the party. In other words, diplomacy. The latter, on the one hand, was allowed certain «deviations» not related to Soviet ideology (military theorists often cited the example of Lenin, who, to preserve the political entity and create a regular army, had to sign the Brest-Litovsk Peace Treaty¹⁷). At the same time, the main idea of Soviet diplomacy was about confrontation with "imperialist" powers. Therefore, any dialogue was to take place only if the Soviet Union gained a military or political advantage over its enemies (for example, the resumption of negotiations

¹³ Vasilij Zemskov, "Questions on the History and Theory of Military Science," *Voyennaya Mysl* 4 (1971): 18–20.

¹⁴ Valentin Dmitriev, "Diplomacy and Military Strategy," *Voyennaya Mysl* 7 (1971): 49–51.

¹⁵ Siergiej Illin, "The 24th CPSU Congress and Questions of the Scientific Guidance of Ideological Work with the Troops," *Voyennaya Mysl* 9 (1971): 4.

¹⁶ Konstantin Abramov and Mikhail Ivanov, "Leninist ideas Concerning the Role of the Rear in Warfare," *Voyennaya Mysl* 9 (1971): 18–20; Seleznev, "On the questions," 8.

¹⁷ Dmitriev, "Diplomacy," 51.

¹⁰ Jeremy Black, *Introduction to global military history* (New York: Routledge, 2024), 327.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 335.

¹² Ivan Seleznev, "On the questions of the factors of victory in modern warfare," *Voyennaya Mysl* 6 (1959): 5.

with Romania in 1944 after the Red Army approached its border¹⁸).

Thus, the Soviet strategy included both a political and socioeconomic component, as well as an exclusively military “solution” to existing external problems.

Unlike the Soviet Union, the Russian Federation entered the First Chechen War with only one of the three components mentioned above – a strategy that appealed exclusively to a military solution. The first, socioeconomic component, could not be implemented at the time. The reason for this was a) the initial incapacity of the Russian economy after the collapse of the USSR and the struggle for control of the former raw material resources of the RSFSR between the presidential government (Yeltsin) and the so-called “seven bankers” (“semibankirschina”) (newly emerging business circles, former directors of Soviet factories¹⁹), b) ambiguous public opinion on military actions, not least influenced by the openness/independence of the media space²⁰.

The second factor, the pragmatism of diplomacy, gave way to the radicalization of political circles and society on both sides. The Italian researcher Mario Ricardo Cuciola proposed to interpret the nature of relations between the Center (Moscow) and the Soviet outskirts through the prism of the so-called definition of “transformismo” (“transformation”). This idea consisted of mutual concessions by local and central Soviet elites on various issues (e.g., preservation of the confessional system or tribal land administration in exchange for loyalty to the Soviet government²¹). Thus, after the disappearance of Soviet control in the Republic of Ichkeria, power passed to fully formed local elites — people from the clergy (such as Ruslan Khasbulatov) or representatives of local semi-financial, semi-religious clans (such as Yaragi Mamadayev²²). As can be understood, they felt, in a certain sense, detached from the Center in Moscow during the Soviet and early post-Soviet Russian Federation eras.

The aforementioned factor was also radicalised by a memory policy of the Soviet Union, in the narrative of which the Caucasian peoples (especially Chechens) remained accomplices of the “fascists”

during World War II²³. Thus, under Soviet rule, there were prerequisites for identifying Chechens as an “other” ethnic group.

During the period of the Russian Federation, the situation was radicalized by the influx of a large labor force from non-Russian regions (including Chechens) to Moscow and St. Petersburg, which partially filled vacant positions in the context of the economic crisis²⁴. Certain proto-nationalist radical circles (Zhyrinovsky, Ruts koy) have also gained more power at the expense of media freedom (which resulted in more than a quarter of the votes in the State Duma)²⁵. Nationalist circles were partially supported by the President of the Russian Federation, Boris Yeltsin. As Anatoly Lieven notes, in the presidential circle, one could often hear about a “small victorious war” (“malenkaya pobednaya voyna”) that was supposed to distract the population from the internal problems of the country²⁶.

In the context of the actual abandonment of “pragmatic” diplomacy, radicalization of government circles, and economic and social stagnation of the rear, the Russian leadership had only one option for its strategy – military conflict. Thus, the Russian doctrine has actually “degraded” to the level of the First World War, in which, according to Jeremy Black, the main goal was military coercion and territorial capture of an enemy state, without regard to personal resources and local political and social factors²⁷.

The military component of Soviet/Russian strategy

Since we have paid attention to the military factor of the Russian/late Soviet strategy, it is worth briefly covering its main components. First of all, there is the offensive nature of the Soviet army’s actions. This view of Soviet theorists was based on several factors. The first was the experience of World War II²⁸. In this context, attention was drawn to both the successful operations of the Soviet Army (the occupation of the Baltic states and Bessarabia in the 1940s) and the reasons for the failures of 1941 (unrealized plans of the Soviet “march to Europe”, the Third Reich’s “blitzkrieg”)²⁹.

¹⁸ Ibid., 55.

¹⁹ Anatol Liven, *Chechnja: Tragedija rossijskoj moshhi. Per-vaja chechenskaja vojna* (Moscow: Russkij fond sodejstvija obrazovaniju i nauke, 2019), 39.

²⁰ “Rastsvet rossijskih SMI. Epoha Eltsina, 1992-1999,” Yeltsinmedia. com, Accessed January 18, 2025, <http://www.yeltsinmedia.com/>.

²¹ Mario Ricardo Cuciola, “The transformist. The evolution and adaptability of Sharaf Rashidov’s regime in Soviet Uzbekistan,” in *Moscow and the Non-Russian republics in the Soviet Union*, ed. by Li Bennich-Björkman, Saulius Grybkauskas (London: Routledge, 2022), 92.

²² Liven, *Chechnja*, 121–123.

²³ Natalie Nougayrède, offline conversation with author, December 7, 2024.

²⁴ Jeff Sahadeo, *Golosa sovetskih okrain: zhizn’ juzhnyh migrantov v Leningrade i Moskve* (Moscow: NLO, 2023), 376.

²⁵ Liven, *Chechnja*, 175.

²⁶ Ibid., 175.

²⁷ Jeremy Black, *Military Strategy: A Global History* (New Heaven: Yale University Press, 2020), 207–215.

²⁸ Black, *Military Strategy*, 266–267.

²⁹ Iosif Gusakovskij, “Some questions on the Theory of Military Art,” *Voyennaya Mysl* 3 (1960): 3–10.

Another important factor was the changes caused by the “arms race” between the USSR and the United States. The main means of destroying the enemy force in the Cold War was a massive strike with missile weapons (nuclear and ballistic). To somehow minimize their losses from the above-mentioned weapons, Soviet theorists envisaged an attack with available units (without waiting for the full concentration of their own forces) on enemy positions and a quick breakthrough to go beyond the enemy’s nuclear and ballistic weapons and destroy its centers (launchers).

The experience of the Second World War and the initial stages of the Cold War confrontation also influenced other aspects of Soviet strategy. Attention to the aviation component increased. After the Second World War, the airplane became not only a means of destruction and cover for ground troops but also a carrier of high-precision missile weapons, a direct means of destroying enemy ground forces³⁰.

The American experience of the Vietnam War (creation of airborne units) provoked the Soviet command to rethink the role of the Airborne Forces (“vozdušno-desantnyie voyska” (VDV)). On their basis, highly mobile units were created, which, with fire support and airborne assault (helicopters, airplanes), could carry out independent operations in the rear and near the immediate front line³¹. At the same time, the latter were reinforced by motorized units (tanks, armored personnel carriers), which increased firepower and mobility after the landing stage. The creation of such military formations was dictated by the aforementioned Soviet doctrine (a quick victory in a “conventional” battle before the threat of a nuclear strike).

The anti-colonial movements in Asia and Africa created new fronts of confrontation between the United States and the USSR. This policy was confirmed by the 24th Congress of the CPSU in 1971. The theses of the Congress emphasized “resistance to the aggression of imperialism” in the context of the newly emerging anti-colonial movements³². Thus, fighting on the continents required the creation of specialized units that could be deployed in relatively short periods to potential war theaters in Africa or Asia. At the same time, to cover the northern coast of the Warsaw Pact countries (Baltic Sea islands) and to directly support the advancing land

group in Europe, it was necessary to create specialized naval units that could take control of enemy points of resistance³³. The main implementation was the use of marines, which, with the help of specialized means of transportation and rapid deployment, could become the core of the Soviet grouping in the above-mentioned locations³⁴. Finally, this policy was facilitated by the Soviet Army’s experience with the use of this type of troops on the coast of the Crimean Peninsula in 1942-1943.³⁵

As mentioned above, the Soviet strategy appealed to Lenin’s thesis of the need for scientific development as the basis for future “class” struggle. This thesis can be applied to the strategy chosen by the Soviet Union in its confrontation with the United States. According to Soviet theorists, one of the main components of the victory of the Soviet Army was its supply of modern weapons. The weapons were required to be a) capable of quickly supplying the army (in other words, mass-produced) and b) “no worse or better in terms of characteristics... than the weapons possessed by capitalist countries”³⁶. In this regard, the attention of Soviet theorists to unmanned reconnaissance aircraft is illustrative. The latter were considered promising due to their «simplicity» of production, low visibility, and practicality (since they did not require an airport)³⁷.

Finally, an important approach of the Soviet victorious strategy was psychological pressure on the enemy’s political circles and population to ensure its further surrender. According to the Soviet postulate, war accomplishes political tasks by forcible coercion» to force the enemy to negotiate. It was necessary to destroy its armed forces and to do so in a short period, without waiting for the enemy to respond. Another way to force the enemy’s surrender was to exert psychological pressure on its population. In the article “On Methods of Influencing the Decision of the Enemy” published in the December issue of *Military Thought*, Artillery General Mikhail Ionov suggested using methods of forcing the enemy to surrender, identical to those used during the bombing of Dresden in 1945 or Hiroshima and Nagasaki³⁸.

³³ Fedor Saviel’ev and Oleg Shulman, “Organization of a landing of Amphibious Forces,” *Voyennaya Mysl* 3 (1970): 4.

³⁴ Donald Cliff, “Soviet Naval Infantry: A New Capability?,” *Naval War College Review* 10 (1971): 90–91.

³⁵ Saviel’ev, Shulman, “Organization,” 8–10.

³⁶ Ivan Voloshin, “Theory of the Operation in Depth and Trends in Its Development,” *Voyennaya Mysl* 8 (1978): 17.

³⁷ Valentin Chetverikov, “Manned aircraft or Pilotless Systems of Aerial Reconnaissance,” *Voyennaya Mysl* 1 (1974): 4; Mikhail Ivanov, “The capabilities of the Reconnaissance Forces and Means of a Front and Their Employment,” *Voyennaya Mysl* 1 (1976): 5.

³⁸ Mikhail Ionov, “On the methods of influencing an opponent’s decisions,” *Voyennaya Mysl* 12 (1971): 59.

³⁰ Black, *Military Strategy*, 271.

³¹ Andersen Drozhzhin, “Basic Trends in the Organizational Development and Employment of Army Aviation,” *Voyennaya Mysl* 9 (1971): 41–47.

³² Siergiej Lukonin and Andrei Migolat’ev, “The 24th CPSU Congress on Current Problems in the building of Communism and the Strengthening of the defensive might of the USSR,” *Voyennaya Mysl* 5 (1971): 1–24.

Soviet/Russian tactics in practice. The First Chechen War case.

The study of the theory and practice of Soviet/early Russian tactics of that time is full of contradictions. On the one hand, several individual theoretical aspects were successfully tested during the First Chechen War. One of them is the tactic of storming enemy defenses by maneuvering units. For Soviet theorists, the practice of bypassing fortified points and their surroundings dates back to the time of the Russian Civil War. This element of tactics is associated with the intensive use of cavalry by the Soviet army, which, in turn, was due to the peculiarities of the economic development of the Russian Empire (relatively low level of industrialization) and the geographical features of its territory (steppe)³⁹. During the Second World War, this tactic was tested in larger formations – fronts, tank armies, motorized rifle and cavalry divisions, and brigades⁴⁰. In the First Chechen War, this Soviet element of tactics was repeatedly used to capture strongholds. In 1995, during the storming of the village of Khidi-Khutor, units of the 136th and 166th motorized rifle brigades, under the threat of flanking from both sides, forced the local garrison to retreat without engaging in protracted fighting⁴¹. In a similar maneuver in 1995, the aforementioned 166th Brigade and other units managed to force the enemy to retreat from Grozny.

A successful Soviet innovation was the creation of independent, reinforced motorized infantry units, the prototype of modern battalion tactical groups (“batalyonno-takticheskie grupy”). The practice of creating similar formations can be traced back to World War II. Initially, these were so-called “formations” (“soydineniya”) consisting of separate tank units (mainly armies) and aimed at expanding the breakthrough in the enemy’s front and defeating its reinforcements or logistics routes⁴². For this purpose, formations were reinforced by several motorized rifles or infantry battalions and artillery. While the infantry was expanding the bridgehead, tank and motorized rifle units were breaking through to the enemy’s rear. The Soviet command noticed that during such “raids,” these units were too far from the main forces and acted independently. Subsequently, smaller groups (tank or motorized rifle corps, divisions, and brigades reinforced by other branches of

the armed forces) were formed to enter the enemy’s rear after breaking through its defenses.

During the first conflict in Chechnya, in 1994–1996, several so-called “consolidated detachments” (“svodnyie otryady”) were formed, consisting of several platoons or companies of various branches of the armed forces (tank, airborne, motorized infantry). However, this situation was not always due to the requirements of the tactics of the time. In the context of the downsizing and conversion of the Russian army to contract service, the lack of payments caused by the collapse of the Soviet economic system and the outflow of experienced personnel to the national outskirts, the units of the Russian Federation were short of personnel⁴³. To bring the number of personnel up to the required standard, various units were combined into separate formations. Their effectiveness depended on the level of training of the personnel. As one of the officers of that time noted, commanders and privates often had no idea of their subordination⁴⁴.

At the same time, in more trained (mostly elite) units, the level of task performance was much higher, not to mention lower casualty rates. Such units usually perform specialized operations in isolation from other forces. One such combined group that stormed Grozny in 1994 consisted of paratroopers from the 106th Airborne Assault Division, scouts from units of the Main Intelligence Directorate (“Glavnoe razvedyivatelnoe upravlenie (GRU)”), and several armored vehicles (tanks and infantry fighting vehicles). The aforementioned unit managed to establish an appropriate level of interaction between the detachments and take control of one of the enemy’s airports in Mosdok by airborne assault⁴⁵. Subsequently, this unit was able to take up positions in the center of Grozny and destroy several enemy defensive points in the city.

The aforementioned Soviet desire for massive, effective weapons was also seen in the fighting in Chechnya. In 1994–1996, a specialized reconnaissance regiment, the 45th Airborne Regiment, was created. It was known for “Bee” (“Pchela”) drones (the latest Soviet development of this class), which were repeatedly used to detect enemy troop concentrations⁴⁶.

³⁹ Valentin Dmitriev, “Diplomacy and Military Strategy,” *Voyennaya Mysl* 7 (1971): 56.

⁴⁰ Ivan Voloshin, “Theory of the Operation in Depth and Trends in Its Development,” *Voyennaya Mysl* 8 (1978): 28.

⁴¹ Konstantin Masaliyov, *Pamyatnik beshenoy pehote* (Ekaterinburg: Storm, 2021), 72–89.

⁴² Khristofor Dzhelaukhov, “Combating strategical reserves on the Theater of Military operations,” *Voyennaya Mysl* 11 (1964): 50–54.

⁴³ *Chechenskaya vojna: rabota nad oshibkami*, ed. by Michail Efimov (Moscow: Ecsmo, 2009), 60; *Zhestokie uroki Chechenskoj vojny*, ed. by Michail Boltunov (Moscow: Ecsmo, 2009), 151.

⁴⁴ Konstantin Masaliyov, *Pamyatnik beshenoy pehote* (Ekaterinburg: Storm, 2021), 14.

⁴⁵ *Chechenskaya vojna: Boevyie operatsii*, ed. by Aleksiej Sukholskij (Moscow: Ecsmo, 2009), 230–248.

⁴⁶ Alexandr Lebediev, “45 ОПИ ВДВ РФ,” accessed May 11, 2020, <https://www.warchechnya.ru/45-orp-vdv-rf/>; “Udarnaya sila — Beskontaktnaya vojna,” You Tube, accessed March 21, 2003, https://youtu.be/ZCIs4tLC_M?si=nB9674uBkYJ4jEby.



Screen 1. Chechen detachment, detected by Russian drone “Pchela-1T” (“Udarnaya sila – Beskontaktnaya voyna,” YouTube, Accessed March 21, 2003, https://youtu.be/ZCIs4tlC__M?si=nB9674uBkYJ4jEby)



Screen 2. Russian GRU sniper during the battle of Grozny, 1995 (“Chechnya – Grozny Street Battles Intensify,” Associated Press YouTube archive, Accessed January 24, 1995, <https://youtu.be/7Uhumjm84ds?si=E2va3rZ6bvY1OXa7>)

At the same time, certain elements of the Soviet military doctrine did not prove to be effective in practice. Last but not least, this was due to the lack of clear instruction on how to overcome “internal threats”⁴⁷ (terrorists and other military formations). Therefore, Russian units had to invent or borrow certain elements of tactics from the enemy.

One of the main problems for the Russian army was urban combat (the storming of Grozny is often cited as an example). One of these issues is the lack of “light” reconnaissance units, the so-called “yegers” or “marksmen” (snipers)⁴⁸. At the same

time, the latter were available in the enemy ranks. As a result, this role, by default, was taken by GRU special forces units, from which sniper groups were selected.

At the same time, there were shortcomings in the intelligence of the enemy’s defense (especially in cities such as Grozny). Reconnaissance groups operated a short distance from the main forces⁴⁹. Thus, the entire column of federal troops could be attacked by Chechen units at once. Considering the experience gained, some units (such as the 166th Motorized Rifle Brigade) began to create separate inde-

⁴⁷ Chechenskaya voyna: rabota nad oshibkami, 75.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 135.

⁴⁹ Konstantin Masaliov, *Pamyatnik beshenoy pehote* (Ekaterinburg: Storm, 2021), 102.

pendent motorized reconnaissance groups of light vehicles (mainly armored personnel carriers), which, under the cover of aviation (usually two Mi-24 or Ka-52 helicopters), conducted reconnaissance of enemy defenses. After completion of the reconnaissance, a signal was given for the entire column of troops to move⁵⁰.

Among the main borrowings of the federal army from the Chechen troops was the use of small groups (the so-called “troika”) that carried out ambushes or raids into the enemy’s rear. The best suited for this role were the GRU’s special forces units, which had been trained with this purpose in Soviet times⁵¹. At the same time, the implementation of this tactic was quite spontaneous. A soldier of the 166th Brigade, Konstantin Masalev, recalls that near the village of Komsomolske, chasing an enemy group in the local forest, his unit had to split into small infantry units in search of the remnants of enemy troops⁵².

Conclusion

Throughout this research, one of our main theses has been repeatedly confirmed: the study of theory is important for understanding the subsequent practice of the Russian military leadership. The Soviet military strategy was inextricably linked to military tactics, as well as to the political and socioeconomic components. The armed confrontation coexisted with the pragmatism of Soviet diplomacy, the economic power of the “rear,” and the support of the “masses”.

⁵⁰ Masaliyov, *Pamyatnik beshenoy pehote*, 201.

⁵¹ Chechenskaya vojna: rabota nad oshibkami, 108–116.

⁵² Masaliyov, *Pamyatnik beshenoy pehote*, 117.

Although the political and military leadership of the Russian Federation tried to copy the aforementioned strategic “trinity,” it could not ensure the proper level of interaction between these factors. In contrast to the always available armed force, the flexible policy of the Soviet Union gave way to the theses of the radicalized masses. The socioeconomic component of the strategy was faced with a lack of understanding of the military invasion by society and the economic devastation of the country. Thus, the Russian Federation entered the war in a deliberately losing position.

The military factor of Russian strategy was rooted in Soviet military doctrine. The latter appealed to an ideological basis (technological development as a prerequisite for class struggle) and the practical experience of the Civil War and World War II. Thanks to this “inheritance”, the Russian Federation achieved from the previous state a modern technological base (production of unmanned aerial vehicles, a significant aviation group), a reformed army (airborne troops and marines), military and theoretical knowledge (the idea of effective psychological and armed influence on hostile political states, tested by previous military experience).

Certain theoretical components of Soviet tactics (maneuver and encirclement, combination of units from different detachments) were successfully used by Russian troops during the first armed clashes with Chechen units. At the same time, unsuccessful episodes of Soviet military theory realisation prompted the federal army for the invention of new practices (e.g., the emergence of light raiding units and changes in approaches to urban combat).

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РОСІЙСЬКА ВІЙСЬКОВА ДУМКА ПІД ЧАС ПЕРШОЇ ЧЕЧЕНСЬКОЇ ВІЙНИ: ТЕОРІЯ ТА ПРАКТИКА

У закордонній і російській історіографії тематику Першої чеченської війни, першочергово, досліджували крізь призму воєнної справи та новацій обох сторін конфлікту. Головним недоліком залишалася наявність невикористаних електронних архівних ресурсів, а також спогадів учасників конфлікту. В плані методології увагу надавали описовому методу (фактично реконструкції боєзіткень та їхніх особливостей), натомість аналіз воєнної теорії відводили на другий план.

У поданому дослідженні простежено розвиток російської воєнної думки в період Першої чеченської війни. Здійснено аналіз російської / радянської стратегії як багатопланової складової (починаючи від економічного та політичного і закінчуючи військовим чинником). Розглянуто теоретичні підоснови і практичне втілення воєнної доктрини в період згаданого військового конфлікту. Окремим об'єктом дослідження є воєнна тактика, як основоположний елемент реалізації стратегії російського командування.

Ключові слова: чеченська війна / війни, російський, радянський, тактика, стратегія.

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