

Group and, perhaps more importantly, at the integrated theatre level of operations (the TVD or TMO).⁸⁰ These major yet largely evolutionary changes in strategies and organization have been formulated to take advantage of improvements in Soviet weapons system technology as well as to address the changing nature of NATO conventional and tactical nuclear defence plans, particularly NATO's increased emphasis on "Active Defence." Active Defence (which has itself evolved) combines features of both passive (or positional) and mobile defence and, as a consequence, has confronted the Soviet Union and its WTO allies with a difficult collection of operational problems. The practical integration of ground, air and naval forces at a high (theatre) level of command, the development of highly mobile, massive conventional firepower, and the continued refinement of elaborate operational plans stressing the flexible use of fast-moving, hard-hitting armoured formations have been the Soviet response.

The increasingly integrated, theatre-level force structures (the TMO commands) can undertake any of a variety of air, anti-air, airborne, amphibious, naval and front (essentially "ground force") operations in order to destroy an adversary military force in the shortest possible time. The strategic objective has increasingly come to be seen as the effective penetration and destruction of NATO conventional defences *before* NATO could use tactical or theatre nuclear weapons. The use of an Operational Manoeuvre Group (OMG) is only one of a number of Front options and hardly constitutes the entirety of TMO operations.⁸¹ To appreciate (but not overestimate) the importance of Operational Manoeuvre Groups, one must recall that the dominant options for the TMO com-

mand, in the event of imminent war, would include a number of air, anti-air and front operations. These options would be integrated and designed to counter NATO's "active defence" strategy before tactical nuclear weapons could be used. The air and anti-air operations would seek to destroy (in this case) NATO aircraft, air bases, air defence resources, nuclear storage sites and C3I facilities while defending against the counter-employment of NATO air resources against WTO air bases and ground forces. While air and anti-air operations are crucial to the success of any campaign, Soviet doctrine continues to place an overwhelming emphasis on the rapid and decisive use of large, highly mobile armoured ground forces. Within this context, the Operational Manoeuvre Group has become the logical extension of previous Soviet conventional military thinking – a smaller, more autonomous, more sophisticated and harder-hitting version of the attack force previously drawn from the "second echelon." However, the

OMG concept is obviously more flexible, more dynamic and potentially more materially and psychologically damaging than the more deliberate [second] echelon concept. It makes more creative use of the technical potential of new equipment [especially the mobile fire-power noted earlier in this chapter] ... [but it] can only be used effectively ... if the operation has achieved surprise. ... [P]rovided some surprise is achieved, and the defence is not well estab-

⁸⁰ The most important "Group level" for our purposes is the Group of Soviet Forces, Germany (GSFG) while the most important Theatre of Military Operations is the "Western TMO" which includes the central European region, the alpine region of Italy and Austria as well as the southern half of Sweden and Norway. The North Western and South Western TMOs encompass the remaining European territory.

⁸¹ See John G. Hines and Philip A. Peterson, "The Warsaw Pact Strategic Offensive – The OMG in Context," *International Defence Review*, no. 10, 1983, p. 1391 and their excellent "The Conventional Offensive in Soviet Theatre Strategy," *ORBIS*, vol. 27, no. 3 (Fall 1983). Other excellent discussions of OMGs and contemporary Soviet conventional doctrine include: C. J. Dick, "Soviet Doctrine, Equipment Design and Organization – An Integrated Approach to War," *International Defence Review*, no. 12, 1983 pp. 1715-1722; C. J. Dick, "Soviet Operational Manoeuvre Groups – A Closer Look," *International Defence Review*, no. 6, 1983 pp. 769-776; and C. N. Donnelly, "The Soviet Operational Manoeuvre Group – A New Challenge for NATO," *International Defence Review*, no. 9, 1982 pp. 1177-1186.

