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SOVIET ANALYZES ALLIES' LAOS PUSH

Sees a 'Failure' and Says
U.S. Underestimated Foe

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MOSCOW, April 28 — The Soviet Defense Ministry newspaper, in an analysis of the recent Laotian operation, said today that the South Vietnamese suffered heavy losses because American advisers underestimated the opposing forces in the area and were caught by surprise by the introduction of tanks and heavy artillery.

A lengthy rundown in Krasnaya Zvezda on the 45-day incursion said the allied intervention in Cambodia last spring was more successful than the Laotian operation because "liberation" forces in Cambodia were less experienced and organized than those in Laos and because United States ground forces were committed to battle.

The Laotian heration, which ended on March 25, was carried out with American air and logistic support. Its announced purpose was to cut enemy supply lines.

The operation demonstrated the "bankruptcy" of the Nixon Administration's Vietnamization policy, aimed at turning the fighting over to the South Vietnamese, the newspaper said. Without American ground forces, it said, Saigon's troops were no match for the "liberation forces." The headline over the article was "The Laotian Failure of the Pentagon."

Called a 'Serious Blow'

It said that although the Nixon Administration denied that the Laotian operation had failed, "a fact remains a fact and in that country a serious blow was delivered to the entire Asian policy and strategy of the United States."

Krasnaya Zvezda, in keeping with Communist practice, did not mention that the Laotian and Cambodian operations were directed against North Vietnamese forces and supplies. The Soviet press has never acknowledged that North Vietnamese are anywhere but in their own country.

In private conversation, however, Soviet officials readily acknowledge that the North Vietnamese are fighting in other countries, and Americans are that "they have more right to be there than you do."

Although the Krasnaya Zvezda analysis was heavily weighted in favor of the Communist side, it did contain the fullest exposition of what happened in Laos to appear in the Soviet Union and had some items of particular interest to its military readers. It noted, for instance, the major role played by helicopters in ferrying forces behind the lines and in the heavy use made of air power to prepare for the attack.

Miscalculations Are Seen

But it suggested that the operation was doomed to fail because the element of surprise was lacking and because of miscalculations.

It said that "the aggressors did not take into account the real situation and this led the American generals to underestimate the forces of their opponent and to overestimate their own chances—a typical mistake of bourgeois strategists."

"The American command miscalculated on being able to carry off a surprise attack. As a result, the command of the liberation forces was able early to regroup its forces to establish a ground superiority in the main direction of the opponents attack," it said.

"The appearance of tanks and heavy artillery (122 mm. and 152mm.) turned out to be unexpected for the invaders, as were the well-organized anti-aircraft system and the high fighting ability of the liberation forces," it said.

Soviet military readers could be expected to know that the heavy weapons were primarily Soviet-built and supplied to North Vietnam.

Question and Answer

The paper asked, "Why in this operation did the Saigon forces show worse fighting qualities than in Cambodia?" and gave this answer:

"The fact is that in Cambodia last spring, the mercenaries struck together with Americans. Besides this, it is necessary to note that the National Liberation Army of Laos has existed for more than 20 years and has a rich experience in battle and the armed forces of the Cambodian patriots were just formed at that time."

Meanwhile, the Soviet press continues to pay heavy attention to the antiwar demonstrations in the United States. The general theme of the articles is that the Administration's policies are under widespread attack from all sections of American people.

Izvestia's New York correspondent said today that the mood was shared by both Democrats and Republicans and was due largely to the "failure" of the Laotian operation and the outrage in the country over the Calley case, in which First Lieut. William L. Calley Jr. of the United States Army was convicted of murdering Vietnamese civilians.