AD A120622

FTD-ID(RS)T-0211-81

FOREIGN TECHNOLOGY DIVISION

HISTORY OF THE GREAT PATRIOTIC WAR OF THE SOVIET UNION 1941-1945

by

P.N. Pospelov

DTIC
SELECTE
OCT 21 1982
S D
H

DTIC FILE COPY

Approved for public release;
distribution unlimited.

82 10 21 044

EDITED TRANSLATION

FTD-ID(RS)T-0211-81 20 August 1982

MICROFICHE NR: FTD-82-C-001126

HISTORY OF THE GREAT PATRIOTIC WAR OF THE SOVIET UNION, 1941-1945

By: P.N. Pospelov

English pages: 1299

Source: Istoriya Velikoy Otechestvennoy Voyny Sovetskogo Soyuza, 1941-1945, Publishing House "Voyennoye", Moscow, 1962, pp. 1-736

Country of origin: USSR
Translated by: SCITRAN
F33657-81-D-0263
Requester: ARMY
Approved for public release; distribution unlimited.

THIS TRANSLATION IS A RENDITION OF THE ORIGINAL FOREIGN TEXT WITHOUT ANY ANALYTICAL OR EDITORIAL COMMENT. STATEMENTS OR THEORIES ADVOCATED OR IMPLIED ARE THOSE OF THE SOURCE AND DO NOT NECESSARILY REFLECT THE POSITION OR OPINION OF THE FOREIGN TECHNOLOGY DIVISION.

PREPARED BY:

TRANSLATION DIVISION
FOREIGN TECHNOLOGY DIVISION
WP-AFB, OHIO.

Accession For
NTIS GRA&I ☑
DTIC TAB ☐
Unannounced ☐
Justification
By
Distribution/
Availability Codes
Dist | Avail and/or Special
A

DTIC COPY INSPECTED 2

Table of Contents

U.S. Board on Geographic Names Transliteration System iii

Part One, Liberation of Leningrad Oblast', Right-Bank Ukraine, and the Crimea vii

Chapter One, The Military-Political Situation at the Beginning of the Winter Offensive 1

Chapter Two, The Offensive of Soviet Troops at Leningrad and Novgorod 44

Chapter Three, The Victory of the Red Army in the South. Liberation of Right-Bank Ukraine and the Crimea 96

The Results of the Military Operations of the Red Army in the Winter Campaign of 1944 191

Part Two, Complete Expulsion of the German Invaders from Soviet Territory and the Liberation of the Peoples of Southeast Europe 198

Chapter Four, Position and Plans of the Belligerents by the Summer of 1944 199

Chapter Five, The Advance of Soviet Troops in the Karelian Isthmus and in Southern Karelia 252

Chapter 6, The Rout of the German Fascist Army Group "Centre." The Liberation of Belorussia 288

Chapter 7, The Completion of the Liberation of the Ukraine 383

Chapter 8, Beginning the Building of a New, Democratic Poland 431

Chapter Nine, The Route of Army Group "South Ukraine." The Expulsion of the Fascist Occupiers from Soviet Moldavia 479

Chapter Ten, The Liberation of Bulgaria 556

Chapter Eleven, The Slovakian People's Uprising and the Advance of the Soviet and Czecholovak Forces in the East Carpathians 591

Chapter Twelve, The Liberation of the Soviet Baltic Republics - Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. The Defeat of the Enemy in the Artic 633

Chapter Thirteen, The Defeat of the German Fascist Forces in Hungary and its Withdrawal from the War 703

Chapter Fourteen, The Liberation of the Peoples of Yugoslavia. The Retreat of the German Forces from Albania and Greece 782

Chapter Fifteen, The Operations of the Navy of the Soviet Union on Naval Lines of Communication 843

Chapter Sixteen, The Struggle of the Soviet People in the Enemy's Rear in 1944 884

The Results of the Military Operations of the Red Army in the Summer-Fall Campaign of 1944 942

Part Three, Military-Political Events in Other Theaters of the Second World War 952

Chapter Seventeen, The Expulsion of the Fascist Occupiers from Central Italy, France and Belgium 953

Chapter Eighteen, War in the Pacific Ocean and Asia in 1944 1041

Part Four, The Success of the Domestic and Foreign Policy of the Communist Party and the Government of the Soviet Union in 1944 1081

Chapter 19, The Further Rise of the Military-Economic Might of the Country. The Labor Feat of the Soviet People 1082

Chapter 20, Mass Political and Ideological Work of the Communist Party in 1944 1179

Chapter 21, Strengthening and Expanding the Antifascist Coalition, The Struggle of the USSR for a Democratic Post-War Organization of the World and the Security of Peoples 1229

Important Dates 1263

U. S. BOARD ON GEOGRAPHIC NAMES TRANSLITERATION SYSTEM

Block	Italic	Transliteration	Block	Italic	Transliteration
А а	*А а*	A, a	Р р	*Р р*	R, r
Б б	*Б б*	B, b	С с	*С с*	S, s
В в	*В в*	V, v	Т т	*Т т*	T, t
Г г	*Г г*	G, g	У у	*У у*	U, u
Д д	*Д д*	D, d	Ф ф	*Ф ф*	F, f
Е е	*Е е*	Ye, ye; E, e*	Х х	*Х х*	Kh, kh
Ж ж	*Ж ж*	Zh, zh	Ц ц	*Ц ц*	Ts, ts
З з	*З з*	Z, z	Ч ч	*Ч ч*	Ch, ch
И и	*И и*	I, i	Ш ш	*Ш ш*	Sh, sh
Й й	*Й й*	Y, y	Щ щ	*Щ щ*	Shch, shch
К к	*К к*	K, k	Ъ ъ	*Ъ ъ*	"
Л л	*Л л*	L, l	Ы ы	*Ы ы*	Y, y
М м	*М м*	M, m	Ь ь	*Ь ь*	'
Н н	*Н н*	N, n	Э э	*Э э*	E, e
О о	*О о*	O, o	Ю ю	*Ю ю*	Yu, yu
П п	*П п*	P, p	Я я	*Я я*	Ya, ya

*ye initially, after vowels, and after ъ, ь; e elsewhere.
When written as ё in Russian, transliterate as yё or ё.

RUSSIAN AND ENGLISH TRIGONOMETRIC FUNCTIONS

Russian	English	Russian	English	Russian	English
sin	sin	sh	sinh	arc sh	$\sinh^{-1}$
cos	cos	ch	cosh	arc ch	$\cosh^{-1}$
tg	tan	th	tanh	arc th	$\tanh^{-1}$
ctg	cot	cth	coth	arc cth	$\coth^{-1}$
sec	sec	sch	sech	arc sch	sech^{-1}
cosec	csc	csch	csch	arc csch	csch^{-1}

Russian	English
rot	curl
lg	log

GRAPHICS DISCLAIMER

All figures, graphics, tables, equations, etc. merged into this translation were extracted from the best quality copy available.

HISTORY OF THE GREAT PATRIOTIC WAR OF THE SOVIET UNION

1941-1945

in Six Volumes

Editorial Commission:

Pospelov, P. N. (Chairman),

Andreyev, V. A., Antonov, A. I., Bagramyan, I. Kh.,

Belov, P. A., Boltin, Ye. A. (Deputy Chairman),

Bragin, M. G., Golikov, F. I., Grechko, A. A., Yeliseyev, I. D.,

Zheltov, A. S., Zhilin, P. A., Zhukov, Ye. M., Zhuravlev, N. A.,

Zemskov, I. N., Il'ichev, L. F., Kukin, D. M., Kurasov, V. V.,

Kuchkin, A. P., Mints, I. I., Moskovskiy, V. P. (Deputy Chairman),

Obichkin, G. D., Osipov, Z. S., Polevoy, B. N., Rudenko, S. I.,

Sidorov, A. L., Sokolovskiy, V. D., Tel'pukhovskiy, B. S.,

Timofeyevskiy, A. A., Khvostov, V. M., Shatagin, N. I.

***

Institute of Marxism-Leninism under the Central Committee of the

Communist Party of the Soviet Union

Department of the History of the Great Patriotic War

Moscow, 1962

HISTORY OF THE GREAT PATRIOTIC WAR OF THE SOVIET UNION

1941-1945

Volume Four

The Rout of the Enemy
Out of the Boundaries of the Soviet Union
and the Beginning of the Liberation of the
Peoples of Europe from the Fascist Yoke
1944

Military Publishers, USSR Ministry of Defense, Moscow, 1962

Editorial staff for Volume IV:

Minasyan, M. M. (head of the editorial staff and of the authors' collective),

Bogdanov, P. P., Dolgiy M. S.,

Krestnikova, N. V. (literary editor),

Prokof'yev, Ye. A., Tavrovskaya, G. M.,

Traktuyev, M. I., Shvarev, M. A.,

Shuktomov, P. I.

Authors' collective:

Al'tgovzen, M. L., Andrianov, V. N., Basov, A. V.

Belokonov, K. K., Bogush, Ye. Yu., Grylev, A. N.

Gurevich, S. M., Dolgiy, N. S., Zastavenko, G. F.,

Zurmukhmashvili, N. G., Il'in, S. S., Klokov, V. I.,

Kostyunin, N. I., Kulish, V. M., Loginov, A. P.,

Matsulenko, V. A., Minasyan, M. M., Naporko, A. G..

Pokrovskiy, S. M., Prokof'yev, Ye. A., Proektor, D. M.,

Roshchin, S. I., Starinov, I. G., Tavrovskaya, G. M.,

Traktuyev, M. I., Udal'tsov, I. I., Shvarev, M. A.

Yakovlev, B. N.

Part One

LIBERATION OF LENINGRAD OBLAST', RIGHT-BANK UKRAINE, AND THE CRIMEA

Chapter One

THE MILITARY-POLITICAL SITUATION AT THE BEGINNING OF THE WINTER OFFENSIVE

1. The Soviet Union and Fascist Germany in January, 1944

The Great Patriotic War [World War II] between the Soviet Union and Fascist Germany, which had lasted for three years, changed all the ideas previously known to man about the dimensions and fierceness of the military actions of armed forces, about the might and effort of the home front of the combatant countries. This gigantic mortal combat was a severe test of all the material and spiritual forces of the powerful opponents. V.I. Lenin, speaking about contemporary wars, emphasized that "he who has the best equipment, organization, discipline, and the best machines will win out,"* that "realization by the masses of the goals and reasons for the war has enormous significance and ensures victory."** The Soviet Union really proved its superiority over the enemy, both in the organization of the economy and the production of materials for waging war, and in the military skill and moral spirit of the troops.

During the course of the war, the USSR achieved a radical reversal in its favor. Having mobilized all moral and material resources, it finally seized the initiative out of the hands of the enemy. The Red Army inflicted an enormous defeat on Hitler's troops and drove them westward. By the end of 1943, 1,020,000 sq. kilometers of Soviet territory, on which about 46 million people had lived before the war, had been cleansed of the occupiers. But almost half of the temporarily-occupied Soviet territory - 906,000 sq. kilometers - still remained under the boot of the conquerors.

---

*V.I. Lenin, Sochineniya [Works], Vol. 27, p. 167.

**V.I. Lenin, Sochineniya, Vol. 31, p. 1.

During the prewar period, about 39 million people had lived here.* The Soviet people who did not succeed in retreating into the depths of the country, who fell under the yoke of the occupying forces, looked hopefully to the east, awaiting the arrival of their own Red Army.

The armed forces of the USSR were faced with these tasks: to complete the rout of the German-Fascist hordes from the borders of our Motherland, to free millions of Soviet citizens from bondage, to liberate the peoples of Europe from the Fascist yoke, and to gain final and complete victory over Hitler's Germany. These truly gigantic tasks were solved by the Red Army during 1944 and from January to May, 1945, i.e., in the third period of the Great Patriotic War**.

The victorious course of events for the USSR on the Soviet-German front was largely due to the heroic activity of the Soviet home front, which successfully dealt with the difficult tasks of rebuilding the economy in accordance with the requirements of the war and became a solid base for the pursuit of offensive actions on a large scale. The toilers of our country, under the leadership of the Party and the government, achieved a sharp reversal in the development of the war economy, and created a material base for the decisive attack of the Red Army in 1944.

The gross industrial output in 1943 was 117% of that in 1942.*** This was an important victory for Soviet industry. Especially significant advances occurred in coal mining, the production of electrical energy, pig iron, aluminum, and

---

* According to data from the CSA(Central Statistical Administration of the USSR). Institute of Marxism-Leninism. Dokumenty i materialy Otdela istorii Velikoy Otechestvennoy Voyny [Documents and Materials of the Department of History of the Great Patriotic War], No. 9605, p. 39.

**In Vol. IV, only the events of 1944 are described. During this year, the Red Army engaged in two great campaigns: the winter and the summer-fall campaigns. The final campaign of the third period of the war is described in the fifth volume of this edition.

*** Cf, Vol. III of this edition, p. 208.

metallurgical equipment. The factories and plants, mines and electric-power stations, which began operation in 1943, increased the productive capacity of heavy industry. Furthermore, already in the first half of 1944, a number of newly-built and restored enterprises began operation. The industrial branches which were the basis for the production of arms and military-technical equipment progressed continuously. The swift development of heavy industry permitted a significant expansion of military production. In 1943 the war factories produced about 35,000 aircraft, 16.5 thousand medium and heavy tanks, about 45,000 field and antitank weapons of 76-mm caliber and above,* more than 1.1 million machine guns and submachine guns, 3.4 million rifles and carbines, 175 million shells, mines and bombs.** Such a quantity of first-class military-technical equipment and arms ensured the broadly-developed offensive actions of the Red Army.

The agriculture of the country experienced great difficulties in 1943. The sown acreage was reduced even in the regions which were not occupied. The harvest of grain crops decreased, and the number of cattle continued to decline. The countryside experienced a severe shortage of tractors, agricultural machines, and especially of labor. Nevertheless, agriculture was able to give the Motherland the necessary minimum of food and raw materials. This testified to the enormous vital capacity of the kolkhoz structure. The countryside supplied the Red Army well with food. The problem of feeding the population in the cities and in the worker settlements was solved satisfactorily, although with great effort.

* Cf. Ibid., pp. 167, 171, and 172.

** Institute of Marxism-Leninism. Dokumenty i materialy Otdela istorii Velikoi Otechestvennoi Voiny [Documents and Materials of the Department of History of the Great Patriotic War], No. 7882, sheets 4, 17. For comparison, it is interesting to remember that during World War I, in 1914-1918, the maximum annual production in Germany came to only 97 million shells of all calibers (1918), while in tsarist Russia during the entire war, about 69 million shells and 17.6 thousand weapons were produced.

By the end of 1943, the worst time for agriculture was past. Such important agricultural regions as the North Caucasus, the Kuban, the Pridon [region near the Don River], and the Left-Bank Ukraine were cleared of occupiers. The Communist Party and the Soviet government took measures to increase agricultural production. Socialist agriculture began to be revived on the liberated territory.

Under the difficult conditions of war, rail transport, which bore the main burden in cargo transport, achieved much success. The average daily cargo of oil, metal, and coal especially increased. Troop transport grew. Despite the great difficulties connected with the change in cargo traffic patterns, the restoration of the railroads in the liberated regions, and the running of trains in the strip near the front, under enemy fire, rail transport managed its assignments. The fulfillment of the transport requirements of the country and the army was an extremely important condition for the development of the further offensive of the Soviet armed forces.

The regions liberated from Hitler's occupying forces began to make their contribution to the development of the Soviet wartime economy, although it was still modest. On land which was not free of battles, in the cities and villages where the charred ruins still smoked, restoration work began. The Donbas was revitalized; the metallurgy of the south, of Stalingrad,* and the industry of Rostov-on-Don and other regions and cities was restored. The revived kolkhozes and sovkhozes of the largest agricultural oblasts of the country sowed the winter crops and prepared for spring field work. All of this increased the capabilities of the military economy and opened new prospects for its growth.

The struggle of the Soviet people for the further development of the wartime economy, which ensured the supremacy of the Red Army over the army of the enemy, proceeded under difficult conditions. The liberated regions were bled white, ruined, and in need of help. In 1943, on the territory which was cleansed of the occupiers, a

* Now Volgograd.

total of 270,000 tons of pig-iron were produced, around 80,000 tons of steel, and 5,000 tons of rolled steel.* The country felt a shortage of workers, and there was not enough electrical energy, fuel, or metal. The people experienced significant difficulties with housing, food, and clothing. The further growth of a well-organized military economy in this tremendously difficult situation again and again showed the selflessness and the labor heroism of the Soviet people.

At the end of January 1944 a plenum of the CC [Central Committee] of the CPSU (b) [Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolshevik)] took place. It discussed the draft resolutions of the forthcoming session of the USSR Supreme Soviet. On 1 February, the Tenth Session adopted laws on the creation of troop formations for the Union republics and granted the latter full powers in the field of foreign relations. The laws adopted called for the transformation of the People's Commissariat of Defense and the People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs from Union bodies to Union-Republican bodies. These constitutional changes broadened the rights of the Union republics and facilitated the further strengthening of friendship of the peoples of the USSR. They had great significance for the further rise in the international authority of the Soviet Union.

The January Plenum of the CC CPSU (b) was the only plenum since the beginning of the war (and during the entire war!). And even here not one vital question on the course of the war was resolved, not one of its greatest problems. The refusal to call regular sessions of the leading organs of the Party, to discuss collectively the most important questions on the course of the war, was a crude violation of Leninist norms of Party life, connected with Stalin's cult of personality.

* IML. Documents and Materials of the Department of History of the Great Patriotic War, No. 16099, sheet 6

This put a brake on Party activity and made it more difficult. And if our Party as a whole came forward as the true leader, the guideof the people in a holy war against Fascism, then this happened because millions of Communists, primary, rayon, city, oblast, and kray Party organizations constantly worked among the masses, aroused them to great exploits of labor and arms. And this is understandable, since the Communists were educated in the spirit of Marxism-Leninism, were politically prepared, and were boundlessly dedicated to the people and to the cause of socialism. The members of the CC of the CPSU (b), faithful to the ideas of V. I. Lenin, to the Lenisist principles of Party leadership, correctly evaluated the situation, the immediate tasks faced by the Party and the people, and independently guided certain sectors of political and economic life. Relying on the local Party organizations, they ensured constant strengthening of the internal political situation in the country and uninterrupted growth of the war economy. Therefore, in spite of the negative influence of the cult of personality, the Communist Party, the government and the Soviet people reached a radical turning point in the development of the military economy. Consolidated in the moral and political sense, the Soviet people eagerly supported the summons of the Party and the government, and did everything to maintain the achievements of socialism, and to rout the hated enemy.

An extraordinary partriotic spirit reigned everywhere in the country. The days were past when the Soviet people with pain in their hearts read and heard the news bulletins about the abandonment by the Red Army of our cities and villages. Now the newspapers and radio reported joyous news on the offensive by the Soviet troops, which filled the hearts of the toilers on the home front with a feeling a great pride for their Motherland. The rise in Soviet patriotism found clear expression in the strengthening of the labor activity of the people. The wave of socialist competition continued to grow. Workers, kolkhozniks, and the intelligentsia directed their creative energy toward increasing the productivity of labor. On the home front, voluntary collections of money and material valuable for the defense fund for the construction of tanks, aircraft, and weapons increased. Aid to the

families of the front fighters expanded, and the number of delegations of workers sent to the front with gifts for the soldiers increased. This showed the moral greatness of the Soviet people, its boundless dedication to the socialist Fatherland.

But the Soviet Union was still faced with a stubborn struggle against a very strong enemy. In the course of the war a turning point had been reached, but final victory could be achieved only at the price of further great effort of all forces, both at the front and on the home front.

At the beginning of 1944 Fascist Germany had enormous resources for waging war at its disposal. Most of the countries of Europe were under its control. The occupation forces were still in Belgium and Holland, France and Denmark, Norway and Albania, Greece and Yugoslavia, Poland and Czechoslovakia. Although the process of dissolution of the Fascist bloc began already in 1943, Germany still controlled Bulgaria, Hungary, Rumania, Finland, and the greater part of Italy. But in the occupied territories, and especially on Soviet territory, the Hitlerites felt insecure. They rushed feverishly to squeeze out all the juices from the peoples who fell under their domination.

The increasing pillage of the occupied countries, the use of the labor of war prisoners, of forcibly adbucted and enlisted foreign workers, the new oppression of the German working class, allowed Hitler's government to whip up the economy of the country. Industrial production continued to grow. In 1943, the mining of coal and brown coal increased over the preceding year, although only slightly, and steel-smelting increased by 2.5 million tons. War production especially increased. The average monthly output of arms increased in December 1943 to over twice that of January-February 1942. In 1943 the war industry produced more than 25,000 aircraft, around 12,000 medium and heavy tanks, 27,000 weapons of 75 mm

caliber and higher, 435,000 rifles and machine guns, 2.2 million rifles and carbines.* Nevertheless, less military materiel was produced in Germany than in the Soviet Union. Germany significantly surpassed the USSR in the production of coal and metals, but lagged in the output of aircraft, tanks, and artillery weapons. The explanation for this at first glance "strange" phenomenon must be sought in the very nature of capitalist production.

The government of Fascist Germany took all measures to set up a powerful, planned, "organized" war economy. During 1943, the restructuring of the organs which administered the economy of the country continued. But the activity of the central planning organ, of the imperial administrations and the unions, of the committees and subcommittees, achieved the goal of increasing military production only when the capitalist monopolies were ensured an increase in profit. As the West German bourgeois economists admit, the entrepreneurs often developed arms programs which did not correspond to the requirements of the German Army. For example, in the aircraft industry, according to the statements of the same economists, the large firms produced a great variety of aircraft, but insufficient number of spare parts for them. The Minister of Arms and Military Production, A. Speer, indicated that as a result of weak control certain factories which had received war orders used metal and workers for unauthorized purposes. Instead of arms and military equipment, in 1943 they produced 120,000 typewriters, 150,000 electric hot-water bottles, 300,000 electric calculators, 800 tons of strings for grand pianos and other pianos, and 364,000 spurs.**

---

* Cf. Promyshlennost' Germanii v period voiny 1939-1945 gg. [German Industry During the War Period, 1939-1945]. Moscow, Foreign Literature Publishers, 1956, pp. 73, 262-271.

** Cf. G. Erman. Bol'shaya strategiya [Grand Strategy]. Oct. 1944-Aug. 1945. Moscow, Foreign Literature Publishers, 1958, p. 19.

In the pursuit of maximum profits, the capitalists transferred the entire burden of war production to the shoulders of the working class. The standard of living of the workers fell; their exploitation increased. The problem of the work force became more and more severe. The Hitlerites continued to use the forced labor of foreign workers and war prisoners. By June, 1944, the total number of such people rose to 6,300,000, which was 2,100,000 more than in June, 1942. Inherent in this method of supplementing the work force was a severe danger of a decrease in labor productivity and an increase in the number of diversionary acts and instances of sabotage. Deep within the German capitalist economy, severe social conflicts were ripening.

The lag in the output of arms and military-technical equipment alarmed the Fascist leadership. On 24 December, 1943, the same Speer informed the factory leaders that an increase in arms production was planned in 1944. "It should be achieved," emphasized the minister, "if we wish to maintain the level of material supremacy over the enemy."* Speer demanded a curtailment of powers and the closing of several civilian enterprises, in order to use their equipment and workers to expand military production. For this purpose, other extraordinary measures were also adopted. In the development of the military industry of Germany, the most intense period of all the war years began.

The battles on the Eastern front led to an aggravation of the political situation in the country. Fascist Germany faced the dark prospect of waging war on its own territory. Hitler hinted at this indirectly in his speech as early as 8 November, 1943. "...Every German," he declared, "should remember that this struggle from the very beginning could have been developed on German territory, and we would not

*"Nachrichten des Reichsministers für Rüstung und Kriegproduktion" [Reports of the Reichminister for Armament and War Production]. No. 33, 1943, p. 1.

doubt for one minute that he (the German - ed.) even in this case would fight with extreme fanaticism to the finish."* This forced confession of the failure of the expansionist plans and the unavoidability of war on German soil increased the alarm of the population. As the situation at the fronts grew worse, antiwar sentiments increased.

In the ruling circles of Germany vacillations began. The imminence of military defeat placed before the "monopolistic bosses of the German bourgeoisie the fateful question as to how it would be able to maintain its positions in power after the military defeat."** After Stalingrad, some of the monopolists, generals, higher civil servants, and diplomats began to conspire against Hitler. The subsequent new defeats of the Wehrmacht near Kursk, in Left-Bank Ukraine, west of Kiev, and on the central front, which foreshadowed the imminent loss of all the occupied Soviet territory and transfer of the military actions onto the territory of Germany, increased the number of Hitler's opponents in the army and in the Nazi Party.

The antifascist struggle of the patriotic forces of the German people grew. The Communist Party, suffering great losses as a result of the violent terror of the Nazis, nevertheless was able to maintain its ruling center in Berlin and its leadership in Hamburg, the Ruhr, and other cities and districts. The Central Committee

*Völkischer Beobachter [People's Observer] No. 10, November, 1943.
**Walter Ulbricht, K istorii noveyshego vremeni [On the History of Modern Times], Moscow, Foreign Literature Publishers, 1957, p. 33.

of the German Communist Party, which was located abroad, headed the underground work. The Central Committee insistently demanded that the Communists achieve unity of military actions with the Social Democrats and other anti-Fascists. Organizations led by A. Zevkov, F. Jakob, B. Bestlein in Berlin; by T. Neibauer and M. Poser in Thüringen; and by G. Schumann, O. Engert, and K. Kress in Saxony, played an outstanding role in uniting all patriotic forces. Thanks to their selfless work, the Communist organizations succeeded in consolidating around themselves many opponents of the Fascist regime from the working class, the peasantry, and the intelligentsia.

The worsening of the situation at the fronts and the ever more intense situation in the country forced the Hitlerites to take new, violent measures in order to hold the popular masses in subjugation, to force them to fight to the finish. The terror increased considerably against those who expressed dissatisfaction with the war and with Fascism. Steps were also taken toward strengthening the Nazi Party and increasing its influence in the country. In the directive instruction "The meaning and goals of activization of the Party," of 11 December, 1943, the head of the Party chancellory, M. Bormann, ordered the members of the Nazi Party to be "active political fighters," and "energetically to struggle against all rumor-mongers and spreaders of political stories which harm the authority of the leadership."* On 24 January, 1944, Bormann issued a directive in which he demanded that Party members fulfill their wartime obligations "without sparing their efforts." He who now proves to be unsound and does not pass this test," the directive says, "should be dismissed from...the party without condescension."

*Archiv des Instituts für Marxismus-Leninismus beim ZK der SED [Archive of the Institute of Marxism-Leninism of the Central Committee of the SED] A-59.

The Party leaders were charged with the obligation "to struggle with all existing methods against any signs of weakness and vacillation, if explanation alone proves insufficient."*

Nazi propaganda tried to arouse chauvinistic attitudes among the population and in the Wehrmacht. It proclaimed that the hour of revenge would come soon and that a turning-point in the course of the war would arrive. The Hitlerites kept silent about the defeats at the fronts and presented the matter as if nothing special had occurred. In this regard, the evaluation of results for 1943, given in the lead article of the organ of the Ministry of Propaganda, Das Reich, of 2 January, 1944, is typical. Noting in this article that 1943 was a "year of trials" for Germany, Goebbels made an effort to prove that Germany essentially lost nothing. Goebbels did not say a word about the rout of German-Fascist troops on the Soviet-German front. He was silent about the defeat of Italian-German troops in Tunis. At the same time, the Nazis in every way frightened the German people with the possibility of the victory of the Allies. The imperial leader of the press department, Dietrich, speaking on 4 December, 1943, before leading representatives of the Fascist press, stated: "The triumph of the plutocrats (i.e., England and the USA - ed.) and the Bolsheviks would signify death for Europe and social ruin for the whole world."** Nazi propaganda still had a significant influence on the soldiers and the people, most of whom docilely followed the bankrupt apex of Fascist rulers, who had pushed the country into the abyss of national catastrophe.

*Archiv des Instituts für Marxismus-Leninismus beim ZK der SED, A-63.
**Völkischer Beobachter, 5, December, 1943.

Thus, although the internal political situation in Germany at the beginning of 1944 had become much worse, the Hitlerites nevertheless remained masters of the situation in the country and maintained most of the German people under their control. The German war industry continued to increase the production of arms and military supplies. Despite the serious defeats of the Wehrmacht and the worsening of the situation in the country, Fascist Germany was still a powerful opponent, capable of exerting fierce resistance.

2. The International Situation Before the Offensive of the Red Army

The radical reversal of the course of military actions on the Soviet-German front was of great international significance. The great victories of 1942-1943 showed the whole world the growing military might of the socialist state and its armed forces. It became evident that the Soviet Union was capable of independently bringing the war to a victorious close. This led to the further increase in the authority of the USSR, an increase in its influence on international affairs, and the expansion of foreign-policy ties.

The end of 1943 was marked by two important events in international life-the Moscow Conference of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, which took place in the last days of October and the Teheran Conference of the heads of governments of the USSR, the USA, and England, which took place from 28 November through 1 December.* The joint resolutions which were adopted at these conferences, especially the resolution on opening a second front in Western Europe in May, 1944 and the coordination of military actions of Soviet, American and British troops, were a serious step toward strengthening the anti-Fascist coalition.

*Cf. the third volume of this edition, pp. 506-514.

From the first months of the Great Patriotic War, the Soviet Union, striving to shorten the war and to decrease the number of its victims, waged a stubborn struggle for opening the second front. But the American and British ruling circles, trying as much as possible to weaken not only Germany, but also the Soviet Union, were slow to develop military actions in Western Europe. By the beginning of 1944, the policy of purposely delaying the opening of the second front had exhausted itself. The successes of the Red Army caused apprehension among the ruling classes of the United States of America and England that the Soviet Union, with the support of the anti-Fascist forces of the European peoples, would achieve complete victory over Germany. Closely connected with the victories of the armed forces of the USSR, the growth of the anti-Fascist movement strengthened the apprehension of the governments of the USA and England as to the fate of the capitalist order in Europe. Furthermore, the broad masses of the American and English peoples more and more insistently demanded that Allied troops be sent to Western Europe. Thus, expressing the sentiments of the simple people of the USA, Baltimore sailors in connection with the surrender of Italy telegraphed General D. Eisenhower: "..We again commit ourselves to supply everything necessary for the next step on the path of routing the Axis powers and opening a true second front in Western Europe."* The workers, farmers, soldiers, and sailors of the USA and England sent F. Roosevelt and W. Churchill many letters and telegrams with similar messages. All of this, taken together, forced the American and British governments to proceed with coordinating their military plans with the military plans of the USSR and to begin to prepare for military actions in Western Europe.

*Daily Worker, New York. September 13, 1943.

The resolutions of the Moscow and Teheran Conferences greatly disappointed Hitler's clique, which had hoped for a split in the anti-Fascist coalition. They showed the important victory of the foreign policy of the Soviet Union, our country's increased importance in international life, and facilitated the realization of the chief goal of the coalition - the hastening of the complete rout of Hitler's Germany.

The expansion and strengthening of the Soviet Union's international ties also showed its increased authority. While the USSR had diplomatic relations with 17 countries at the beginning of the war, by 1944 their number had increased to 32.

The successes of the Soviet Armed Forces, the increased authority of our Motherland, decisively influenced a change in the policy of Japan and Turkey. The rout of Fascist troops at Stalingrad sobered the Japanese militarists and forced them to give up the attack on the USSR. Turkey's plans were also disrupted. Taking into account the new situation on the Soviet-German front, the Turkish government changed its foreign-policy orientation. Although Turkey still continued to supply Germany with several types of strategic raw materials, it now began to strengthen its ties with the USA and England. In November 1943 negotiations took place between Turkey and English representatives on the entrance of Turkey into the war against Germany.

Sweden, too, was forced to come to similar conclusions. As early as 5 August 1943, the Swedish government made a decision to stop German transit,* which made communications difficult between Germany and Finland, and with the German troops which were there. According to the agreement of January, 1944, dispatches to Germany of strategic raw materials and other goods were reduced from 60 million to 26 million crowns, that is, by more than half.** This showed the increased

*FPA (Arkhiv vneshnei politiki; Foreign Policy Archive) of the USSR, Folio 0140, op.27, d.5, p. 126, sheet 49.
** Ibid., inventory 29, file 4, p. 127, sheet 4.

influence of those circles of Swedish society which demanded real neutrality.

The victories of the Red Army strengthened the national-liberation struggle of of the peoples of Europe. The Resistance movement, which arose on the basis of economic and national oppression brought by the Fascist "new order," was invincible. Now, when Hitler's army suffered catastrophic defeats on the Soviet-German front, when the victory of the Allies became imminent, nothing could stop the peoples of Europe, who arose to struggle against the invaders.

The most characteristic traits of the anti-Fascist movement in European countries by the beginning of the Red Army's winter campaign were the swift increase of patriotic forces, their unification on a national scale, the creation of central and local organs of the Resistance movement, the expansion of the front of armed struggle against the invaders and their underlings, and the close intertwining of the anti-Fascist and the class struggle. The Communist and worker parties, with their organization and selfless dedication to the cause of the people, won a leading position in the movement and the recognition of the broad masses of the people.

By the beginning of 1944, the anti-Fascist movement was especially developed in the occupied countries of Southeastern Europe, whose peoples in the past had had significant experience in national-liberation struggle. The Yugoslav people, headed by the Communist Party, fought heroically. In Yugoslavia local and central organs of the Resistance movement had already been formed earlier. In November 1943 the anti-Fascist Assembly in its second session was constituted as the supreme legislative organ. A resolution was adopted on the creation of a National Committee for the Liberation of Yugoslavia -- a Provisional Government. The People's Liberation Army and the partisan detachments, which grew to a total of 300,000 people, was an inspiring force. In September - December 1943, the army and the partisan detachments repulsed the sixth and largest attack by German-Fascist troops

and Yugoslav quisling bands. Fierce battles took place in Slovenia, Serbia, Central Bosnia, and Macedonia. The flame of anti-Fascist struggle blazed in Greece. The National-liberation front (EAM), in which the Communist Party played a leading role, relied on the support of the broad masses of the people. The Greek People's Liberation Army (ELAS) counted in its ranks several tens of thousands of men. The Albanian people fought courageously against the invaders. The soul of the Resistance movement was the Communist Party of Albania. On its initiative the General Staff was created, which concentrated in its hands the command of the growing and consolidating partisan forces. The partisan detachments, which by the end of 1943 numbered more than 20,000 people, liberated many regions and cities of the country from the invaders: Berat, Delvina, Girokastra, Saranda, and others.

The national-liberation movement against fascism and the war also grew in those countries of Southeastern Europe which still remained satellites of Hitler's Germany. In Bulgaria, under the leadership of the Workers' Party, a National Committee of the Patriotic Front was created, which united the patriotic forces of the country. By the end of 1943, there were 6,000 men in the partisan detachments, who were supported by the popular masses. Furthermore, in the large population centers military groups were active which united a significant number of fighters against fascism. The swift growth of partisan detachments led to the creation of the Popular-Liberation Front of the insurgent army. In order to better organize the armed resistance, a Headquarters Staff was formed and the country was divided into 12 military-operational zones. The dissatisfaction of the Hungarian people with the Fascist regime and the war increased. At the factories and plants the workers more and more often arranged diversions, sabotaged the orders of the manufacturers, and in the villages the peasants harbored agricultural goods. Despite the difficult conditions, the process of consolidation of democratic forces proceeded in Hungary. In Romania in 1943 the Anti-Hitler

Patriotic Front was created, uniting the democratic parties and groups. Partisan detachments arose.

The national-liberation movement also expanded in the countries of Central Europe. In Poland on the night of 1 January 1944, on the initiative of the Polish Workers' Party the National People's Council was formed -- the central organ of the anti-Fascist national front, the highest representative underground organ of democratic forces of the country. The detachments of People's Guards, according to by no means complete data, conducted 230 partisan operations in 1943. The struggle of the peoples of Czechoslovakia gained strength. The national committees of the anti-Fascist movement became centers uniting the patriotic forces of the country. During 1943 new partisan detachments arose in the regions of Olomouc, Ostrava, Tabor, in Moravia and Silesia. The situation in Slovakia became tense, where a partisan movement developed and a general rebellion became imminent.

The resistance movement was marked by great successes in the countries of Western and Northern Europe, also. The wave of the national-liberation struggle in France rose especially high. By the end of 1943, more than 200,000 people participated in the partisan movement. Its center was Upper Savoy. The partisans operated actively in most of the territory of the country. In September the patriots of Corsica rose up against the Italian-German invaders, and in a short time they liberated the island. The toilers of the part of Italy which was occupied by the Hitlerites struggled selflessly for the liberation of their country. After the landing of Anglo-American troops in the southern part of the country, the Italian patriots took up arms and began to clear town after town of German invaders. In September the invaders were routed from Naples. After the uprising in Naples, there followed armed incursions in Florence, Bologna, Genoa, Turin, and Milan. The flame of partisan war engulfed the entire occupied territory of Italy.

The Resistance movement also grew in Belgium, Norway, Denmark, and Holland. Here, as in other countries, national centers of the movement were organized or formed. Such forms of struggle as sabotage, diversion, and strikes became widespread. For example, in Denmark in November-December 1943 alone, the largest arms shops in Hellerup were blown up, as well as the steel mill in Varda and the machine-building and arms factories in Copenhagen. Large-scale diversions occurred on the wharves of Odense and Helsingor. General strikes took place in Odense and Esbjerg. Mass strikes occurred in Copenhagen, Roskill, Helsingor, Orkhus, Bogense, Middelfart, and other cities. The diversions and strikes led to a sharp reduction in output of military goods. In Belgium, as a result of the strikes, sabotage and diversions, the smelting of steel and pig-iron in the second half of the year was reduced by 30%.

In the majority of countries the national-liberation movement was closely connected with the class struggle of the toilers. This is especially true of the countries of Southeastern and Central Europe. Since the beginning of the war, the ruling cliques in these countries began to become friendly with the invaders or, throwing their peoples to the caprice of fate, emigrated abroad. And the bourgeois-landowner parties, which refused to struggle against the Fascist invaders, were unmasked in the eyes of the popular masses. The isolation of the parties increased. The emigré governments in every way obstructed the developing national-liberation movement, tried to use it for their own narrow class purposes. The Quisling governments which were formed in several countries openly befriended Hitler's Germany.

The only force which was capable of rousing the people to struggle for national and social liberation were the Communist parties. In the vanguard of the struggle went the worker class, united with the toiling peasantry. The toilers more and more realized the necessity of establishing their own popular-democratic power, capable of protecting and championing their interests .

In many countries, new, democratic organs of power were formed on the initiative of the popular masses. The national committees which arose in the course of the struggle in Czechoslovakia, the popular-liberation committees in Yugoslavia, the popular councils in Poland, Greece, and the national-liberation councils in Albania were the embryo of a new, popular-democratic structure, created by the toilers. The struggle of these soviets, which represented at the same time organs of the united national front and organs of revolutionary power, against the old bourgeois-landowner systems, were the initial stage of a revolutionary crushing of the exploitative state machine and the establishmant of a popular democratic structure.

The national-liberation movement of the European peoples, which developed in close connection with the successful offensive of the Red Army, aided it in turn. The anti-Fascist struggle disrupted the rear of Germany, forcing Hitler's command to keep significant forces in the occupied countries.

The victories of the Red Army in 1943 seriously complicated the relations in the bloc of Fascist countries. This was the year it experienced the first large blow. As a result of the defeat of German and Italian troops on the Soviet-German front, the military actions of the Allied troops in Africa, their invasion of Sicily and the Apennine Peninsula, and also the increasing struggle of the popular masses against Fascism, Italy left the war.

This caused a significant worsening of the strategic situation in Germany. The German command was forced to send additional troops for the occupation of Italy and the creation of a front against the Allies in the southern Apennine Peninsula. Furthermore, it was necessary to increase the German-Fascist troops in the Balkans, in order to replace the Italian divisions which had served in the occupation forces in Yugoslavia, Albania, and Greece.

The defeat of the German troops on the Eastern front and Italy's withdrawal from the war precipitated disorder in Hitler's camp. At the Hungarian parliament session in December 1943, many deputies declared directly that after the capitulation of Italy the Trilateral Pact had lost any kind of significance for Hungary and that the interests of the country required its immediate withdrawal from the war. On the command of the Hungarian government of Kallai, its representatives in Bern, Lisbon, and Istanbul entered into negotiations with the consulates of the USA and England, which ended in the signing of a preliminary agreement.*

The political situation in Romania heated up. I. Antonescu, in a letter to Hitler of 15 November, 1943, emphasized that an unusually difficult situation had been created in that country. Pointing out that Romania had already lost more than 1/4 million soldiers, Antonescu declared that it could no longer send new units to the Eastern front.**

In the circles of the large bourgeoisie and landowners, surrounding the king and led by the National-Peasant and National-Liberal Party, the desire to conclude a separate agreement with the USA and England became more apparent. For this purpose, negotiations were conducted between Romanian, English, and American representatives in Madrid, Ankara, Stockholm, Bern, and the Vatican. Certain circles of the USA supported and shared these plans. Thus, the American consul in Madrid, K. Heiss, in conversation with a member of the Romanian mission, S. Grigoriu, in November, 1943, emphasized that "the only way to avoid the complete occupation of Romania by the Soviet Army would be for M. Antonescu [the Minister of Foreign Affairs -- ed.] to send a formal declaration of unconditional surrender to the government of the United States."**

---

* Cf. the third volume of this edition, p. 546.
**Cf. Ibid., p. 544.
***Alexander Cretzianu, The Lost Opportunity, London, 1957, p. 117.

The internal political situation in Finland also grew acute. Various strata of the population began to speak out more decisively for withdrawal from the war. The Finnish rulers were forced to declare that the "brotherhood in arms" with Hitler's Germany was a fateful mistake. Characterizing the situation which was developing in Finland, the former representative of the supreme command of the armed forces of Germany (OKV) in Mannerheim's headquarters, General W. Erfurth, wrote: "...The constant worsening of the situation on the German fronts caused great dissatisfaction in the public opinion of the Finnish people. The internal political situation in Finland at the beginning of the year [1944 - ed.] was very unstable."*

After the August memorandum of 33 leading social and political figures, who expressed dissatisfaction with the policy of the government and raised the question of Finland's withdrawal from the war, on 8 November 1943 the council of the Social-Democratic Party called for a very swift ending to the war, despite the fact that it was headed by an ardent supporter of cooperation with Germany V. Tanner. The council adopted this resolution because the pressure of the rank-and-file social-democrats was very strong.**

Seeing the inevitability of Germany's defeat, the Finnish rulers, although they continued to lead the country along the path of German policy, began behind-the-scenes negotiations with the USA and England, in order to gain their support in the forthcoming talks with the Soviet Union. Meanwhile, the government of Finland, despite the critical situation of the country and the complete disruption

---

* Waldemar Erfurth, Der finnische Krieg, 1941-1944 [The Finnish War, 1941-1944], Wiesbaden, 1950, p. 161.

** Cf. Finland and World War II, 1939-1944, ed. by John Wuorinen, New York, 1948, p. 161.

of its aggressive war plans, did not hurry to enter into negotiations directly with the USSR.

The imperial government of Bulgaria remained a faithful servant of Fascist Germany. But the internal political situation in the country by the end of 1943 was very tense. Hitler did not count on the Bulgarian divisions in the war against the USSR.

All this showed the growing crisis in the camp of Germany's vassals. The Fascist bloc, created on the basis of aggressive desires of its participants, proved durable only until the first defeats. The serious failures on the Soviet-German front led to a sharpening of conflicts between members of the bloc and laid the foundations of its decay.

The foreign political ties of Hitler's Germany also worsened. While before the attack on the Soviet Union 15 countries were at war with Germany, by the beginning of 1944 their number had increased to 36. Furthermore, nine more countries broke diplomatic relations with Germany.

Thus the radical reversal in the course of the war on the Soviet-German front, which had become evident both for the friends and for the enemies of the Soviet Union, influenced all international life. The winter offensive of the Red Army in 1944 began in a favorable international situation for the Soviet Union and the entire anti-Fascist coalition.

3. THE PLANS OF THE PARTIES FOR THE WINTER CAMPAIGN OF 1944

After the battle of Stalingrad, the Soviet Armed Forces possessed the strategic initiative. The German-Fascist command, having launched a large-scale offensive near Kursk and having suffered one more serious defeat there, was finally forced to transfer to strategic defense. The Soviet Supreme High Command, correctly determining the time and direction of the chief blows, skillfully

imposed its will on the enemy and forced him to retreat. At the end of 1943, the Red Army troops received the assignment to secure the lines they had reached and to prepare for a new offensive. Only in certain directions were they to continue offensive actions. At this time, the strategic situation on the Soviet-German front was as follows.

The right flank of our front and the banks of the Barents and White Seas were covered by the Northern Fleet, which was based in Polyarnyi and other ports of the Kol'skiy Gulf (Map 1). In this naval theater the Soviet fleet and the naval forces of the Allies, which accompanied convoys into the ports of the USSR, had numerical superiority. But enemy submarines and aircraft continued to threaten our communications.

In the sector of the front from the Barents Sea to the Gulf of Finland, changes had not occurred in the position of the parties since the fall of 1941. Neither the Soviet nor the German and Finnish troops undertook active operations. The front line passed west of Murmansk and Belomorsk, along Lake Onega and then along the Sviri River to the southern shore of Lake Ladoga. Here troops of the Karelian front, consisting of four combined-arms armies and one air army, and the troops of the 7th separate Army, took up a defensive position. The 23rd army of the Leningrad front guarded the Karelian Isthmus. Facing the Soviet troops from the Barents Sea to the Gulf of Finland were the troops of the 20th German mountaineer army and the chief forces of the Finnish army. This whole enemy group numbered 21 infantry, 1 tank division, and 6 brigades.*

*Sbornik materialov po sostavu, gruppirovke, i peregruppirovke sukhoputnykh voysk fashistskoy Germanii i voysk byvshikh yeyo satellitov na sovetsko-germanskom fronte za period 1941-1945 gg. [Collection of materials on the composition, grouping, and regrouping of the ground troops of Fascist Germany and the troops of its former satellites on the Soviet-German front during the period 1941-1945]. Fourth edition, Moscow, 1956, p. 8 (later cited as Collection of materials on the compostion of troops of Fascist Germany). The collection was composed based on captured German documents.

The Red-Banner Baltic Fleet, subordinate operationally to the Leningrad front, was based in Leningrad and Kronstadt, firmly holding the islands of the Gulf of Finland - Lavensari and Seiskari (Map 5). The basing conditions were exceptionally crowded: the fleet was actually incapable of emerging beyond the bounds of the eastern part of the Gulf of Finland. The naval forces reliably protected the flanks of the armies of the Leningrad front which were close to the sea.

The line of the Soviet-German front from the Gulf of Finland to Nevel passed south of Leningrad - east of Chudov, Novgorod, and Staraya Russa, and west of Velikiye Luki. The most important sector in this direction was the heroic city of Lenin, which could not be reached by the enemy. The break in the blockade in 1943 improved the situation of Leningrad. But the enemy continued stubbornly to maintain its positions in the near approaches to the city, while enemy artillery barbarically bombarded it. In the sector from the Gulf of Finland to Nevel were located the troops of the Leningrad, Volkhov, and the 2nd Baltic fronts, which consisted of 11 combined-arms armies and three air armies.* They were opposed by troops of Army Group "North" consisting of the 18th and 16th Armies supported by the 1st Air Force. The German-fascist force numbered 44 divisions and four brigades.**

In the Western Theater of Operations between Nevel' and Mozyr' the front line passed east of Vitebsk and Orsha - west of Gomel: but in the Nevel' area Soviet troops continued the attack. Operating in this theater were troops of the 1st Baltic, Western, and Belorussian Fronts whose composition included 15 combined-arms and 3 air armies.*** The German-Fascist army group "Center", consisting of the 3rd tank division and the 4th, 9th, and 2nd armies, defended against them. The sixth air force supported them.

* IML. Documents and materials of the Department of History of the Great Patriotic War, inv. No. 9608, p. 6.

** Collection of materials on the composition of troops of Fascist Germany, 4th edition, p. 10.

*** IML. Documents and materials of the Department of History of the Great Patriotic War, inv. No. 9608, p. 6.

In all, this army group numbered 63 divisions, including 9 tank and motorized, and one brigade.*

On the sector of the front from Mozyr' to Kanev the troops of the 1st Ukrainian front, going over to the offensive on 24 December 1943, continued to win success in the direction toward Sarny, Zhitomir, and Berdichi. The front line from Kanev to the Black Sea passed for the most part along the Dnepr. In the region of Dnepropetrovsk, Soviet troops occupied a bridgehead on the right bank of the Dnepr, while in the region of Nikopol' the enemy held a bridgehead on the left bank. The Crimea remained in the hands of the Hitlerites, but in the eastern part of the Kerch Peninsula our troops seized a bridgehead and firmly entrenched themselves there. From Mozyr' to the mouth of the Dnepr the troops of the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd, and the chief forces of the 4th Ukrainian fronts were active. They combined 21 combined-arms, 3 tank, and 4 air armies.** Against them the German-Fascist troops of Army group "South", composed of the 4th and 1st tank, and the 8th and 6th armies, and also part of the forces of army group "A" - the 44th separate army corps and the 3rd Romanian army - took up the defensive. This enemy group included 93 divisions, including 18 tank and 4 motorized, and 2 brigades.*** Army groups "South" and "A" were supported by the aviation of the 4th air force.

In the Crimean Isthmus the 51st army of the 4th Ukrainian front was active, while on the bridgehead in the eastern part of the Kerch Peninsula, it was the Independent Maritime Army, which was supported by the 4th air army. The Crimea was defended by the 17th enemy army from army group "A", numbering 10 divisions.****

---

* Collection of materials on the composition of troops of Fascist Germany, 4th edition, p. 14.

** IML. Documents and materials of the Department of History of the Great Patriotic War, inv. No. 9608, p. 6.

*** Collection of materials on the composition of troops of Fascist Germany, 4th edition, p. 18.

**** Ibid.

The southern flank of the strategic front, near the sea, was protected by forces of the Black Sea Fleet, which was based in the ports of the Caucasus shore. The distance of the bases from the northwest shore made the actions of the fleet difficult. By the beginning of 1944 the fleet operated on enemy communications between the Crimea and the ports of Romania and Bulgaria, protecting our communications from attack by enemy naval and air forces.

The Soviet Supreme High Command by the beginning of the winter campaign of 1944 had significant reserves at its disposal. In the Reserve of Headquarters there were five combined-arms, two tank, and one air army, and 9 detached tank and mechanized corps. All the armies, with the exception of two combined-arms armies, were located on the southern flank of the Soviet-German front.*

A large army of partisans fought in the rear of the German-Fascist troops on the occupied Soviet territory. The partisan units and detachments conducted a struggle against the Hitlerite invaders in cooperation with the troops of the Red Army.

The military might of the Soviet Armed Forces began to grow steadily stronger. The following table shows the composition of the operating army at the beginning of 1944.**

---

* The 20th and 70th combined-arms armies of the Reserve Headquarters consisted only of administrations and army units; there were no rifle divisions in them.

** IML. Documents and materials of the Department of History of the Great Patriotic War, No. 17936, pp. 605-606.

Personnel, formations, arms, and military technical equipment	Operating fronts and fleets	Reserve of headquarters of the Supreme High Command	Total
Ground troops, thousands of men	5,568	419	5,987
Air forces (with long-range aviation), thousands of men	331	77	408
Navy, thousands of men	266	-	266
Paratroops, thousands of men	-	75	75
Total	6,165	571	6,736
Artillery, motorized rifle * cavalry, and paratroop divisions	461	19	480
Separate brigades (rifle, mechanized, motorized rifle, naval infantry	38	17	55
Fortified regions	32	-	32
Tank and mechanized corps	23	12	35
Separate tank brigades	42	4	46
Artillery and mortar divisions	76	4	80
Separate artillery and mortar brigades	69	4	73
Aviation divisions	124***	4	128
Guns and mortars (without rockets)	92,650****	5,040	97,690
Tanks and self-propelled artillery	5,357	271	5,628
Combat aircraft	8,506*****	312	8,818

* The red Army formations were far understrength. At the beginning of operations, a rifle division numbered 6-7 thousand men, as a rule.

** A fortified region (UR) is a combined-arms formation of the Red Army, designated chiefly for protection of important boundaries. The UR was also used in an attack for securing the occupied large defense objectives of the enemy, tying down his forces in secondary directions, and also for covering flanks of the chief group. In firepower, a UR is equivalent to a rifle division.

*** Including 9 aviation divisions of the Navy and 18 of long-range aviation.

**** Including antiaircraft artillery guns and naval weapons.

***** Including naval aircraft and long-range aviation.

Hitler's Germany and its allies had 236 divisions on the Soviet-German front including 25 tank and 8 motorized divisions, and 18 brigades. Of this total number, 38 divisions and 12 brigades belonged to Germany's satellites.* Without counting the latter, the number of German troops on the Soviet-German front constituted 63% of the German armed forces. Here 54% of the tanks and assault guns, 71% of the guns and mortars and 56% of the aircraft were concentrated. In all, the enemy armies on our front numbered 4,906,000 men, including 706,000 satellite troops. The armies had these weapons: 54,570 guns and mortars, 5,400 tanks and assault guns, and 3,073 aircraft.**

Thus the Soviet Armed Forces surpassed the enemy 1.3 times in personnel***, 1.7 times in guns and mortars****, 1,4 times in tanks and self-propelled artillery*****, and 2.7 times in aircraft. However, fantastic figures are often quoted in the Western European and American press to show the overwhelming general supremacy of Soviet troops.

The fiction about the extreme numerical superiority of the Red Army is based on two unfair concepts. One is that in comparing Soviet combined-arms formations and rifle divisions with German armies and infantry divisions, bourgeois military historians do not speak about the substantial difference in their organization and numbers. Soviet armies at this time had 8-9 divisions, while German armies had on the average 17. Our rifle divisions were numerically at least one-third smaller than the German infantry divisions; a German tank division in quantity of technical equipment and men was almost equal to a Soviet tank corps.

---

* In Western Europe and the Balkans, Germany held 102 divisions and 3 brigades. Fifteen divisions and 1 brigade were in the reserve of the high command.

** IML. Documents and Materials of the Department of History of the Great Patriotic War, inv. No. 17936, p. 614; p. 616.

*** Without counting the reserves of the Headquarters of the Supreme Command or the reserves of the supreme command of the German-Fascist army.

**** Not counting antiaircraft artillery weapons.

***** The enemy had 3,700 tanks in good repair.

Thus a genuine comparison of forces can be made only by taking into consideration the difference in composition of the armies, corps, and divisions.

The other idea is essentially as follows. Basing their convictions on the truly great supremacy of Soviet forces in the direction of the main operational strikes, bourgeois falsifiers of history are silent on the fact that the Soviet command created such supremacy in narrow sectors of the front by a clever maneuver, by bold regrouping of forces taken from the inactive sectors of the front.

In both cases, an unobjective presentation of the facts pursues the goal of deprecating Soviet military skill, justifying the catastrophic defeats of the German army and the failure of German-Fascist military skill.

The fact that the Red Army by the beginning of 1944 was superior to Hitler's troops in men, arms, and military technical equipment was remarkable. Actually, the uncrushable might of the socialist state was proven. The Soviet Union in 2½ years succeeded not only in repulsing the unheard-of onslaught of the enemy and liquidating his superiority, but also in achieving superiority in forces and equipment, in seizing the strategic initiative of waging war and beginning the mass rout of the invaders. The Soviet people, led by the Communist Party, was able, due to the superiority of the socialist social order, to create a harmonious war economy and to achieve military superiority over the enemy.

The armed forces of the USSR were superior to the German-Fascist army not only quantitatively, but also qualitatively. They were supplied with more modern, powerful equipment. The ground troops received new types of automatic guns, T-34 tanks, improved in design and equipment, with an 85-mm. gun; IS-2 heavy tanks, and ISU-122 and ISU-152 self-propelled artillery; and also the more powerful 100-mm weapons and M-31-12 rocket devices. A significantly larger amount of auto transport came to the formations and units of all types of troops.

In 1944 the air forces began to receive modernized and new fighter aircraft--the Yak-3, the La-7, and the Yak-9 long-range fighters--which were superior to former types in their tactical and technical characteristics. New submarines and surface vessels, built by our industry, and also received on Lend-Lease from the Allies, began to be received by the Navy. The ships were equipped with modern technical devices. The air defense troops of the country began to grow stronger and develop. The quality of their equipment increased greatly. Fighter aircraft of antiaircraft defense received new, improved high-speed fighter aircraft, and antiaircraft artillery received radar stations for gun aiming.

During 2½ years of war, Soviet military skill had also increased greatly It was distinguished by flexibility, skillful combinations of various methods of military operations in defense and in attack. The Red Army, in its defensive operations in the second period of the war, especially near Kursk, skillfully used active defense methods. The skillful defense of our troops usually led to the fact that the attacking enemy was quickly bled white, and the ratio of forces finally changed in our favor. With great success counterattacks were made, as a result of which Soviet troops achieved a reversal in the course of the armed struggle and transferred to a general attack.

The Red Army during the previous war years, especially in 1943, gained enormous experience in conducting offensive operations. The strategy of the Soviet Supreme High Command was characterized by exceptional purposefulness. All the efforts of the Red Army were directed toward achieving an important goal -- the defeat of the enemy. Especially valuable was the experience of surrounding the large German-Fascist grouping between the Volga and the Don and the powerful counterattack near Kursk. During the strategic offensive operations, the problem of the interaction of the fronts was successfully solved.

The very rich experience in organizing a breakthrough in the deep and strongly secured defense of the enemy had important significance. The success in the breakthrough to a large degree was ensured by the deep operational structure of the troops, by the decisive concentration of forces and equipment in the direction of the main blow, by defeat of the enemy troops way into the depths of their tactical disposition. In the course of military operations, Soviet troops mastered the art of fording large water obstacles, such as the Dnepr. The offensive of the Red Army was characterized by an uninterrupted increase in the force of the attacks and increased tempos of the offensive. In the summer and fall of 1943, the average daily tempo of offensive of the formations reached 10-25 kilometers, and that of the tank and mechanized units -- 30-35 kilometers.

The greatly increased spatial scope of the struggle, the number of forces and equipment used in conducting the operations, and also the tempos of the offensive by our troops, made great demands on the work of the central, front, army, and division rear institutions and units. No matter how great the difficulties were, the rear institutions and units coped with their assignments. The Chief Administration of the Rear of the Red Army - Chief of the Rear, General of the Army A. V. Khrulev - took timely measures to develop new rear institutions and units, improve the work of all types of transport, to create additional organs for controlling the rear, and especially to increase the number of railroad, automobile, and road troops.

The morale of the Soviet troops was very high. The victories of the Red Army enhanced the feeling of pride of our soldiers for their great Motherland strengthened their faith in the power of Soviet arms, inspired them to new exploits. The political organs and the Party organizations played an enormous role in raising the morale of the Red Army. They daily explained to the soldiers the character and goals of the war, engendered love for the Motherland and hatred for the enemy.

By personal example, Communists and Komsomol members inspired the soldiers and sailors to fulfill their military assignments.

At the beginning of 1944, the German-Fascist army, although it had suffered great defeats on the Soviet-German front, did not lose its capacity to fight, and remained a powerful and harmonious military machine. The German soldiers and non-commissioned officers, who were under the unabated control of the Fascist officers, fought stubbornly and tenaciously. The traditional Prussian drill school and the fear of retribution for the bad deeds done on Soviet territory sustained discipline in the troops. Most of the soldiers continued to believe the Fascist propaganda that the German army was using new, super-powerful technical equipment and arms, that the offensive capabilities of the Soviet troops were exhausted. Stories about the "terrors" of Bolshevik captivity, that if the Red Army invaded German territory, the families of the soldiers would probably be shot, also had a great influence on the soldiers.

The Fascist government and the command of the Wehrmacht, fearing revenge for the crimes committed on Soviet soil and not counting on any compromise in the war with the USSR, did everything possible to avoid the imminent catastrophe. Total mobilization added significantly to the operating troops, and a large number of new formations and units were formed. During the last four months of 1943 alone, 32 divisions and brigades were transferred from Germany and the Western European countries which it occupied to the East.

The best-organized and battle-ready units of infantry operated against the Red Army, and also the majority of the Fascist armored troops and aviation. The quality of the military technical equipment of the German armed forces, although it was inferior to the quality of the Soviet technical equipment, improved greatly in comparison with the previous years of the war. The troops received for arms heavy antitank and antiaircraft artillery systems. The battle capabilities of the tanks, the self-propelled artillery, and the aircraft were increased, and

the air defense of the troops and the country was strengthened.

Nevertheless, the German-Fascist army by the beginning of1944 was not the same army as it was before the beginning of the Kursk offensive. The great defeats on the Soviet-German front destroyed its previous superiority, broke its military spirit. The battle-readiness of the Fascist troops, especially in comparison with the growing skill and power of the Soviet Armed Forces, decreased. The best-prepared and most experienced cadres had been slaughtered. The reinforcements which arrived did not offset the losses which Hitler's troops had suffered. Furthermore, the majority of the recruits did not have the necessary fighting qualities. The problem of personnel acquired exceptional importance. In the formations and units of the ground troops there was a chronic shortage of personnel. New losses led to the fact that many infantry divisions were turned into military groups. In the ground troops the lack of heavy weapons, towing devices, and other military technical equipment began to be apparent. By 1944, due to large losses of aircraft and flight personnel on the Soviet-German front, and also due to a reduction in the production of bombers, the strike power of the German air forces was significantly reduced.

The decreased military morale of the troops began to seriously alarm Hitler's command. Thus the commander of the 9th army, Colonel-General V. Model, in one of his decrees emphasized: "The danger is arising that the ideological capability (the morale - ed.) and together with it the internal resistance, which our people brought with them into the war, are gradually disappearing..."* The book World War, 1939-1945, written by a group of generals and officers of the former Fascist Wehrmacht and published in West Germany, notes that after the Kursk battle

* IML, Documents and materials of the Department of History of the Great Patriotic War, inv. No. 11968, sheet 5.

"as a result of huge losses of officers, non-commissioned officers, and specialists, which were the backbone of the German troops, their steadfastness became less and less reliable, so that the German command met every new offensive by the enemy with great alarm."* In order to strengthen the ideological preparation of the soldiers, the leaders of the Nazi Party were obliged at the end of 1943 to begin an "educational institute for National-Socialist officers." Such were the strong and weak aspects of the German armed forces. Their strike ability was reduced, but in defensive battles they continued to show stubborn resistance to the Red Army.

The strategic situation which had come about by the beginning of 1944 on the Soviet-German front allowed the Communist Party and the government of the Soviet Union to advance new tasks. The war entered the stage when it was a matter of completely routing the invaders from Soviet territory and liquidating the Fascist "new order" in Europe. The solution of these grandiose tasks required still greater efforts and new exploits on the part of the Red Army and the entire Soviet people.

Proceeding from the general political and strategic problems, the Soviet High Command, even during the period when the summer-fall campaign of 1943 was being completed, began to plan and prepare extensive strategic offensive operations for the winter campaign of 1944. In order to use more completely the success achieved in the previous campaign, it was planned to begin a new campaign without pause. This was to take the German-Fascist command by surprise, since it guessed that the Red Army after the summer-fall campaign of 1943 was

* Mirovaya Voina, 1939-1945 gody [World War, 1939-1945]. Collection of articles. Moscow, Foreign Literature Publishers, 1957, p. 223.

unable to continue the offensive. The chief goals of the campaign, as is apparent from the working map "Plans of operations,"* composed by the General Staff on 8 December, 1943, and also from directives of headquarters given out at the fronts at the end of November, in December 1943, and in January 1944, were to disperse the large strategic groupings of German-Fascist troops at Lenengrad, in the Right-Bank Ukraine, in the Crimea, and in Belorussia.

In order to achieve the planned military-political goals, the General Staff planned to carry out offensive operations by groups of fronts, bringing in long-range aviation and the Navy. The Red Army was to concentrate its chief efforts on the strategic flanks of the Soviet-German front: near Leningrad - against the enemy army group "North" and in the Right-Bank Ukraine - against army groups "South" and "A".

The plan was to deal the chief blow in the winter campaign in the southwest theater of military operations. The rout of strong groupings of the German-Fascist army, the liberation of the important economic and industrial regions of Right-Bank Ukraine, and the emergence onto our state border -- all this was to lead to a severe weakening of the enemy and the further complication of the international and internal political situation in Fascist Germany.

It was planned to develop the offensive on the front from the River Pripyat to the Black Sea by the forces of troops of the 1st , 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Ukrainian fronts. The goal was the rout of army groups "South" and "A" and the liberation of Right-Bank Ukraine. The offensive was to take place in two stages. In the first stage it was necessary, by strikes of powerful groupings of the fronts, concentrated on the bridgeheads, to crush the defense of the enemy on the Dnepr,

* IML. Documents and materials of the Department of History of the Great Patriotic War, inv. No. 17741.

to destroy the large groupings of his troops and to emerge onto the Southern Bug. In the second stage it was planned, using the initial success, to make several deep strikes, to cut the strategic front of the enemy, to destroy in parts his groupings, and to gain control of the Rovno-Mogilev-Podol'sk-Dnestr River line. At the same time, Headquarters planned an operation to liberate the Crimea by the forces of the 4th Ukrainian front and the Independent Maritime Army, operating together with the Black Sea Fleet and the Azov military flotilla.

In the Northwestern theater of military operations the troops of the Leningrad, Volkhovo, and the 2nd Baltic fronts were faced with the task of conducting, in cooperation with the Red-Banner Baltic Fleet and long-range aviation, an offensive operation in the course of which they would rout the chief forces of army group "North" and would throw the enemy out of Leningrad, liberate Leningrad and Kalinin oblasts, gain control of the boundary Narva-Pskov-Valga-Velikaya River, and create conditions for the liberation of the Soviet Baltic republics.

In the Western theater of military operations, offensive actions on three fronts were planned. The troops of the first Baltic and Western fronts were to rout the enemy in the regions of Vitebsk and Orsh and gain control of the boundary Polotsk-Lepel'-Mogilev. The troops of the Belorussian front were ordered to attack in the direction of Bobruisk, with the most immediate task to rout the grouping of the enemy in the region of Bobruisk and to break through to the boundary of the River Ptichi, having in mind in the future to aim a blow at Minsk.*

* IML. Documents and materials of the Department of History of the Great Patriotic War, inv. No. 9491, sheets 472, 491; No. 9492, sheets 21-22.

Our fleets also received active assignments. The northern fleet, operating together with the naval forces of the Allies, was to ensure the movement of convoys between England and the northern ports of the Soviet Union, to wage a struggle on enemy communications, and to protect our own communications. The Red-Banner Baltic Fleet was given the task of aiding the offensive of the Lenengrad front, and also of transporting goods to the Primorsk bridgehead and guarding our naval communications in the eastern part of the Gulf of Finland. The Black Sea Fleet was ordered to continue the blockade of the Crimean grouping of the enemy from the sea, to strike by air at enemy ships in the ports and on the sea, and to aid the offensive of Soviet troops in the direction of the sea.

In November, 1943, the Supreme High Command gave assignments to the Soviet partisans who were operating in the rear of the enemy troops. The partisan units and detachments were to strengthen aid to the Red Army: to attack the garrisons of the enemy, to smash his rear, to disrupt communications, and to make it impossible to pull up reserves.

Execution of the plans of operation of the winter campaign required of the military soviets of the fronts and armies, the commanders and political organs of the units, the greatest perfection in party-political work among the troops, the mobilization of all moral and physical forces of the Soviet soldiers.

Thus the Soviet High Command planned for the winter campaign of 1944 offensive operations on ten fronts. It was planned to develop the offensive on a broad front from Leningrad to the Black Sea, extending more than 2.5 thousand kilometers and to a depth of 300-500 kilometers.

The plan of the Headquarters of the Supreme Command for the winter campaign corresponded to the political goals of waging the war. This plan, and the plans for the front operations and the operations of groups of fronts, were the result

of the creative work of the Headquarters, the General Staff, the military councils of the fronts, the chief commanders of the Services, and the commanders of the service arms. The plan basically corresponded also to the strategic situation which had developed by the beginning of the third period of the Great Patriotic War. But it also had a serious shortcoming. Concentrating the chief efforts on the flanks of the strategic front, Headquarters also planned an offensive toward the west, with the purpose of our troops emerging onto the line of Polotsk-Minsk-Ptich River[7], i.e., to a depth of 150-230 kilometers. However, in order to solve such a task, the 1st Baltic, the Western, and the Belorussian fronts, as later events showed, did not have sufficient superiority over the enemy. They needed extensive reinforcements, especially of tanks, ammunition, and fuel, which Headquarters could not send. There is no doubt that the decision of Headquarters to send the chief reserves to the Ukrainian fronts, which were operating in the direction of the chief strike, was correct. It was this very factor which was one of the decisive conditions for achieving success in the winter campaign of 1944. Unable simultaneously to strengthen the fronts which operated in the central sector, Headquarters should have determined more modest assignments for them. But this was not the case. As a whole, however, the strategic plan of the Soviet Supreme High Command was correct.

What could the German-Fascist command do to thwart the further offensive plans of the Red Army? Although the situation which had occurred was unfavorable for Germany, Hitler and the other leaders presumed that the war still was not lost, that the German army could conduct dilatory defensive operations far from the borders of the Reich. The Hitlerites counted chiefly on a split in the anti-Fascist coalition and on the conclusion of a separate peace with the USA and England.

In accordance with this political line, the supreme command of the German-Fascist army set as its goal to stabilize the Eastern front and to extend the war at any price. Having decided to drag out the war, the German General Staff

thought that the Soviet Union "in the future will surpass Germany in reserves of men, technical equipment, and propaganda,"* that "the Soviet Union will definitely be able to conduct a large-scale winter offensive."** The German generals mistakenly supposed that "Germany can oppose this only with its high operative-tactical skill and the very high fighting qualities of the individual soldiers."*** Proceeding from such an evaluation of the situation, the German general staff pointed to the necessity "of maintaining the German eastern army with a minimum of the same number of soldiers as it has at the present time, and...to ensure the education...of the reserves, which will make it possible in counterattacks to deal a telling blow even to the superior forces of the enemy, which are quantitatively strong."****

A serious problem for Hitler's command was the creation of the necessary grouping of armed forces. The chief of staff for operational leadership of the Wehrmacht, Colonel-General A. Jodl, was forced to recognize this. Speaking before the highest political and military servants of Fascist Germany in Munich on 7 November 1943, he said: "The most difficult problem facing the command at the

---

* Bulletin of evaluations (by the general staff of the German ground troops--ed.) of the situation on the Soviet-German front. IML. Documents and materials of the Department of History of the Great Patriotic War, inv. No. 13625, leaf 185.

** Ibid.

***Ibid.

****IML. Documents and materials of the Department of History of the Great Patriotic War, inv. No. 13625, sheet 226-227.

present time is to distribute the forces throughout the entire theater of military operations so as to concentrate troops on those sectors of the front where the enemy intends to strike."* General Jodl called the "distribution of forces" among sectors of the front a difficult task, since the German high command more and more sensed the shortage of strategic reserves. There were no substantial changes in the grouping of the German-Fascist troops operating on the Soviet-German front at the beginning of 1944. The distribution of ground forces according to sectors of the front, with the exception of Karelia, was caused by the active operations of the Red Army in 1943. The greatest number of forces were in the center and on the southern flank of the front (from Nevel to the shores of the Black Sea). Here up to 60.9% of the infantry and 92.4% of the tank and motorized divisions were located. Attached to the army groups, large armored reserves were created. Maneuvering them along the front, the German command planned by short counterstrikes to repulse the offensive of the Soviet troops. At the same time they planned also to regroup the aviation forces from one direction to another.

In the northwest sector of the Soviet-German front the enemy counted on holding in their hands Leningrad Oblast' and the Baltic area, depending on the lines previously prepared for defense. This gave him the opportunity to cover the approaches to East Prussia from the northeast, to maintain supremacy of the navy on the Baltic Sea, and thus not to lose his influence in the Scandinavian countries. In the center of the Soviet-German front the Fascist command intended by stubbornly defending the favorable lines to hold the occupied part of Belorussia and to cover the most important strategic direction toward Warsaw. In the southwest, the Hitlerites tried by active operations

* Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression. Vol. VII. Washington, 1946, p. 959.

to revive the defense along the Dnepr and to retain the Right-Bank Ukraine and the Crimea. By this means, the enemy hoped to maintain its political positions in Romania, Bulgaria, and also in Turkey.

The German-Fascist command gave great significance to erecting defensive boundaries. Already after the defeat at Kursk, it took immediate measures to strengthen its defense. With this goal, the building of defensive boundaries and zones far into the interior began.

In organizing the defense, the Fascist high command apparently was not completely sure that the German troops would be able to hold the occupied positions. General Jodl spoke directly about this in the above-mentioned report. "I must confess with all frankness," he said, "that our general position is very difficult, and I cannot hide the fact that I expect further serious crises."* It was already clear to the Fascist leadership that the time had come to prepare for the defense on German territory.

Consequently, the plan of Hitler's command in 1944 came down to strategic defense to exhaust and bleed the Red Army white, to win time in the hope that a political crisis would arise in the camp of Germany's opponents. The transition to strategic defense was necessary, since the military superiority of the Red Army had become evident to the Fascist command.

But as the experience of military operations in 1944 showed, the German-Fascist command was unable to realize this plan. It was unable to turn the defense in the East into an active strategic defense which, as is known, calls for a combination of broad defensive actions with an offensive in directions where

* Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression, Vol. VII, p. 972.

the enemy is vulnerable. That which was typical of the Red Army's and the Soviet command's military activity in 1941-1942 proved impossible for the German army and its general staff in 1944.

An analysis of the German-Fascist plan of operations for 1944 shows that Hitler's command as before overestimated their military skill and underestimated Soviet military skill. Meanwhile, Soviet military skill improved so much, and the Red Army became so powerful, that no "defensive barrages" could hold back the onslaught of the Soviet troops. Our command possessed the strategic initiative, had at its disposal sufficient reserves and a significant strike force to continue the war in highly maneuverable forms and not only to drive the enemy out of the borders of the socialist Motherland, but also to transfer military operations onto enemy territory.

The German plan for waging war in 1944 was faulty in its political basis, since it was based on the conviction of the fatal inevitability of a split in the anti-Fascist coalition. The Hitlerite leaders thus did not understand that the anti-Fascist coalition was founded on a communality of basic interests of the peoples, who could not allow the supremacy of Fascism and the loss of freedom and national independence.

Thus the internal political, international, and military-strategic situation of the USSR at the beginning of 1944 created favorable conditions for the further offensive of Soviet troops, the liberation of the entire Soviet territory from Hitler's invaders, and the transfer of military operations onto the territory of the enemy. The scales of victory inclined toward the socialist state. The Central Committee of the Communist Party and the Soviet government, correctly evaluating the situation which had come about, mobilized the Soviet people and the armed forces to deal new crushing blows at the enemy.

Chapter Two

THE OFFENSIVE OF SOVIET TROOPS AT LENINGRAD AND NOVGOROD

1. THE LAST DAYS OF THE LENINGRAD BLOCKADE. TASKS OF THE SOVIET TROOPS

The victories of the Red Army in 1943 created conditions for the complete liberation of Leningrad from the enemy blockade. The heroic epic of defense of the city of Lenin was nearing an end. Its concluding pages are a worthy crown for the noble exploits of the defenders of Leningrad—people of unbendable will, exceptional steadfastness, courage, and heroism.

The situation of Leningrad and its defending troops by the end of 1943 had significantly improved. The breakthrough of the blockade in January of that year, even though the breach made in the surrounding ring was narrow, ensured the communications of the besieged city with the country. Supplies traveled in an uninterrupted flow along the newly-laid railroad south of Lake Ladoga, and along the automobile and air routes. The terrible days of hunger and cold which were endured in the winter of 1941-1942 were over. Soviet fighter aviation and antiaircraft artillery reliably guarded the skies of Leningrad.

After the breakthrough of the blockade, from month to month help increased for Leningrad in the form of food, fuel, and electrical energy. The railroad workers of the Northern and October Railroads selflessly delivered goods to the city and to the troops. Workers and engineers of the Volkhovo Hydroelectric Station by the end of 1943 restored six units with a total of 48,000 kwts. of power.* All this poured new strength into industry and the municipal economy of Leningrad, and improved the supply and servicing of the population.

* IML. Documents and Materials of the Department of History of the Great Patriotic War, inv. No. 16099, sheet 6.

As before, Leningrad stood on the firing-line. In the second half of 1943, German bombers appeared rarely over the city. In November and December, the air defense did not allow one fly-over by enemy aircraft. But the Hitlerites regularly shelled Leningrad with large-caliber weapons. In July-December, enemy artillery launched 18,000 shells at the city. In each of these months, Leningrad was under artillery fire an average of 23 days. On each of these days, an average of 130 shells exploded on the streets, squares, and parks.* The walls of the houses were shot through with holes, and many of the buildings were destroyed, burned, and mutilated.

Enemy shells brought death to the peaceful population. In 1943, as a result of artillery shellings, more than 1,400 inhabitants of the city were killed and around 4,600 were wounded.** Diaries and letters of the people of Leningrad report the tragic facts. V. Inber wrote in her diary on 9 January 1944: "In Leningrad there are the same bloody days of war. Shellings, fatalities, direct hits in the subway, as on Wednesday with No. 10, where 70 people were killed."*** The blood of children and women washed the pavements of the city.

On 11 September 1943, the Leningrad city committee of the AUCP (b) and the city soviet of workers' deputies adopted a special resolution "On measures for reducing losses among the population during artillery shelling of the city."

---

* Cf. Leningrad v Velikoy Otechestvennoy voyne Socetskogo Soyuza. Sbornik Dokumentov i materialov [Leningrad in the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union. Collection of Documents and Materials.] Vol. II, 23 June 1943-24 March 1944. [Leningrad Lenizdat Publishers], 1947, p. 128.

**Cf. A. V. Karasev, Leningradtsy v gody blokady, 1941-1943 [The People of Leningrad During the Blockade, 1941-1943], Moscow, USSR Academy of Sciences Publishers, 1959, p. 297.

*** Vera Inber, Pochti tri goda, Leningradskiy dnevnik [Almost Three Years. A Leningrad Diary] "Sovetskiy Pisatel' " 1946, p. 252.

Special attention was devoted in it to ensuring the safety of factories and institutions in which many people worked. The resolution regulated the activity of theaters, schools, and hospitals. Several of them, located in the shelling zone, temporarily ceased operation. The places of arrival and departure of passenger trains from the Leningrad -Finland-passenger Station were changed.* The war against children and women, the barbaric shootings, could not disorganize the population or stop the growing rhythm of life of the large city.

Under the severe war conditions, the workers and employees toiled with great enthusiasm. Many did not leave their work places even during air bombings and artillery shellings. They stood at their posts, like soldiers. In 1943 in Leningrad work was restored in more than 85 large factories and plants. Because of the alleviation of hunger and the improvement in the supply of raw materials, fuel, and electrical energy to the factories, the productivity of labor that year increased almost 2.6 times over that of 1942.** The plan for the national economy of Leningrad for the fourth quarter of 1943 was fulfilled in all basic indicators. The industry of the city yielded 79% greater production in 1943 than in the previous year.*** The production of arms and military supplies expanded, and the manufacture of generators and textile machines was restored.

With the growth of industry, the demand for qualified cadres increased. In order to eliminate difficulties that arose, the city committee of the AUCP (b) and the Leningrad Soviet redistributed the work force among the factories of the

* CPA (Tsentral'nyi partiinyi arkhiv ; Central Party Archive) of the IML, op. 1, d. 1160, sheets 15-16.
** According to data of the USSR Central Statistical Administration. IML. Documents and Materials of the Department of History of the Great Patriotic War, inv. No. 16099, sheet 13.
*** Ibid.

city, as a result of which the most important factories received more than 10,000 trained workers. Furthermore, at the factories and plants various forms of production and technical instruction and increases in worker qualifications, which had existed before the war, began to be restored: obligatory production of a technical minimum of the first and second degree, courses for masters of socialist labor, obligatory production and technical instruction of workers who did not have qualifications, etc.

A serious problem, on the solution of which the restoration and development of industry depended, and also the improvement in the living conditions of the population, was the supply of the city with fuel and electrical energy. The railroad workers and the collective of the Volkhovo Hydroelectric Station exerted all efforts to solve this pressing problem. It was necessary to make broad use of local fuel resources, to expend every kilogram of fuel, every kilowatt-hour of electrical energy economically. On the initiative of the Party, Soviet, and trade-union organizations, an all-city socialist competition began for saving fuel and electrical energy, in the course of which the people of Leningrad displayed exceptional inventiveness and carefulness. In the third quarter alone, more than 4,100,000 kilowatt-hours of electrical energy were saved and 5,200 tons of conditional fuel. During this time, due to the use of local fuel, 5,700 tons of short-supply fuel brought in from a distance were saved.*

The remarkable organization and efficiency of the people of Leningrad made for a noticeable improvement in living conditions in the spring and summer of 1943. Socialist competition developed between regions of the city for the best preparation of private homes for winter. Entering into competition, the toilers greatly overfulfilled the plan for capital and current repair. By the beginning of winter, special commissions accepted more than 7,000 repaired houses.

*CPA IML, Folio 17, op. 1, d. 1161, sheet 17.

In 1943 the people of Leningrad fought energetically for an increase in food supplies. The sovkhozes and subsidiary enterprises of plants and institutions alone collected around 74,000 tons of vegetables and potatoes. The plan for gross collection of vegetables was overfulfilled by more than 11,000 tons.* The collective and individual small plots became very widespread. The number of workers, employees, and their family members who participated in it increased by 167,000 people, compared with 1942. In their private plots, which were located chiefly within the city boundaries, on empty lots, the toilers collected around 60,000 tons of vegetables and potatoes. This was an important aid in organizing the feeding of the population.

The situation in Leningrad improved so much that the State Committee for Defense on 29 August adopted a resolution "On the restoration of production of turbines at the Nevskiy Machine-Building Factory." The Leningrad City Committee of the AUCP (b) published a special decree "On increasing the output of rolled steel and steel sheets in Leningrad industry." On the resolution of the central organs, in the 1943/1944 school year the studies in the institutions of higher education which had been interrupted by the war were restored. On 1 October, 1943, the M. I. Kalinin Polytechnical Institute, the A. I. Herzen Pedagogical Institute, the Engineering-Construction, the Chemical-Technological, the Communications Engineers, and the Railroad Transport Institutes and other vuzes [institute of higher education - tr.] were revived. All this was perceived by the inhabitants of Leningrad as signs of the imminent and final liberation of the city from the blockade, and it increased their political and labor activity.

The successes of the Leningrad toilers in 1943 were achieved under the leadership of the Central Committee of the AUCP (b) and the Leningrad Party organization, which was one of the most advanced and enthusiastic detachments of the Party. The population of Leningrad with justification saw in the city committee

* Ibid., op. 2, d. 840, sheet 31.

of the AUCP (b) and the Leningrad Soviet its own tested military staff, operatively guiding ... life in an extremely difficult situation. The Leningrad Party organization, executing the orders of the Central Committee of the AUCP (b) and the Soviet government, mobilized all its forces to ensure the needs of the front, to improve the work of industry and transport. The Secretary of the oblast' and city committees of the Party, A. A. Zhdanov, the secretaries of the city committee of the AUCP (b) , A. A. Kuznetsov and Ya. F. Kapustin, the chairman of the Leningrad Soviet P. S. Popkov, and the chairman of the oblast' executive committee, N. V. Solov'yev, the members of the bureau of the oblast committee of the AUCP (b), of the oblast' and city executive committees, often visited the factories and military units, talked with the workers and soldiers, inspired them to solve the tasks facing the rear and the front. The fact that for the second half of the year 1943 the Leningrad Party organization increased by 2,208 people and that by the beginning of 1944 it numbered in its ranks 49,643 members and candidates of the AUCP (b) testifies to the strength and authority of the Communist Party.*

The victories of the Red Army on the entire Soviet-German front, in particular the breakthrough of the blockade of Leningrad in January 1943, had a great influence on the situation in the occupied regions (rayons) of Leningrad Oblast'. The Hitlerites wreaked their anger for failures in the war and for their thwarted plans for the capture of Leningrad on the peaceful population . They behaved with particular brutality in the fall of 1943. In October alone, in Slavkovo, Sochinsk, and Porkhovo rayons, hundreds of villages were burned. The invaders rounded up Soviet citizens for Fascist forced labor, barbarously plundered cities and villages, transported machines, grain, cattle, and domestic goods to Germany. But the atrocities of the Fascists could not break the will of Soviet citizens

* CPA IML folio 17, op. 2, d. 870, sheet 83.

to resist; they only engendered fierce hatred for the Fascists and strengthened the liberation struggle in the occupied rayons. Inspired by the victories of the Soviet troops, the inhabitants of these rayons went into the partisan detachments. While there were 4 partisan brigades, 1 partisan regiment, and several detached units and groups numbering a total of about 3,000 people in the oblast' at the beginning of 1943*, before the Red Army offensive near Leningrad in January 1944 13 partisan brigades, numbering 35,000 people, were already operating on Leningrad territory, in the rear of the enemy.** The fifth partisan brigade alone, which was commanded by K. D, Karitskiy, increased during the last months of 1943 from 220 people to more than 6,000.

The Leningrad partisans also significantly increased their military activity. They destroyed the insidious plan of the German-Fascist invaders to drive the inhabitants of the occupied regions to the West. The partisans liberated Soviet people who had been herded into collection centers, seized the railroad trains, attacked the concentration camps and prisons, and, annihilating the guard, released the prisoners to freedom. Having avoided Fascist slavery, the people went off into the forests and joined the ranks of the popular avengers. At the beginning of the offensive of our troops near Leningrad and Novgorod, the chief forces of the partisans disrupted enemy communications in the regions of Pskov, Gdov, Strug Krasnyye, and Luga. They destroyed railroads and highways, made the dirt roads and country roads impassable, preventing the movement of railroad trains, automobile transport and cartage of the enemy.

---

* Cf. the third volume of this edition, p. 446.
** CPA IML, folio 17, inv. 2, d. 962, sheets 3-4.

The Leningrad Party organization systematically selected experienced cadres to lead the Party-political work among the population which was in the enemy rear and to strengthen the Party ranks of the partisan detachments. In 1943 alone, 150 Party workers were sent to the territory occupied by the enemy after the breakthrough in the blockade of Leningrad. Due to the losses suffered by the Communist underground, the Leningrad oblast committee of the AUCP (b) in May 1943 recreated leading organs, including rayon Party committees, in the occupied regions. In the partisan brigades political departments operated. Every partisan detachment had a strong Party organization.

Thus, by 1944 Leningrad was in an incomparably better situation than at the beginning of 1943. But in the interests of securing the safety of the city, political and strategic considerations absolutely required complete lifting of the blockade from Leningrad and the liberation of Leningrad oblast.' The Supreme High Command headquarters, planning operations for the liberation of the entire Soviet land from the invaders, decided at the beginning of 1944 to organize an offensive near Leningrad and Novgorod.

At the moment the Red Army went over to the offensive, i.e., on 14 January, the situation in the sector of the Soviet-German front which was occupied by troops of the Leningrad, Volkhov , and 2nd Baltic fronts was as follows (map 2).

The enemy had a large grouping of troops near Leningrad and Novgorod. He counted on retaining the occupied lines and thus covering the approaches to the Baltic region with its naval bases, on securing the sea routes to Sweden and Finland, and also on keeping Finland as his ally in the war against the USSR.

The 18th army of the enemy defended against the troops of the Leningrad and

and Volkhov fronts on the boundary from Sista-Palkino to Lake Il'men'. This army was composed of 19 divisions and 3 brigades* and numbered about 168,000 men. It was armed with approximately 4,500 guns and mortars of all calibers (not counting antiaircraft and rocket artillery), and up to 200 tanks, and assault guns.** The average density of the enemy defense was 17 kilometers per division. One division was in reserve of the army commander. Two special artillery groups were created by the German-Fascist command for bombarding Leningrad. They had 75 batteries of heavy and 65 batteries of light artillery.*** An operative group of Finnish troops, the "Karelian Isthmus," took up the defense against our 23rd army on the Karelian Isthmus.

South of the 18th army, against the troops of the 2nd Baltic front, the 16th enemy army, including 21 divisions and 1 brigade, was deployed.**** The density of defense of this army was 23 kilometers per division. The 18th and 16th armies were combined into army group "North", which was commanded by General-Field Marshal Küchler. It had in reserve three guard and one instructional field divisions.***** Thus, in the army group there was a total of 44 divisions and 4 brigades. It was supported by the 1st air force , numbering more than 200 aircraft.******

The enemy created a powerful defense, well equipped in regard to engineering. In the tactical zone it consisted of a system of strong centers of resistance and strong

---

* Collection of materials on the composition of troops of Fascist Germany, 4th edition, p. 10.
** IML. Documents and Materials of the Department of History of the Great Patriotic War, inv. No. 9608, p. 64.
*** Ibid., p. 34
**** Collection of materials on the composition of troops of Fascist Germany, 4th edition, p. 10.
***** Ibid.
****** IML. Documents and materials of the Department of History of the Great Patriotic War, inv. No. 14050, sheet 1.

points, which were composed taking into consideration the forest-swamp and lake terrain, and which had fire communication among them. An especially strong enemy defense was south of the Pulkovo highlands--against the troops of the 42nd army of the Leningrad front, and north of Novgorod--against the 59th army of the Volkhov front. Here the enemy erected not only gun and machine-gun bunkers, but also concrete pillboxes, antitank ditches, obstacles, and scarps. In the operative depths, the enemy prepared the defense along the rivers Oredezh Luga, Plyuss , Mshaga, Shelon', Narva, and Velikaya. Its total depth reached 230-260 kilometers. Conquering a defense echeloned to such a depth required of the Soviet troops careful preparation, high skill in massing forces and equipment in the chief directions, skillful maneuvering in the course of battle operations.

The ships and aviation of the German and Finnish fleets conducted limited battle operations. The enemy, trying to hold the Red-Banner Baltic Fleet in the eastern part of the Gulf of Finland, increased its already powerful minefields.

The troops of the Leningrad front, whose command was General of the Army L. A. Govorov, member of the Military Council-Lieutenant-General A. A. Zhdanov, and Chief of Staff--Lieutenant-General D. N. Gusev, took up the defense extending 256 kilometers. The 23rd army took up the defense on the Karelian Isthmus. In the region of Oranienbaum the troops of the Primorsk operative group held a bridgehead extending for 50 kilometers along the front and 25 kilometers deep, on which the 2nd shock army was concentrated at the beginning of the offensive. The troops of the 42nd and 65th armies took up the defense south and southeast of the approaches to Leningrad on the sector from Ligovo to Gontovaya Lipka.

The front consisted of 33 rifle divisions, 3 rifle brigades, 4 tank brigades, and 5 fortified areas. The 13th air army of the front, commanded by Lieutenant-General of Aviation S. D. Rybal'chenko, and the 2nd guards fighter aviation corps

had 461 aircraft.* The corps covered Leningrad, the troops, bases, and communications of the front from the air. The Red-Banner Baltic Fleet, based at Leningrad and Kronstadt, was operatively subordinate to the Leningrad front. The fleet was commanded by Admiral V. F. Tributs,, the member of the Military Council was Vice-Admiral N. K. Smirnov, and the chief of staff was Vice-Admiral A. N. Petrov. Naval aviation, commanded by Lieutenant-General of Aviation M. I. Samokhin, was brought in to support the troops of the Leningrad front.

Further, from Gontovaya Lipka to Lake Il'men', the troops of the Volkhov Front occupied a line extending 232 kilometers. North of Novgorod, on the west bank of the Volkhov, they held a bridgehead. The commander of the troops of the front was General of the Army K. A. Meretskov, the member of the military Council was Lieutenant-General T. F. Shtykov, and the chief of staff was Lieutenant-General F. P. Ozerov. The front was composed of 22 rifle divisions, 6 rifle brigades, 4 tank brigades, and 2 fortified regions. The 14th air army, commanded by Lieutenant-General of Aviation I. P. Zhuravlev, had 257 aircraft at its disposal.**

The rifle troops of the Leningrad (except for the 23rd army) and the Volkhov fronts numbered about 375,000 men. Both fronts had 14,300 guns and mortars of all calibers, not counting antiaircraft and rocket artillery; more than 1200 tanks and self-propelled artillery devices and 718 aircraft. One hundred ninety-two naval aircraft and 330 long-range aircraft were also at their disposal.*** Thus, the Leningrad and Volkhov fronts had twice the number of rifle (infantry) and motorized troops as the 18th army of the enemy, more than 3 times the amount of artillery, 6 times the number of tanks and self-propelled artillery devices, and more than 6 times the number of aircraft.

* IML. Documents and materials of the Department of History of the Great Patriotic War, inv. No. 9608, p. 31, 46.
** Ibid., p. 32, 46.
*** Ibid., p. 46, 64.

On the boundary from Lake Il'men' to Lake Neshcherdo, for a distance of 320 kilometers, the troops of the 2nd Baltic Front, commanded by General of the Army M. M. Popov, operated against the 16th army of the enemy. Lieutenant-General N. A. Bulganin was the member of the Military Council and chief of staff was Lieutenant-General L. M. Sandalov. The front included 45 rifle divisions, 3 rifle brigades, 4 tank brigades, and 1 fortified region. The 15th air army, also attached to it, was commanded by Lieutenant-General of Aviation N. F. Naumenko, and numbered 355 aircraft.

The goal of the offensive which was being prepared at Leningrad and Novgorod was the rout of the enemy army group "North", the complete liquidation of the blockade of Leningrad, and the clearing of the German-Fascist invaders from Leningrad Oblast'.

The rout of the German army group "North" and the liquidation of the blockade of the city of Lenin created favorable conditions for the liberation of the Baltic and the Karelian-Finnish Republic. The troops of the Leningrad, Volkhovo, and 2nd Baltic fronts, the Red-Banner Baltic Fleet, long-range aviation, and the partisans were used in conducting the operation.

The plan of our command was to rout first of all the flank groupings of the enemy's 18th army. Developing an offensive in the direction of Kingisepp and Luga, the Soviet troops were to rout the chief forces of the 18th army and to emerge on the boundary of the Luga River. It was planned that in the future, the troops of the Leningrad, Volkhov and 2nd Baltic fronts, operating in the direction of Narva, Pskov, and Idritsa, would inflict defeat on the enemy's 16th army, would complete the liberation of Leningrad Oblast', and would create conditions for conducting subsequent operations for the liberation of the Baltic region.

The Red-Banner Baltic Fleet was given the task of aiding the troops of the Leningrad front in breaching the defensive zone, of destroying the enemy artillery groups and centers of resistance by air strikes and ship and shore artillery fire. Long-range aviation was ordered to inflict concentrated blows at regions where enemy troops were concentrated, at headquarters, railway junctions in the operational depths of defense of army group "North", armies, and also at the most important military targets on the territory of Finland. The partisans of Leningrad Oblast' received the assignment to increase strikes at communications, in the rear, at headquarters and communications points, and to systematically spy on the enemy and thus to support the invading troops.

The beginning of our offensive near Leningrad and Novgorod was projected for the middle of January, 1944. According to the plan of the Soviet command, at this time an offensive was to be developed against the main group of the enemy in Right-Bank Ukraine, and also against his troops in the central sector of the Soviet-German front. This would make it impossible for the German-Fascist command to reinforce army group "North".

The offensive was to be conducted under difficult conditions. The forest-swamp terrain allowed the enemy to organize a strong defense. In moving to the northwest, the west, and the south, the Soviet troops had to cross many rivers. There were not enough dirt roads here, and the railroads had been destroyed and were not operating and the thaw, which had begun during the course of the operation, made the offensive extremely difficult.

In accordance with the assigned task, the commander of the Leningrad front decided to break through the enemy defense in two sectors. The chief strike was inflicted by the 2nd shock army from a bridgehead in the region of Oranienbaum and the 42nd army from the region of the Pulkovo heights in converging directions

on Ropsha. After surrounding and destroying the Peterhof-Strel'na enemy grouping, the chief forces of the 2nd shock and 42nd armies were to develop an attack on Kingisepp, and part of the forces - on Krasnogvardeysk.* The 67th army received the assignment to inflict an auxiliary blow in the general direction of Mga station and not to give the enemy the opportunity to redeploy his forces in other directions; in case of enemy withdrawal, this force was to organize pursuit in the direction of Krasnogvardeysk.

The commander of the Volkhov Front made the decision to inflict the chief strike by the forces of the 59th army, to breach the defense of the enemy north and south of Novgorod, and to develop an offensive in converging directions on Lyubolyady. Having surrounded and destroyed the German-Fascist grouping in the region of Novgorod, the troops of the front were later to take the city of Luga, to emerge on the line of Luga-Utorgosh, blocking the enemy's withdrawal toward Pskov. The 8th army commanded by Lieutenant-General F. N. Starikov, and the 54th army commanded by Lieutenant-General S. V. Roginskiy of that front were given the task of actively operating in the directions of Tosno, Lyuban', and Chudovo, and not allowing redeployment of the enemy forces toward Novgorod, and, in case of enemy withdrawal, of beginning pursuit.

The decision of the commander of the 2nd Baltic Front called for an offensive of troops of the left wing to take the region of Pustoshka-Idritsa. Later the troops of the front were to advance in the directions of Opochka and Sebezh.

In planning the operation, the headquarters of the fronts and armies felt that it would be difficult to break through the defense created by the enemy.

* Archive of MD [Ministry of Defense] of the USSR, folio 309, inv. 4073, d. 175, sheets 22-23.

They therefore organized careful preparation for the offensive. Special attention was given to the artillery. Depending on the concrete characteristics of the enemy's defense and the conditions of the terrain, artillery operations were planned differently in different directions. But in all cases, its chief mass was concentrated on the sectors of breakthrough. This ensured an average artillery density of from 123 to 138 guns and mortars of 76mm caliber and above per one kilometer of breakthrough sector of the front on the Leningrad front, and up to 106 guns and mortars on the Volkhov front. Great importance was given to suppressing the fire of the large-caliber enemy artillery located south of Leningrad, the destruction of enemy pockets of resistance, strong points, and pillboxes. For this purpose, more than 200 medium- and large-caliber guns of the ship-based and shore-based artillery of the Red-Banner Baltic Fleet were used.

A large number of tanks and self-propelled artillery installations were brought into the operation. Tank brigades and regiments, artillery self-propelled units were attached to divisions of the first and second echelons of the rifle corps, and also to the rifle corps of the second echelon. Furthermore, in the armies advancing in the directions of the main strikes, mobile army groups and tank reserves were created. All this ensured the participation of the armored tank troops both in the breakthrough of the enemy defense and in the development of success in the operative depth.

An important position was assigned to the operations of the 13th, 14th, and 15th air armies, to the aviation of the Red-Banner Baltic Fleet, and also to long-range aviation. Aviation received the assignment to suppress enemy artillery, to aid the breakthrough into the tactical zone of the enemy defense, to support the advance of our shock groups in the operative depths of the enemy defense, to block the enemy airports, to cover the chief group of Soviet troops from the air,

and also to conduct intelligence observations on the enemy at immediate operational depth and on his communications.

The forested and swampy character of the terrain and the saturation of the enemy's defense with various obstacles required that in engineering planning special attention be devoted to preparing the initial region for the offensive, equipping the roads and cross-country tracks, in arrangements for fording rivers and swamps, for removing obstacles and mines. On the Leningrad front in the starting regions 926 minefields were cleared and about 324,000 mines were removed.

Preparation for the operation was made from the end of October, 1943, to the middle of January, 1944. In the formations, units and headquarters intense training was conducted at this time. In warehouses and among the troops, ammunition, fuel, lubricants, provisions, and clothing and other goods were stored up. In order to supply the 42nd and 2nd shock armies alone with ammunition, 1150 railroad cars were required. In order to give first aid, the necessary personnel and equipment were appropriated, and a large reserve of hospital cots was created. Thus, the Leningrad front had more than 59,000 cots to receive the sick and wounded.*

The Red-Banner Baltic Fleet played an important role in preparing the operation. Despite the difficult weather conditions and the unsuitability of the ships for sailing on the ice, the ships of the fleet transported across the Gulf of Finland to the bridgehead near the sea more than 44,000 men, about 600 guns, many tanks, self-propelled artillery, armored cars, autos, and thousands of tons of ammunition and other cargoes.** The sailors, petty officers, ships' officers, together with the soldiers, sergeants, and officers of the troops of the front,

* IML. Documents and materials of the Department of History of the Great Patriotic War, inv. No. 17368, sheet 3.

** Archive of the QS [Intendantskoye otdeleniye--Quartermaster Section] of the Navy [Voenno-morskoy flot--Navy], d. 13372, sheets 105-109.

and also the personnel serving the barges and tugs, displayed exceptional selflessness and heroism.

The success of the operation in many ways was predetermined by the high moral-political condition of the troops, which was due to Party-political work. At its base were the directives of the Supreme High Command, the Chief Political Administration, resolutions of the commanders of the fronts and of the Baltic fleet for the forthcoming operation, and also directives of the military Councils and political administrations of the fronts and the fleet.

The commanders and political workers, Party and Komsomol organizations widely propagandized the victories of the Soviet people, gained in 1943 at the front and in the rear. They explained to the soldiers that the rout of the enemy at Leningrad was being prepared by the entire country, that the CC of the AUCP (b) and the Soviet government were devoting constant attention to the solution of this task. This inspired the soldiers and sailors for a selfless struggle against the German-Fascist invaders and strengthened their faith in an imminent victory. Systematic propaganda of revolutionary traditions of the workers of Leningrad, popularization of outstanding examples of courage and heroism displayed by Soviet soldiers in the defense of the city of Lenin, occupied an important place in Party-political work.

The political organs and Party organizations felt that our troops, which had shown examples of steadfastness, stubbornness, and heroism in the defense of Leningrad, did not yet have sufficient experience in breaking through the powerful defense of the enemy. Therefore, they subordinated all Party-political work to the tasks of training the troops in the art of breaking through a strongly-fortified and deeply-echeloned defense of the enemy, conducting decisive and creative offensive operations over a long period and into a great depth, and maneuvering small subdivisions in a forested and swampy locality

with many lakes. The workers of the Party-political apparatus spent a significant part of their time in the subunits. Together with the commanders, they helped the soldiers, sergeants, and officers to master advanced battle experience. The Communists and Komsomol members served as examples for all the soldiers. The successes of the most outstanding fighters were widely popularized.

The moral and political upsurge which reigned among the troops during preparation for the offensive caused an enormous flow of the best soldiers and officers into the Party and the Komsomol. Tens of thousands of applications were submitted to the Party and Komsomol organizations of the Leningrad front. In the 63rd guards rifle division in two days alone, more than 630 people submitted applications for acceptance into the party and about 130 for acceptance into the Komsomol.* Up to 8,000 people joined the ranks of the Party every month.** On the Leningrad front in January there were 148,164 Communists and 101,380 Komsomol members.*** In several divisions of the 2nd shock army, Communists and Komsomol members constituted up to 30% of the personnel. In individual rifle divisions there were more than 2,000 members and candidates of the Party.****

The Party and Komsomol organizations of companies and batteries had from 15 to 30 Communists and Komsomol members before the offensive. Moreover, there were Communists and Komsomol members in almost all the rifle divisions and gun crews. Thus, in the 194th guards rifle regiment of the 64th guards rifle

---

* Archive of the MO [Local Defense] of the USSR, folio 32, op. 22152, d. 3, sheet 24.
** Ibid., sheet 115.
*** Ibid., folio 217, op. 1217, d. 562, sheet 128; d. 570, sheet 126.
****Ibid., folio 309, op. 4092, d. 20 sheets 2-19.

division, in only 3 divisions out of 105, and in the 14th rifle regiment of the 72nd rifle division only in 7 divisions out of 171 were there no Communists and Komsomol members.* The Party and Komsomol organizations which were created in the subunits cemented the personnel, increasing their fighting abilities.

The Leningrad Party organization participated actively in Party-political work among the troops. In this the unity of the front and the rear was clearly displayed. The Leningrad city committee of the AUCP (b) sent to the front and the fleet a large number of leading Party workers. Propagandists and agitators of the city committee of the Party systematically delivered lectures and reports in the soldier units and on the ships. These were experienced and tough Party cadres, who reinforced the high moral qualities of the soldiers—political consciousness, tenacity, steadfastness in struggle, and holy hatred for the enemy.

A s soon as the order for the offensive was received, in all subunits and units Party and Komsomol meetings took place, at which the tasks of Communists and Komsomol members in battle were discussed. Meetings were held directly before the offensive. The soldiers and officers who addressed them in the name of the soldiers of their units and formations assured the CC of the AUCP (b) and the Soviet government that they would spare no effort to rout the enemy and liberate Leningrad Oblast'.

The purposeful Party-political work during the period of preparation for the operation ensured among the troops high offensive passion, strengthened military discipline, raised even higher the battle capability of the personnel of the fronts, of the Baltic fleet and aviation, and its readiness to fulfill great and responsible assignments with honor.

---

* Ibid., folio 32, inv. 22152, d. 3, sheet 23.

The strategic situation favored the offensive of the Leningrad and Volkhov fronts. In the first half of January, a large-scale offensive developed on the Ukrainian fronts. The German-Fascist troops suffered heavy losses. They retreated in the direction of Vinnitsa and Uman' 200 kilometers, and up to 50 kilometers toward Kirovograd. In order to hold back the onslaught of Soviet troops, the German command sent reserves here, including several divisions from army group "North". In the neighboring central sector of the front, the troops of the 1st Baltic and Western fronts at this time waged fierce battles in the direction of Vitebsk, and the troops of the Belorussian front—in the direction of Bobruisk. In the conditions which had been created, as the Soviet command presumed, army group "North" could not receive any substantial assistance with reserves.

2. THE BATTLES OF LENINGRAD AND NOVGOROD

In the night of 14 January, long-range aviation made 109 flyovers, inflicting blows on the enemy defense before the front of the 2nd shock and the 42nd armies of the Leningrad front. During the day the troops of the 2nd shock army went over to the attack from the Oranienbaum bridgehead. The attack was preceded by 65 minutes of artillery preparation. The artillerymen of the 2nd shock army and the Red-Banner Baltic Fleet exploded more than 100,000 shells and mines on enemy positions. Frontal aviation during the day of 14 January, due to unfavorable weather, could not make any flights. Only 15 crews, well trained for operations under difficult conditions, flew reconnaissance on that day.

With the transfer to offensive by the 2nd shock army, commanded by Lieutenant-General I. I. Fedyuninskiy fierce battles were immediately engaged. The enemy tried to stop the attack at any price, and therefore fought in a frenzy for every strong point. In heavy battles the army formations during the first day of the operation advanced in the main direction up to 4 kilometers, seized the first

position of the main line of the enemy defense, and in individual sectors drove a wedge into the second position. On the following day, the battles became even more fierce. On 15 January, due to an improvement in the weather, naval aviation activated its operations, aiding the offensive of the troops of the 2nd shock army.

Despite the desperate resistance of the enemy, who pulled up his reserves and undertook fierce counterattacks in order to reestablish his position or at least to hold back our advance, the rifle units of the first echelon of the 2nd shock army on the third day of the operation made a breakthrough in the main zone of the enemy defense,* advanced 8-10 kilometers into the interior, and extended the breakthrough up to 23 kilometers. But the enemy was still not crushed even on this day.

The capture of each new line required of our soldiers high skill, steadfastness, and self-sacrifice. In battles for the population center of Sokuli (9 kilometers west of Ropsha), senior sergeant of the 4th rifle regiment of the 98th rifle division, I. K. Skuridin, repeated the heroic exploit of Aleksandr Matrosov. The sixth company, under fire from an enemy pillbox, was forced to lie down. The attempt to destroy the pillbox by artillery fire was unsuccessful. In order to liquidate the pillbox, it was necessary to have a gun for point-blank shooting, but it was behind the infantry. Then senior sergeant Skuridin, who was closer than the others to the pillbox, threw himself to the gun-port and covered it with his body. The machine-gun choked and became silent. The company

* Archive of the MD of the USSR, folio 217, inv.1221, d. 4944, sheet 45.

quickly went over to the attack and soon was in possession of the population center.

Even more intense battles developed in the zone of the 42nd army. It went over to the attack on 15 January. The night before, when the 2nd strike army began its offensive from the Oranienbaum bridgehead, the artillery of the 42nd and 67th armies opened fire only for destruction: it destroyed the pillboxes and bunkers of the enemy. The attack was preceded by artillery preparation, in which the ships and shore batteries of the fleet participated. It lasted one hour, 40 minutes. 220,000 shells and mines were exploded at the enemy. Artillery preparation was conducted also on the front of the 67th army in order to confuse the enemy and to create favorable conditions for the 42nd army, which was given the task of breaking through a very strong enemy defense.

The troops of the 42nd army ran against fierce resistance from the enemy. Supported by a strongly fortified and deeply echeloned defense, the enemy tried in every way possible to maintain its positions directly on the approaches to Leningrad. The advance of our infantry and tanks during the first day was slight. Only in the direction of the main strike of the army did the rifle divisions of the 30th guards rifle corps, commanded by Major-General N. P. Simonyak, succeed by the end of the day in penetrating the enemy defense 2.5-3 kilometers.* During the following two days, the troops of the 42nd army in battles conquered 7-8 kilometers and drove a wedge into the second zone of the enemy defense. In three days of the offensive, the 2nd shock and 42nd armies each advanced no more than 10 kilometers. The insufficient experience of the troops of these armies was apparent in the breakthrough of the strongly fortified defense. Guns for firing point-blank were behind the infantry, the tanks were blown up on the poorly-scouted minefields, and the lines seized were not always reinforced. Eliminating the mistakes discovered in the course of battles,

*Archive of the MD of the USSR, folio 487, inv.79131, d. 6, sheets 11-13.

the Soviet troops began to move ahead persistently.

The enemy began to lose its strength. In the following days, his resistance began to weaken gradually. On 17 January, the German troops which had taken up the defense in the regions of Krasnoye Selo, Ropsha, and Strel'na were threatened with encirclement. The enemy command on this day began to withdraw the troops located north of Krasnoye Selo. The commanders of the 2nd shock and 42nd armies led their mobile groups into battle. But they did not succeed in making a breakthrough on this day. In order finally to smash the enemy resistance, it was necessary to reinforce the attacking troops. On 18 January, the commander of the 2nd shock army led the second echelon of the army into battle -- the 108th rifle corps, which together with the mobile group made a breakthrough in the tactical zone of defense and went over to pursuit of the retreating enemy. On the following day, the commander of the 42nd army also led in his second echelon -- the 123rd rifle corps. This corps successfully overcame the second zone of defense, while the mobile army group entered the break and began to pursue the enemy.

With the entrance of the second echelons and the mobile army groups, a turning-point occurred. The enemy began to retreat. The artillery of the Baltic fleet transferred its fire to the chief resistance centers of the enemy, which were located in the regions of Krasnoye Selo and Ropsha, and also on the German-Fascist troops which had tried to retreat toward Krasnogvardeysk. Especially distinguished were the artillerymen-sailors of the line ship "Oktyabr'skaya revolyutsiya", the cruisers "Kirov" and "Maksim Gor'kiy", the flotilla leader "Leningrad", and the 101st naval brigade of railroad artillery, whose fire was very effective.

Despite the poor weather, aviation also aided the ground troops. On the nights of the 17th and 18th January alone, long-range aviation made about 500 flyovers. They bombarded the enemy in the regions of Krasnoye Selo, Duderhof, Pushkin, and other population centers. Aircraft of the 13th air army and the Baltic fleet bombed and assaulted Fascist troops, helped our formations and units fulfill the tasks assigned to them. On 17 January, the pilot of naval aviation, Captain I. A. Irzhak, did a heroic deed. With a group of assault pilots , he began to shoot at enemy soldiers and officers who had gathered in one of the population centers. His Il-2 war machine was set on fire by enemy antiaircraft artillery. A true son of the Motherland, Captain Irzhak directed the aircraft at a building around which were many Hitlerites and machines. Dozens of invaders paid for the death of the brave hero with their lives.* Dive-bombers of the 276th bomber aviation division, commanded by Major-General of Aviation A. P. Andreyev, struck accurately at enemy strong points.

The Leningrad partisans were also active during these days. The 12th partisan brigade, operating on the shores of the Gulf of Finland, systematically struck at the Baltic Railroad and disrupted enemy movement on the dirt roads of Kingisepp and Volosovo rayons. The 11th partisan brigade on 14 January made a raid on Mshinsk Station. The partisans succeeded in routing the enemy garrison, blowing up the warehouses and the station buildings, destroying 13 kilometers of railroad bed. On 16 January in the sector Gdov-Slantsy the 9th partisan brigade derailed the troop train of the enemy by manpower. And other partisan brigades also dealt blows at enemy communications.**

---

* Cf. Geroi i podvigi. Sovetskiy iListovki Velikoy Otechestvennoy Voyny, 1941-1945 gg. [Heroes and Exploits. Soviet Leaflets of the Great Patriotic War, 1941-1945]., Moscow, State Political Publishers, 1958, p. 295.

** Cf. P. R. Sheverdalkin, Geroicheskaya bor'ba leningradskikh partisan [The Heroic Struggle of the Leningrad Partisans] , Leningrad Publishing House, 1959, pp. 240-242, 246.

Pursuing the enemy, the troops of the 2nd shock army on 19 January took possession of Ropsha, while units of the 42nd army liberated Krasnoye Selo. At night in the region of the Russko-Vysotskoye population center, mobile units of both armies met. In the morning of 20 January, a meeting took place between soldiers of the 43rd rifle division of the 2nd shock army and of the 189th rifle division of the 42nd army, which joined northeast of Ropsha.* In a letter to the Military Council of the Leningrad front, the participants in the meeting wrote that together with other units of the Red Army they would strike even more vigorously at Hitler's army. The victorious moment of the meeting of soldiers of the 43rd and 189th rifle divisions was commemorated by a special act. This historic document was signed by Colonel I. M. Tur'yan, Lieutenant-Colonel I. K. Kharmyshev, Lieutenant-Colonel M. D. Chernysh, Lieutenant M. P. Fisenko, and others.**

On 20 January, the Peterhof-Strel'na grouping of the enemy ceased to exist. Two German-Fascist divisions were routed, and five divisions suffered significant losses. Our troops took captive more than a thousand enemy soldiers and officers, seized a large number of tanks, guns, mortars, rifle equipment, and various storehouses. Among the captured items were 85 heavy guns of from 152 to 400 caliber, which had fired at Leningrad. "Most of the seige equipment piled up over the years at Leningrad," the German General Tippelskirch was forced to confess later, "also could not be saved and fell into the hands of the Russians."***

---

* Archive of the MD of the USSR, folio 397, inv. 9262, d. 193, leaves 26-28.

**Ibid.

***K. Tippelskirch, Istoriya vtoroy mirovoy voyny / History of the Second World War /, Moscow, Foreign Literature Publishers, 1956, p. 363.

It must nevertheless be noted that the slow tempos of breakthrough of the enemy defense during the first days of the offensive, and the introduction into battle at different times of the second echelons and mobile army groups allowed the enemy to withdraw the greater part of the forces of the Peterhof-Strel'na group and to avoid encirclement.

The route of the Peterhof-Strel'na group had great significance. The enemy not only suffered huge losses in manpower and military technical equipment, but also experienced severe moral disillusionment. The Red Army broke through the powerful fortifications with which the Hitlerites surrounded Leningrad. The German-Fascist troops were hurled back 25 kilometers from the city. The 2nd shock army, advancing from the Oranienbaum bridgehead, consolidated its left flank with the 42nd army. Favorable conditions were created for the subsequent offensive operations.

On 19 January, Moscow saluted the heroic troops of the Leningrad front, which had broken through the German defense and gained possession of Krasnoye, Selo and Ropsha. In honor of the victory won, formations and units of the 2nd shock and 42nd armies, and of the 13th air army and naval aviation, which had distinguised themselves the most in battle, were given the title of "Krasnoye Selo" and "Ropsha" units.

The people of Leningrad during all these days, lived in a mood of joy and exhilaration. The roar of artillery cannonade, the increase movement to and from the front, and tens of other large and small things testified to the fact that the greatest offensive for which they had waited, in which they believed, had begun. And from the first day of the offensive, news of the successes of Soviet troops spread through the city.

Ardent patriots, the people of Leningrad remained true to their remarkable traditions. They marked the offensive of Soviet troops with new successes in labor. Indissolubly connected with the fighters of the Leningrad front, the inhabitants of the hero city were prepared to do everything for the sake of victory. As soon as the wounded began to arrive from the front, thousands of Leningrad people offered to give blood for them. Women came to the hospitals to care for the wounded and brought them gifts.

On 14 January, simultaneously with the offensive which had begun near Leningrad, operations of the troops of the 59th army of the Volkhov front developed. As a result of artillery preparation in the chief direction north of Novgorod, which lasted one hour, 50 minutes, the enemy suffered losses, but his defense was not suppressed. Poor weather prevented the artillerymen from observing the targets. For this same reason aviation did not participate in the preparation and support of the offensive. The 14th air army began active military operations only on the second day. Units of the 6th and 14th infantry corps did not emerge onto the line of attack at the same time. Several subdivisions did not immediately enter the battle after the end of the artilley preparation, but came 15-20 minutes later, which made it possible for the enemy to restore the destroyed command. Some of the tanks, in moving from the initial positions to the forward edge, became stuck in the swamps and could not participate in the attack. All this led to the fact that the battles took on a protracted character. By the end of the first day, the attacking troops had driven a wedge of only 600-1000 meters into the defense of the enemy.

The military operations in the direction of the auxiliary strike of the 59th army, south of Novgorod, developed much more successfully. Using the darkness and the beginning snowstorm, the southern group of troops, commanded

by Lieutenant-General T.A. Sviklin, on the night of 14 January secretly crossed Lake Il'men' on the ice. By sudden attack, it destroyed the strong-points of the enemy on the left bank, seized the bridgehead, and by the end of the day, had expanded it up to 5 kilometers along the front and 4 kilometers deep.* In order to reinforce and develop this success, the commander of the 59th army, Lieutenant-General I.T. Korovnikov, led into battle from the second echelon of the army, the 372nd rifle division, the regiment of the 225th rifle division, and a battalion of armored cars. At the same time, north of Novgorod another rifle division (the second echelon of the 6th rifle corps), two tank brigades, and one self-propelled artillery brigade were led into battle.

During 15 and 16 January, fierce battles took place, in the course of which our troops, slowly advancing north of Novgorod, took a strong-point of enemy resistance -- the population center of Podberez'ye. Operating under difficult conditions of a forested and swampy terrain and a thin ice cover, the infantry-men and tank troops seized the Chudovo-Novgorod road and continued the attack on the south. South of Novgorod the troops of General Sviklin's group cut the Novgorod-Shimsk Railroad. Trying to stop our advance, the enemy began to pull up reserves in the region of Novgorod, to transfer subunits and units here from the sectors which were not under attack.

A difficult situation was created. In order to crush the enemy resistance, the commander of the 59th army on 18 January led into battle north of Novgorod the second echelon -- the 112th rifle corps, reinforced by the 122nd tank

---

* Archive of the MD of the USSR, folio 204, inv. 89, d. 2261, sheet. 26.

brigade. The corps was given the task of advancing in the direction of Dolgovo-Finev Lug and, operating together with the troops of the 54th army, routing the enemy group of Lyuban' -Chudovo . Two days earlier, on 16 January, the formations of the 54th army of the Volkhov front went over to the attack in the direction of Lyuban' , paralyzing the enemy and making it impossible for him to transfer divisions into the regions of Novgorod and Leningrad.

Despite the difficult conditions of the terrain and the lack of roads, the Soviet troops north and south of Novgorod stubbornly overcame enemy resistance. They traveled through swamps, fighting to meet one another. The soldiers carried guns, mortars, and ammunition. Hatred for the enemy and love for the Motherland led people to achieve heroic exploits.

Fearing encirclement, the enemy began to retreat from the region of Novgorod to the west. But he did not succeed in avoiding a rout: on 19 January the troops of the 59th army seized all the roads from the city to the west. On 20 January they surrounded and liquidated the units of the Novgorod grouping which had not succeeded in retreating, and they gained possession of Novgorod. The enemy suffered great losses in manpower and technical equipment. Our troops took captive more than 3,000 enemy soldiers and officers. The units and formations of the Volkhov front which had distinguished themselves in battle, by command of the Supreme High Command, were awarded the title of "Novgorod." Many participants in these battles received governmental awards.

The Soviet soldiers who seized the city saw a dark picture of destruction. The Fascists had razed the ancient Russian city to the ground. They destroyed the ancient monuments, which were dear to our people. The Sophia Cathedral - a remarkable example of national architecture of the 11th century - was plundered.

The invaders tore the gilded roof from its chief cupola and sent it to Germany. They destroyed the monument "The Thousandth Anniversary of Russia." Only 40 houses which were suitable for habitation remained in the city. The Soviet fighters and commanders swore an oath to destroy the enemy, to liberate their entire native land from him.

Thus, during the period from 14 through 20 January, the troops of the Leningrad and Volkhov fronts, with the active participation of the Red-Banner Baltic Fleet, broke through the enemy defense near Leningrad and Novgorod, routed the flank groupings of the 18th army, took possession of the cities of Peterhof, Strel'na, Krasnoye Selo, Ropsha, and Novgorod, advanced 20-25 kilometers, and created conditions for an attack on the entire front from the Gulf of Finland to Lake Il'men'.

The troops of the Leningrad front continued to develop the attack in the directions of Kingisepp and Krasnogvardeysk. Fearing encirclement in the region of Mga-Tosno, the enemy in the night of 21 January began to retreat. The troops of the left wing of the Leningrad and the right wing of the Volkhov fronts began to pursue him. By 30 January the troops of the Leningrad front had advanced 70-100 kilometers from Leningrad, liberated the cities of Pushkin, Slutsk, and Krasnogvardeysk, and emerged on the line of the river Luga in its lower reaches, and in certain sectors forded it, capturing a bridgehead.

One of the strongest methods of Party-political work in the course of the offensive was the personal example in battle of Communists and Komsomol members. They were the first to arise to the attack, were the first to assault the bunkers and pillboxes. Among the military dispatches of the 2nd battalion of the 466th regiment of the 125th rifle division this note could be found:

"We are consolidating the success which has been achieved. The wounded are taking over the defense. The people are fighting like lions." The dispatch ends with the simple words: "The Communists and Komsomol members are in the front; they are leading all the soldiers behind them."*

In the mobilization of the moral and physical forces of the personnel, the making of awards directly on the field of battle to outstanding soldiers and officers was very significant. Thus, the commander of the 90th rifle division, Colonel N. G. Lyashchenko, and the commanders of regiments of this division, on the first day of battle made awards to more than 100 soldiers, sergeants, and officers. The commander of the 543rd regiment of the 120th in- rifle division, Lieutenant-Colonel F. I. Galeyev, after the liberation of the city of Krasnogvardeysk, in battles for which this regiment distinguished itself, read to the personnel a decree of the Supreme High Command and announced a list of soldiers and officers who were presented with awards.** In six days of battles alone, in the units and formations of the 2nd shock and 42nd armies, 3281 soldiers were awarded orders and medals.*** The soldiers and officers of the Leningrad front, I. M. Boytsov, F. A. Budanov, I. K. Skuridin, A. I. Spirin, A. F. Tipanov, M. F. Sharonov, A. F. Shcheglov, and a number of others were awarded the title Hero of the Soviet Union.

The command and the political organs propagandized widely among the troops the military exploits of the brave Soviet soldiers, the positive experience of the units and subunits. The front, army, and division press took a leading part in this propaganda. (no #)

* Archive of the MD of the USSR, folio 32, inv. 22152, d. 3, leaf 26.
** Ibid.
***Ibid., leaf 27.

In the course of the offensive,"lightning" leaflets were widely distributed. Written on the battlefield and transmitted along the line, they cheered the soldiers, summoned them to great deeds. The command and the political organs presented cards to the best fighters, in which they thanked them for their exemplary execution of the assignment and congratulated them on the award. Letters about the glorious deeds of the front fighters were also sent to their families, to the plants, kolkhozes, and institutions where they had worked before the war. All this caused a surge in the offensive spirit of the troops, and consequently, the success of the operation.

The Leningrad partisans caused many difficulties for the retreating German-Fascist troops. The 5th and 6th partisan brigades disorganized the enemy movement on the Vitebsk railroad. The partisans of the 11th brigade on the night of 30 January attacked Oredezh Station and for a long time disrupted the movement of trains. On the morning of 27 January the partisans of the 5th brigade seized Peredol'skaya Station and held it until the approach of Red Army units.

The troops of the Volkhov front, after the rout of the enemy grouping in the region of Novgorod, advancing in the direction of Batetskiy·Luga, and also in the direction of Shimsk, threw back the enemy 60-80 kilometers from Novgorod. By 30 January, the troops of the left wing of the front emerged onto the defensive line of the enemy along the river Luga, while the troops of the right wing, operating together with formations of the 67th army of the Leningrad front, occupied the cities of Tosno, Lyuban', and Chudovo. The administration of the 54th army, after the liberation of the village of Oredezh, on instructions of Headquarters transferred its troops to the Leningrad front and was concentrated in the region of Novgorod. On 11 February the 111th and 110th rifle corps entered into the 54th army.

The second Baltic front advanced in the region of Novosokol'niki. The troops of the front took possession of Nasva Station and cut the railroad Novosokol'niki-Dno, and on 29 January they liberated the city of Novosokol'niki. By their active operations, they paralysed the 16th army of the enemy, not allowing him to transfer troops near Leningrad and Novgorod.

As a result of the successful offensive from 14 through 30 January, the troops of the Leningrad and Volkhov fronts, with the support of aviation and of the Red-Banner Baltic Fleet, finally liberated Leningrad from enemy blockade. The October Railroad connecting Leningrad with Moscow, was cleared of the enemy. The chief forces of the enemy's 18th army suffered great losses and appeared surrounded from the flanks. In order to avoid complete rout, covered by strong rear guards, they successfully retreated to previously-prepared intermediate lines.

The victory artillery salute which roared in Leningrad on 27 January 1944 announced to the whole world that the enemy blockade finally had been liquidated. For the inhabitants of the city and its defenders, this was a great holiday. "...Crowds of Leningraders went out onto the streets, the squares, the river-banks," wrote N. Tikhonov about this day. "Who could communicate their good Who could tell what they were experiencing at this moment? There were no words to describe their excitement. Everything that had accumulated during the years of trials, everything experienced, arose and was carried before them, like a series of visions, terrible, unbelievable, dark, and threatening. And all this disappeared in the blinding light of the rockets and the roar of the historic salute. Three hundred twenty-four guns resounded in honor of the great victory, in honor of the great city.

" People wept and laughed with joy, people watched with sparkling eyes as the city rose in its invincible grandeur out of the darkness in the light of the salute. The spire of the Petropavlovsk Cathedral, and the forts of the old fortress, the banks of the river, the Admiralty, St. Isaac's Cathedral, and the boats on the Neva, the Nevskiy, all the expanses of the city were illuminated in the lightning of the exultant joy."

The Leningrad salute resounded throughout the whole Soviet Union. The central newspapers Pravda and Izvestiya and others dedicated special lead articles to the final liberation of the hero-city from the blockade. Leningrad was congratulated by the toilers of Moscow, of the Caucasus Soviet Socialist Republic, of the Komi ASSR, of Taganrog--by all the peoples, all the cities and villages of the Soviet land, all the soldiers of the Red Army. The Motherland was proud of the victory of Soviet troops at Leningrad and Novgorod.

In Leningrad itself, the complete removal of the blockade caused a new surge of initiative and labor enthusiasm amoung the masses of the people. Expressing the mood of the inhabitants of the famed city, the old production workers of the Kirov Factory assured the front-fighters: "We will multiply our labor energy, we will double and triple the output of production...We people of Leningrad will restore all the plants and factories, will heal the wounds of the hero-city, and it will become even more beautiful and majestic."** The Baltic ship-repairers stated: "We are imbued with an ardent desire to respond to the heroic exploits of the Red Army and Navy with a new exertion of our efforts."*** Passionately grateful to the soldier-liberators, the people of Leningrad increased the attack on the labor front.

---

* Devyat'sot dney Literaturo-khudozhestvennyy i dokmental'nyy sbornik. [900 Days. A Literary-Artistic and Documentary Collection], Leningrad Publishing House, 1957, p. 501.
**Leningrad in the Great Patriotic War of the Sovie: Union, Vol. II, pp. 176-177.
*** Ibid., p. 206.

3. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE OFFENSIVE AND THE LIBERATION OF LENINGRAD OBLAST'

After the route of the Peterhof-Strel'na enemy group, the troops of the Leningrad front continued to attack in the direction of Narva, Gdov, and Luga. The 67th army, under the command of Lieutenant-General V.P. Sviridov, advanced on Luga and was to aid the troops of the Volkhov front in capturing this strong center of enemy resistance.

The Volkhov front dealt the chief blow on Luga from the southeast, and with part of its forces it protected itself from a blow by the enemy from Shimsk. Taking into account the fact that the 59th army was attacking on a broad front, the front commander subordinated his left-flank 7th and 14th rifle corps to the control of the 8th army, which had been transferred here. The 112th and 6th rifle corps, operating in the direction of Luga, remained part of the 59th army.* This made control of advancing troops significantly easier.

The German-Fascist command tried to reinforce and hold the line of the Luga River, in order to create conditions for the withdrawal of the remnants of the routed divisions of the 18th army. Therefore the enemy showed especially stubborn resistance to our troops here, and many times transferred to the counterattack. In order to reinforce the defense of the River Luga line, the German command transferred here the "Feldhernhalle" motorized division and the 12th tank division from army group "Center", and also the 58th infantry division from the 16th army, and subordinated them to the 18th army.

The military actions of the Soviet troops proceeded most successfully on the Leningrad front. The troops of the 2nd shock army, with the support of aviation of the Red-Banner Baltic Fleet, pursued the enemy who was retreating to the west. On 1 February, they seized a strong point of enemy resistance--the

*Archive of the MD of the USSR, folio 204, inv. 89, d. 2261, sheet 31.

city of Kingisepp -- and by 3 February they emerged on the Narva River, crossed it, and seized the bridgehead. The troops of the 42nd army, advancing to the southwest and the south, on 4 February entered the city of Gdov, liberated by that time by the partisans, and went out to Lake Chudskoye.

In the course of battles from 8 through 13 February in the region of Plyussa, the 116th rifle corps of the 42nd army, with the support of the 13th air army, surrounded and annihilated the regiment of the 58th infantry division and subunits of the 5th motorized regiment of the 12th enemy tank division, and also inflicted large losses on the 13th aviation field division.* The 2nd partisan brigade participated in these battles. Even before the advanced units of the 116th corps came out into the region of Plyussa, the partisans joined battle with the retreating enemy, delaying his retreat. Later they took part in destroying the surrounded German-Fascist troops.**

In the direction of the main attack of the troops of the Volkhov front, the attack developed somewhat more slowly.*** Pulling up his reserves, the enemy dealt a counterblow with the forces of the 12th tank and 285th guard divisions from the region of Luga and the 121st infantry division from the region of Utorgosh in converging directions. The enemy succeeded in pressing the troops of the 8th army, and in the region of Oklyuzh'ye on 3 February in surrounding the Soviet units and formations which had broken through in individual sectors toward the Luga-Pskov road. The 256th rifle division, commanded by

* Ibid., folio 581, inv.59308, d. 3, sheets 36-38.
**Cf. "Leningradskiy partisan," /Leningrad Partisan/, 21 March 1944.
***On the directive of Headquarters of 1 February, the zone of attack of the Volkhov front was narrowed. Its right boundary was moved forward to the south, on the line Chudovo-Mshinsk, and farther to the southwest.

Colonel A. G. Koziyev, part of the forces of the 372nd rifle division, and the 2nd partisan regiment of the 5th partisan brigade, which participated with it in battle, were surrounded. The attempts of the enemy to liquidate our surrounded group were unsuccessful. Neither the fierce attacks by Fascist troops, nor the lack of ammunition and provisions -- nothing could break the battle spirit of the Soviet soldiers. In the course of two weeks, until the arrival of our troops, they held the occupied region, absorbing the attention of significant forces of the enemy, and thus aiding the attack of our troops in the direction of the city of Luga. The Soviet soldiers demonstrated great stability and courage in their defense, boundless devotion to their Motherland.

Despite the stubborn resistance of the enemy, the formations of the 67th army of the Leningrad front, working together with the troops of the Volkhov front and the partisans, on 12 February liberated the city of Luga. By 15 February, our troops had completely conquered an important defensive line, erected along the Luga River.

The troops of the 2nd Baltic front continued to conduct offensive operations west of the city of Novosokol'niki, occupying the chief forces of the enemy's 16th army.

As a result of the military operations from 31 January through 15 February, the troops of the Leningrad and Volkhov fronts advanced 50-120 kilometers in various directions, emerged on the line of the Narva River -- north of Lake Pskov - Lake Chernoye - Kreni - Shimsk, embracing the flanks of the 18th army and threatening the 16th enemy army from the north. The Fascist troops were dealt a serious defeat near Leningrad and Novgorod. Conditions were created for the continuation of our advance to the southwest and the south. The Soviet government on 21 February 1944 awarded Orders to a large group of generals, admirals,

and officers of the Leningrad, Volkhovo fronts and the Red-Banner Baltic Fleet for skillful and courageous leadership of the operations. Among them were Generals L. A. Govorov, D. N. Gusev, A. A. Zhdanov, I. T. Korovnikov, A. A. Kuznetsov, K. A. Meretskov, V. P. Mzhavanadze, G. F. Odintsov, T. A. Sviklin, N. P. Simonyak, I. I. Fedyuninskiy Admirals G. I. Levchenko, V. F. Tributs, and Colonels V. I. Volkov and N. G. Lyashchenko.*

Due to the fact that by the middle of February the line of the front had shortened considerably, the Supreme High Command Headquarters, in a directive of 13 February, 1944, disbanded the Volkhov front. The majority of its troops became part of the Leningrad front, while the rest were transferred to the 2nd Baltic front. Headquarters required that the commander of the Leningrad front take the city of Narva no later than 17 February.** This assignment was given to the 2nd shock army. But the chief forces of the front were to continue the swift pursuit of the enemy to the southwest and the south.

Taking into account the weakened resistance of the enemy and the successful advance of the troops of the Leningrad and 2nd Baltic fronts, Headquarters on 22 February 1944 assigned new tasks to the Leningrad front. The right wing of the front, composed of three armies, was ordered to break through the enemy defense on the isthmus north of Lake Chudskoye. After this, one army was to develop an attack on Parnu in order to cut off the paths of retreat for the enemy's Tallin group to the south, while the two others were to advance in the directions of Viljandi-Valga and Tartu-Vyra (Map 11). The troops of the left wing of the front, composed of three armies, were designated for taking the

* Cf. Krasnaya Zvezda [Red Star], 22 February 1944.
** IML. Documents and Materials of the Department of History of the Great Patriotic War, inv. No. 9492, sheet 59.

region of Ostrov surrounding Pskov and forcing the River Velikaya, after which they were to develop an offensive in the general direction of Riga.*

The 2nd Baltic front on 17 February received the assignment to prepare and strike a blow with the forces of the two armies of the left wing, to break through the enemy defense southeast of Pustoshka, and developing an offensive, to seize the crossing on the Velikaya River north of Idritsa, to emerge on the line Opochka-Zilupe. Later the troops of the front were to occupy the city of Rezekne, advance in the direction of Karsava, and operating together with the troops of the left wing of the Leningrad front, break up the enemy group in the region of Ostrov.**

The troops of the Leningrad front, in fulfilling the tasks assigned to them in joint operations with the 2nd Baltic front, continued to pursue the remnants of the routed formations of the 18th enemy army in the direction of Pskov. They overcame the intermediate enemy positions on the Rivers Mshaga and Shelon' and emerged toward his Pskov-Ostrov fortified area. The 2nd shock army expanded the bridgehead on the Narva River which had been seized earlier. But the Soviet troops did not succeed in seizing the city of Narva, since the enemy, using the favorable terrain, transformed this city into a powerful center of resistance.

The great losses to the 18th army and the danger of a rout of the 16th army, which the troops of the Leningrad and 2nd Baltic fronts surrounded more and more from the north and the southeast, forced the German-Fascist command to begin to withdraw the troops of the 16th army from the regions of Staraya Russa and Kholm to the west.

---

* Ibid., sheet 80.
**Ibid., sheet 63.

Our troops did not discover the enemy's retreat right away, as a result of which contact with him was lost. This allowed the enemy to pull back his troops and technical equipment and to secure himself on the previously-prepared lines. The shortcomings in the leadership of troops by the command of the 2nd Baltic front were noted by the State Committee of Defense in a special decree.

In pursuing the enemy, the troops of the right wing of the 2nd Baltic front on 18 February occupied the city of Staraya Russa, and on 21 February, the city of Kholm. Formations of the 54th army of the Leningrad front and the 1st shock army of the 2nd Baltic front on 24 February liquidated the strong center of enemy resistance in the region of the station and city of Dno. On 26 February Soviet troops liberated the city of Porkhov. Anchored on previously-prepared lines, the enemy tried by rear-guard battles to hold back our offensive, but under blows by Soviet troops, he was forced to fall back to the west.

In accordance with the Headquarters directive of 17 February, on the left wing of the 2nd Baltic front on 26 February the troops of the 10th guards and the 3rd shock army went over to the attack, although they had still not completed their regrouping up to this time. By the end of February, the troops of the 2nd Baltic front, together with the troops of the Leningrad front, went out toward the Pskov-Ostrov fortified region and further to the left, onto the line Novorzhev-Pustoshka, where they were stopped by the enemy.

Thus, despite the significant forward advance, the directives of Headquarters of the Supreme High Command that the troops of the Leningrad front conduct an offensive in the directions of Valga, Vyra, and Riga and the troops of the 2nd Baltic front advance on Karsava had still not been executed. The main reason for this was the fact that our troops had to conquer strong resistance by the enemy, operating in forested and swampy terrain and in extremely poor weather: they were hindered

by thaws, snowstorms, and fog. There were few roads, and even those had become unfirm. All this made it possible for the enemy to lead away the chief forces of the 16th army and the remnants of the routed troops of the 18th army, to occupy the previously-prepared line, and to show stubborn resistance. Our troops for more than 1½ months fought uninterrupted, intense offensive battles. They experienced a severe shortage of ammunition and suffered losses in manpower and technical equipment. It was necessary to stop the offensive. On the instructions of Headquarters, the Leningrad and 2nd Baltic fronts on 1 March transferred to the defense and began to prepare for new operations.

The partisans greatly aided the troops of the Leningrad and Volkhov fronts in the rout of the Fascist invaders. They disorganized the enemy's rear, disrupted his communications, destroyed his garrisons, and seized population centers. The partisans paralyzed the enemy's movement on the railroads and highways in the sectors Kingisepp-Gdov, Strugi Krasnye-Pskov, Luga-Plyussa, Batetskiy-Sol'tsy, Dno-Dedovichi, and others.* They seized the city of Gdov, Peredol'skaya Station, and other large population centers, together with the units of the Red Army they participated in the liberation of the city of Luga, the villages of Oredezha and Slantsy and Plyussa Station. The partisans of the 5th brigade, operating in the region Luga-Strugi Kranye-Sol'tsy-Peredol'skaya were especially active. They gave much aid to the troops of the Volkhov front, halting the advance of the enemy on the railroad sector Batetskiy-Utorgosh. The fame of the 2nd partisan brigade, which in January-February 1944 operated on the paths of enemy retreat in the region of Strugi Krasnye-Gdov-Pskov and caused the enemy great losses,was carried far beyond the borders of the oblast'.

---

* Cf. P. R. Sheverdalkin, Geroicheskaya bor'ba leningradskikh partizan [The Heroic Struggle of the Leningrad Partisans], p. 274.

In the first six weeks of the Red Army offensive alone, the partisans of Leningrad Oblast' blew up more than 58,000 rails, 300 bridges, and derailed 133 trains with men and equipment of the enemy.* The military operations of the partisans in the course of the operation were coordinated with the offensive of our troops in every direction.

The Leningrad partisans played an important role in the mobilization of the population of the occupied territory for struggle against the enemy. Every detachment and brigade published its newspapers and leaflets, encouraging the will to fight of the Soviet people, strengthening their faith in an imminent victory. The newspapers Leningradskiy partisan [Leningrad Partisan] and Za Sovetskuyu Rodinu [For the Soviet Motherland], which our pilots delivered across the line of the front, were published especially for the partisans and population of the occupied regions of Leningrad Oblast'. Workers, kolkhozniks, employees, and even old people and children were recruited for distribution of the newspapers and leaflets.

The Leningrad partisans united with units of the Red Army. On 1 March, 1944, in Leningrad in front of the Kirov Rayon Soviet, a meeting took place, dedicated to the meeting with the partisans. Partisans from the brigades of N.A. Brednikov, V.P. Ob'yedkov, and many others were present. The people of Leningrad congratulated warmly the brave sons of the Soviet people, tempered in battles, selflessly dedicated to the Motherland. The speakers at the meeting spoke of the leadership by the Leningrad Party organization of the partisan movement, of the unbroken tie of the toilers of the city with the Leningrad partisans, of the help which the workers gave to the partisans with weapons and ammunition, about the outstanding role of the CC of the AUCP (b) in the leadership of the

*Cf. P.R. Sheverdalkin, The Heroic Struggle of the Leningrad Partisans, p. 274.

entire struggle of the people in the rear of the enemy. Many partisans joined the troops of the Leningrad front. The rest returned to their native places and immediately engaged in the restoration of the national economy of the oblast'.

The Soviet government valued highly the services of the Leningrad partisans. For heroism and courage displayed during the war years, for active help to the troops of the Leningrad and Volkhov fronts, more than 5,000 partisans, male and female, were awarded Orders and medals of the Soviet Union. Eighteen commanders of partisan units and partisans, including N. G. Vasil'yev, A. V. German, K. D. Karitskii, V. I. Nikiforov, I. I. Sergunin, were awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union.

* * *

The rout of the enemy near Leningrad and Novgorod was one of the brightest pages in the military chronicle of the Soviet Armed Forces. "The Leningrad victory," said M. I. Kalinin, "is a military victory, which has significance not only for Leningrad, but also for the entire course of struggle of the Soviet people against the German invaders."*

The powerful, deeply-echeloned defense of the enemy, the so-called "Northern Rampart," which the Hitlerites had prepared for more than two years, crumbled under the crushing blows of the Soviet troops. Advancing under exceptionally difficult natural conditions and in extremely poor weather, the Red Army threw back the enemy 220-280 kilometers from Leningrad, liberated almost all of Leningrad Oblast' and part of Kalinin Oblast', and entered the boundaries of Soviet Estonia. The city of Lenin was finally liberated from the enemy blockade, and its population

*Leningrad dvazhdy ordenonosnyy [Twice Order-Bearing Leningrad], Leningrad, State Political Publishers, 1945, p. 60.

was freed from barbaric artillery fire. The supply basing of the Red-Banner Baltic Fleet improved, and a beginning was made in routing the enemy in the north of the Soviet-German Front. Favorable conditions were created for conducting subsequent operations in Karelia, on the Karelian Isthmus, and in the Soviet Baltic.

As a result of the operation, 3 enemy divisions were destroyed and 23 divisions were routed, i.e., reduced to "fighting groups" or to "remnants of divisions." Our troops seized a large amount of arms, ammunition, military technical equipment, and other military materiel. The morale of the German-Fascist troops plunged.

The defeat at Leningrad and Novgorod greatly undermined the positions of Hitlerite Germany in Finland and weakened its influence in the Scandinavian countries. The reactionary Finnish government began to seek a way out of the war on Germany's side. It was forced to turn to the Soviet government with a request to inform them of the terms of a possible truce.

The operation of Soviet troops near Leningrad and Novgorod was characterized by skill in inflicting the chief strikes. The troops of the Leningrad front struck from the bridgehead near the sea and directly from the region of the city. This allowed them by the shortest route to emerge onto the flanks and rear of the enemy's Peterhof-Strel'na group and to rout it. At the same time, the troops of the Volkhov front dealt the chief blow from a bridgehead on the Volkhov River and routed the troops of the right flank of the 18th German army. The skillful use of success which was achieved in the auxiliary direction, south of Novgorod, played an important role in solving this task. Subsequently, after the troops of the Leningrad front emerged on Narva, the chief strikes of both fronts were directed at Pskov and Luga. This threatened the chief communications of the main forces of the 18th army and forced them to make a hurried retreat.

The offensive at Leningrad and Novgorod was successfully conducted by troops of the Leningrad, Volkhov, and 2nd Baltic fronts, of the Red-Banner Baltic Fleet, of aviation, and of partisan formations and detachments. The troops of the Leningrad front played the most active role in the execution of the assignments.

The air forces of the fronts, the naval aviation, and long-range aviation made a great contribution to the rout of the German-Fascist troops. The 13th and 14th air armies in January-February alone made 12,855 flights, and the air forces of the Red-Banner Baltic Fleet made 4,404 flights in the course of the operation. This reliably ensured aviation support for the ground troops. Long-range aviation systematically bombed enemy troops, his rear forces, and his communications. On 7, 17, and 27 February, it made three large raids on the capital of Finland, Helsinki.

The high degree of maneuverability of the small subdivisions was typical in the offensive of the troops. The Soviet troops, although they operated under difficult conditions of a forested and swampy terrain, surrounded the enemy strong points, blocked them with small forces, emerged onto the flank and the rear of the defending enemy, and working together with the subunits which had advanced from the front, destroyed him.

In the course of the operation, the organs of the rear had to overcome enormous difficulties. Despite the fact that the railroads were destroyed, the dirt roads were in poor condition, and a shortage of automobile transport was evident, they coped with their assignments. The railroad-worker soldiers of the Leningrad and Volkhov fronts from 14 January through 16 March restored 1,400 kilometers of track and 253 railroad bridges. The road units restored 10.5 thousand kilometers of dirt roads, established 62 front feeding centers, and centers for heating apparatus, first aid, and technical aid. Automobile transport of the Leningrad front carried 250,000

tons of cargoes and evacuated 67.7% of all the wounded.*

The mass-political work which was conducted by the command, the political organs, the Party and Komsomol organizations at all stages of the operation played an important role in the final removal of the blockade from Leningrad and the liberation of the greater part of Leningrad Oblast'. The fact that in January-February, about 24,000 soldiers and officers were accepted into the ranks of the Communist Party on the Leningrad front alone shows the scope and depth of this work.** This permitted the existence of strong Party organizations in the subunits, the carrying out of uninterrupted Party-political work in the course of the entire operation, and the assurance of the execution of military assignments.

The seige of Leningrad and the supremacy of German-Fascist invaders on the territory of Leningrad Oblast' brought enormous harm to the national economy, and cost the people of Leningrad many victims. By masterful plunder, by the extermination of Soviet people, by driving them into slavery, the Hitlerites overshadowed the dark fame of their ancestors - the knights of the land, those robbers and tyrants, who threatened the peaceful populations of the European countries.

During the blockade, about 150,000 shells were launched at the hero-city, more than 100,000 incendiary bombs were dropped on it, and more than 4.6 thousand demolition bombs. Many inhabitants of Leningrad, whose memory will live forever in the hearts of the Soviet people, perished from artillery fire and bombings from the air, from hunger and cold. Thousands of buildings suffered in the city: homes, factories and plants, state buildings and public organizations. The Hermitage, the Russian Museum, the Senate Building, and other historic monuments were severly damaged. After a fierce and heroic struggle, Leningrad stood wounded,

* IML. Documents and materials of the Department of History of the Great Patriotic War, inv. No. 17368, sheets 4-5.

** Archive of the MD of the USSR, folio 32, inv. 22152, d. 3, sheet 115.

***CF. Leningrad v Velikoy Otechestvennoy voyne Sovetskogo Soyuza [Leningrad in the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union] Vol. 11, p. 11.

but as before, full of grandeur and impregnable.

The suburbs of Leningrad and the regions of Leningrad Oblast' where the German-Fascist invaders held sway for more than two years, presented a terrible picture of destruction. The world-famous Pulkovo Observatory lay in ruins, and Peterhof, with its palaces and famous fountains, was transformed into ruins. When they entered Krasnoye Selo, our troops did not find one whole building standing. In Slutsk, 211 buildings were saved out of 1403, and only disfigured walls of the Pavlovsk Palace remained. The Gatchina Palace, like all the palaces, had been plundered and burned. The same fate fell to the wonderful palaces of the city of Pushkin. Many cities and villages of Leningrad Oblast' had a dismal appearance, with their ashes and the gaping holes in the buildings. As a result of mass murders and forced imprisonment of Soviet people by the Fascists, the population of the oblast' was severely reduced.

The Central Committee of the AUCP (b) and the Soviet government showed daily concern about the restoration of the city of Lenin and the whole oblast'. On 29 March 1944, the State Committee of Defense adopted a decree "On the primary measures for reestablishing the industry and municipal economy of Leningrad in 1944." Following it were decrees by the USSR Council of People's Commissars "On aiding Leningrad Oblast' in the reestablishment of kolkhozes and Machine-Tractor Stations in the regions liberated from the German invaders," and "On re-establishing the sovkhozes in Leningrad Oblast'." The restoration of Leningrad and Leningrad Oblast' due to these resolutions became a vital matter not only for the inhabitants of Leningrad, but for all the toilers of our country.

The spring of 1944 was a time of creation for the people of Leningrad, the beginning of the rebirth of cities and villages, factories and plants, sovkhozes

and kolkhozes. Liberated from the blockade, Leningrad began swiftly to gather its forces, to heal the wounds inflicted by war. On 26 January, the Leningrad Soviet removed the limitations established in connection with the artillery bombardment of the city. All the streets became free for traffic, and the signs warning of the danger of exploding enemy shells disappeared. The trolley stops which had been transferred due to the bombardment were restored to their previous places. A new trolley route started to operate, connecting the Baltic and the Finland Stations, and a trolley park began operation. In March-April the Krasnyi Oktyabr' Factory produced the first 25 pianos. The swimming pool began operation. Communications between Leningrad and the whole country and the regions of the oblast' were restored. At the end of March, the first express train, "Krasnaya Strela", [Red Arrow], arrived on the railroad from Moscow to Leningrad.

Transforming the external appearance of the city, the Leningrad inhabitants tore down the ruins and repaired the damaged buildings. The boxes of earth which protected the store windows from shells and splinters were removed, and the plywood in the windows was replaced with glass. In the parks and gardens, trees and bushes were planted, and the boulevards were set in order. Potatoes and vegetables which had previously occupied the flower-beds, were removed to the suburbs. And although the traces of the 900-day seige were still very apparent in Leningrad, many signs already showed that the time was not far-off when the city would acquire its former appearance, would become even more beautiful and even more grand.

The victory of Soviet troops near Leningrad and Novgorod, the cessation of aerial attacks and artillery bombardment -- all this inspired the people of Leningrad to new labor exploits. The inhabitants of the city worked selflessly to give more production to the front. The famed collective of the Kirov Factory undertook

the obligation to double the production of heavy tanks in the shortest possible time. On the initiative of the advanced enterprises of Vyborg, Kirov, and Oktyabr' Rayons of the city, a patriotic movement began for the restoration of factories, plants, and private homes by the forces of the population itself. In fulfilling the obligations which they undertook, the toilers in 1944 worked 25 million hours overtime. Tens of thousands of Leningrad inhabitants tried to master building specialties, in order to participate in the restoration of their native city.

The cities and villages of Leningrad Oblast' rose from the ashes and ruins. Even in the course of military operations, the Leningrad Party organization sent experienced leading cadres for 31 rayons which they were to liberate. In the first place they selected workers for the rayon Party committees and the executive committees of the rayon Soviets of toilers' deputies. The majority of these cadres were comprised of mature Communists in the political sense, Komsomol members and non-Party people, who had taken active part in the partisan struggle. Twenty-nine secretaries of rayon Party committees, approved by the bureau of the Leningrad oblast' committee of the AUCP(b), had previously occupied command posts in partisan brigades and detachments. Twenty-nine active participants in the partisan movement were recommended for the positions of chairmen of rayon soviets.*

As soon as the occupied regions were freed from the enemy, the local Party and Soviet organs immediately began to work there. Workers from the apparatus of the oblast' committee of the AUCP(b), of the oblast' Soviet of toilers' deputies, and of other oblast' organizations were sent to help them. By 5 February 1944, when the attack of troops of the Leningrad and Volkhov fronts

* CPA [Central Party Archive] of the IML, folio 17, inv.3, d. 313, sheet 16.

was still in full swing, 49 workers from the apparatus of the oblast' organizations and 40 workers sent by the Leningrad city Party organization were in the liberated regions.* The political departments of the armies selected a large number of Communist officers to aid the rayon Party committees.

As a result of the concern of the Leningrad Party organization and the army political organs, the toilers of the oblast' achieved important successes in 1944. Every day the production of industry and agriculture, which went first to satisfy the needs of Leningrad and the Red Army, increased. Leningrad Oblast' was awarded the transitional Red Banner of the State Committee of Defense for the successful fulfillment of agricultural work and the increase in the harvest in 1944. Public buildings, private homes, communal enterprises, and cultural-educational institutions of the oblast' were quickly restored.

The offensive of Soviet troops near Leningrad and Novgorod in January-February 1944 and the destruction of army group "North" ended the serious struggle which Soviet soldiers, together with the inhabitants of the city and the oblast' had waged over a period of many months, beginning with the summer of 1941.

The immortal exploit of the people of Leningrad in the terrible time of the Great Patriotic War is an exploit which overshadowed the ancient myths about the patriotism, steadfastness, and stubbornness of the inhabitants of cities besieged by the enemy. "The proletariat of Leningrad," said M. I. Kalinin, "was always the pioneer in the struggle for the cause of the people. And I, a man of the old generation, succeeded in seeing the very great patriotism of the people of Leningrad. Without hesitation I can say that the world has never seen such patriotism as was displayed by the population of the great city of Lenin in the

* Ibid., sheets 16-17.

struggle against the most inveterate enemy of progressive mankind, against an enemy who conceived the daring idea of subjugating mankind to a fanatical band of hardened reactionaries." *

The Soviet country was proud of the heroic exploit of Leningrad. During the entire 900 days of the blockade, the people of Leningrad were conscious of their very great responsibility to the socialist Fatherland, felt its love, moral and material support. Leningrad -- the city of glorious revolutionary traditions, the cradle of the proletarian revolution - personified the invincible spirit of the Soviet peoples, their readiness, despite any difficulties, to uphold the achievements of October, their utter devotion to the ideas of Communism. Expressing the excitement of the toilers of our country at the steadfastness and heroism of the defenders of Leningrad, their bravery, resolution, and self-sacrifice in the offensive, the scientist well known throughout the country, Academician A. A. Baykov, said: "I am an old metallurgist. I am accustomed to think that there is nothing in the world stronger than steel. But today I became convinced of my mistake. Yes, I was mistaken. There is, it seems, a metal which is stronger than steel. It is a noble metal -- the Soviet people." **

Not only the Soviet people, but the whole world was excited by the noble exploit of Leningrad. "Scarcely", wrote the newspaper The New York Times in regard to the removal of the blockade, "can there be found in history an example of such steadfastness as was displayed by the people of Leningrad over such a long period of time. Their exploit will be inscribed in the annals of history as a kind of heroic myth...Leningrad embodies the invincible spirit of the people of Russia."***

* Leningrad dvazhdy ordenonosnyy, p. 61
** Propagandist [The Propagandist], 1944, No. 19-20, p. 36.
*** Quoted by Izvestiya, 1 February 1944,

London radio reported that "with their courage, their self-sacrifice, the population of Leningrad and the heroic soldiers defending it together with the population, have inscribed the most remarkable page in the history of the world war, for more than anyone else, they helped the coming final victory over Germany."*

The Soviet Motherland highly valued the exploit of the hero-city. On 26 January, 1945, the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet awarded Leningrad the Order of Lenin. On the next day, in the S. M. Kirov theater a celebratory session was held of the Leningrad Soviet, with the participation of representatives of public organizations and military units. The toilers of Leningrad were charged with accepting a high award from the hands of the Chairman of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet, M. I. Kalinin, to its best people. Among the delegation were the secretary of the city committee of the AUCP (b), Ya. F. Kapustin, the chairman of the Leningrad Soviet, P. S. Popkov, Marshal of the Soviet Union L. A. Govorov, Admiral V. F. Tributs, chief of the shop of the Kirov Factory, A. K. Miroshnikov, Professor I. P. Vinogradov, master of the Bolshevik Factory, V. M. Knyazev, Hero-Mother S. V. Ignat'yeva, people's artist of the RSFSR K. V. Skorobogatov, Director of the G. K. Ordzhonikidze Factory, N. Ya. Olennikov, the poet A. A. Prokof'yev, Academician I. A. Orbeli, artist V. A. Serov, plasterer A. A. Stepanova, and many others.** About 1½ million people were awarded the medal "For the defense of Leningrad."***

The heroic epic of Leningrad, the concluding page of which were the January-February offensive battles of 1944, has not been extinguished up to now and

* Quoted in Pravda, 22 January 1944.
** Cf. Leningrad dvazhdy ordenonosnyy, pp. 73-74.
***IML. Documents and Materials of the Department of History of the Great Patriotic War, inv. No. 13896, sheet 1.

will never be extinguished. On the days of celebration of the 250th anniversary of Leningrad, the CC of the CPSU in its greeting wrote: "The exploit of the people of Leningrad in the terrible time of the Great Patriotic War is immortal. Neither cruel aerial bombings, nor artillery bombardment, not the constant threat of death broke the iron will and patriotic spirit of the people of Leningrad. The 900-day defense of the besieged city is a legendary tale of courage and heroism which caused amazement and excitement among contemporaries and will always remain in the memory of future generations. The people of Leningrad remained true to the end to the Motherland. The hero-city, this is a name which the Soviet people has given to Leningrad in gratitude."*

* Pravda, 23 June 1957.

Chapter Three

THE VICTORY OF THE RED ARMY IN THE SOUTH. LIBERATION OF RIGHT-BANK UKRAINE AND THE CRIMEA

1. THE SITUATION IN RIGHT-BANK UKRAINE AND THE CRIMEA AT THE BEGINNING OF 1944

In the second half of 1943, the Red Army conducted successful military operations for the liberation of the Ukraine and won great victories. The troops of the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Ukrainian fronts completely cleared the enemy out of Left-Bank Ukraine, forced the Dnepr, and returned Kiev, Cherkassy, Dnepropetrovsk, and many other cities and villages to the Motherland, seized important strategic bridgeheads on the Right-Bank. The troops of the North-Caucasus front, operating together with the Black Sea Fleet, crossed the Kerch Strait and seized a bridgehead in the Crimea.* At the beginning of 1944, the task of routing the largest groupings of the enemy on the southern flank of the Soviet-German front, of the complete liberation of Right-Bank Ukraine and the Crimea, came to the fore.

Right-Bank Ukraine and the Crimea, rich and flourishing until the arrival of the German-Fascist invaders, met the year 1944 in fire and charred ruins, blood-stained and plundered. Two and one half years of the supremacy of the Fascist oppressors had left their gloomy impress on the life of the occupied regions.

The cities withered, decayed. In Nikopol', Nikolayev, Krivoy Rog, Odessa, Simferopol' and other large industrial centers, only certain enterprises were in operation. Many factories, plants, and mines were either destroyed or dismantled

---

* On the directive of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command of 15 November, 1943, the Northern-Caucasus front was reorganized into the Independent Maritime Army.

by the Hitlerites. Institutions of learning, clubs, libraries, medical institutions were either burned or turned into prisons or warehouses.

On the outskirts of Belaya Tserkov' before the war there was a construction site. The invaders turned it into a place for executions. A gray house on the city square became a house of despair and tears for girls who were forced into Fascist exile in Germany. Such sinister places of mass executions, collection centers for the forcibly-mobilized youth, were everywhere where the Hitlerites exercised their sway: in Berdichev -Lysaya Gora, in Zhitomir --Boguniya and Sennaya; in Kirovograd -- the territory of the children's home on Upper-Bykovskaya Street. And in every city there was the Gestapo, and in many places, concentration camps for peaceful Soviet citizens and prisoners of war.

The evil deeds of the German-Fascist invaders were truly monstrous. Throughout the entire Ukraine, the invaders pursued a criminal policy of mass shootings of Soviet citizens, and use for this purpose the most infamous, the most refined, the most evil methods. Thus, in the city of Slavuta, Kamenets-Podol'sk Oblast', they created a "large infirmary" for prisoners of war. Beatings, experiments aimed at spreading infections, and hunger led to the fact that death cut down up to 300 people p.. day in this so-called "infirmary." In Kerch, in the inspection of the place of mass executions - an antitank trench - it was discovered that over the distance of a kilometer it was filled high with the corpses of women, children, young people and old people. In Rovno the Hitlerites shot 102,000 peaceful inhabitants and prisoners of war.*

The life of the people of the cities was devoid of rights, difficult, full of dangers and deprivations. Many workers and employees, despite the threats of the

* Cf. Nyurnbergskiy protsess. Sbornik materialov v dvukh tomakh. [The Nüremberg Trial. Collection of Materials in Two Volumes]. Ed. 3, Vol. 1, Moscow, State Juridical Publishers, 1955, pp. 461-467, 536, 553.

i in cellars or dugouts or went off to the villages. Soviet citizens only when forced. The Hitlerites rounded people up and hunted them. s exhausting, the pay miserable. In Nikolayev, for example, the ily wages amounted to 300 rubles. This money could buy only one bread on the market.

cupation by the invaders, their seizure of sovkhoz and kolkhoz rganization of the so-called "common economic units", gave a sharp griculture of the very rich oblasts of the Ukraine. The chiefs and ural commandants, relying on the police and military force, and them with repressions, forced the peasants to work for the invaders. ne agricultural production was sent to Germany; only pitiful crumbs the peasants. The Hitlerites destroyed the buildings of the sovkhozes , and where these buildings remained they were in a state of neglect. n huts, previously sparkling white, because decrepit and turned gray; about in rags, exhausted from not eating and from forced labor.

ls whole inhumane system of limitless arbitrariness, cruel reprisals, of the personality, and violation of human dignity could not break loving people of the Ukraine. True, the riches of the Right-Bank mineral deposits and fields, factories, and mines, still flowed into trains with Soviet people were hauled by rail to the west. But the to tear away every tone of ore, every pound of grain by fighting, t it away under reinforced guard. Underground Party and Komosomol s operated in cities, in the rayon centers, and in the villages. took on broad dimensions in the occupied territory.

es adopted in 1943 by the Central Committee of the AUCP (b) and the the Ukraine and by the Ukrainian headquarters of the partisan movement

were very important in the development of the partisan movement. Especially important was the organization of raids by large partisan formations throughout the territory of Right-Bank Ukraine, the transfer of several partisan detachments and formations from the eastern oblasts of the Ukraine to the west, the transfer of leading Party workers to the rear of the enemy, and the establishment of a closer connection between the partisans and the Red Army.

By the beginning of 1944, there were about 50,000 armed partisans who had permanent ties with headquarters in the enemy rear in the Ukraine, the Crimea, and in Moldavia.* This was a large partisan army, swift and elusive. In the Right-Bank Ukraine, large partisan formations operated, commanded by V. A. Begma, P. P. Vershigora, S. F. Malikov, Ya. I. Mel'nik, M. I. Naumov, A. Z. Odukha, S. A. Oleksenko, A. F. Fedorov, I. F. Fedorov, and others. Three formations fought in the Crimea in the spring of 1944: the Southern, commanded by M. A. Makedonskiy; the Northern, commanded by P. R. Yampol'skiy; and the Eastern, commanded by V. S. Kuznetsov. Two partisan units fought in Moldavia--one under the command of V. A. Andreyev, and the other under the command of Ya. P. Shkryabach--and an unattached partisan detachment, whose commander was Ya. A. Mukhin. Three brigades and a detachment of Polish partisans and a Czechoslovak detachment fought bravely together with the Soviet partisans. The Czechoslovak groups also operated as part of the Soviet partisan detachments of Odessa.

The local population supported the partisans everywhere. This was one of the most important conditions for their successful military activity. The Central

* Partarkhiv Instituta istorii partii TsK KP Ukrainy [Party Archive of the Institute of Party History of the CC of the CP of the Ukraine], folio 62, inv. 62-1, d. 77, sheets 1-9; Partarkhiv Krymskogo obkoma KPU [Party Archive of the Crimean Oblast' Committee of the Communist Party of the Ukraine], folio 151, inv.151; Otchet Krymskogo shtaba partizanskogo dvizheniya [Account of the Crimean Headquarters of the Partisan Movement.], pp. 459, 469, 475; IML. Dokumenty i materialy Otdela istorii Velikoy Otechestvennoy voyny [Documents and Materials of the Department of History of the Great Patriotic War.], inv. No. 16688, 16695, 16696.

Committee of our Party and the entire Soviet people constantly aided the partisans. They furnished them with weapons, ammunition, medicines, food, and communications.

The heavy losses suffered by the enemy in the southern sector of the Soviet-German front, the breakup of the enemy defense on the Dnepr, the seizure of the large strategic bridgeheads on the right bank of the river, and the broadly-developed partisan movement in the rear of the German-Fascist troops created favorable conditions for the continuation of military operations for the liberation of Right-Bank Ukraine and the Crimea.

The offensive of the Red Army in the southern sector of the Soviet-German front had an exceptionally important place in the plans of the Soviet Supreme High Command for the winter campaign of 1944. The goals of the offensive--the rout of the largest strategic grouping of the enemy, the liberation of millions of Soviet people, the return of the metallurgy of Krivoy Rog and Kerch, of the manganese mines of Nikopol', of the very fertile agricultural rayons, of the Black Sea ports--had exceptional military-political and economic importance. The liberation of Right-Bank Ukraine, the entrance of Soviet troops to the southwestern boundary of the USSR, opened prospects for striking blows through Romania at the Balkans, and also toward Poland and along the flank and rear of army group "Center", which was holding the defense in Belorussia.

The plan of the Soviet Supreme High Command was by powerful blows along the entire front from Ovruch to Kakhovka to dismember the enemy defense, to surround and destroy the enemy groupings in parts (map 3). The first Ukrainian front was to strike the main blow at Vinnitsa and Mogilev-Podol'skiy, and with part of its forces, at Lutsk and Khristinovka. The 2nd Ukrainian front was to strike the

chief blow at Kirovograd, Pervomaysk, and with part of its forces, on Khristinovka, also. The 3rd and 4th Ukrainian fronts, by strikes in converging directions, were to destroy the Nikopol'-Krivoi Rog grouping of the enemy and to develop an offensive on Nikolayev and Odessa. It was planned at first to rout the enemy in the eastern regions of the Right Bank, finally to throw him from the Dnepr, and to emerge on the line of the river Southern Bug-Pervomaisk-Shirokoye-Ingulets River. Later the Soviet troops were to emerge on the line Lutsk-Mogilev-Podol'skiy-Dnestr River, and also to liquidate the Crimean grouping of the enemy and to liberate the Crimea. In accordance with this general concept, the concrete tasks of the troops were determined by directives of Headquarters and the plans of the fronts. In the course of the offensive the tasks of the fronts were specified and changed, depending on the situation as it arose.

Besides the four Ukrainian fronts, the Independent Maritime Army, the Black Sea Fleet, and the Azov military flotilla were to participate in realizing the plan of the Supreme High Command. Active participation in the struggle with the enemy by the Ukrainian, Moldavian, and Crimean partisans was also planned.

The German-Fascist command tried in every way possible to retain the Right-Bank Ukraine and the Crimea, well aware of what enormous military and political difficulties the loss of the richest industrial and agricultural regions, of the first-class ports on the Black Sea, and the emergence of the Red Army onto the approaches to the Balkans would bring. The defeat led unavoidably to the loss of strategically important positions and the sharp worsening of the position of the Hitlerites in the countries of Southeastern Europe, and also to a curb on Germany's ties with Turkey.

Losing the battle for the Dnepr, the supreme command of the German armed forces thought that it would succeed in obtaining a breathing-spell in the winter and spring of 1944, that "at least in the southern sector of the Eastern front there was so far no danger of a Russian offensive on the previous scale due to the beginning of the thaw."* Moreover, the enemy had still not lost hope of pushing our troops away, by strong blows, from the right-bank bridgeheads on the Dnepr and establishing communications by land with the entire Crimean grouping. At the same time, the enemy quickly reinforced the defense on the occupied boundaries. The chief defensive zone, 4-6 kilometers deep, was a system of strong points which was supplemented in the chief directions by a developed system of trenches and communications trenches, covered with engineered barriers. In the important directions, 10-15 kilometers from the forward region, the second zone of defense was constructed. At operative depth along the rivers Gpryn', Ingul'ts, Ingul, Southern Bug, and Dnestr, the enemy still earlier had begun the construction of defensive zones. A powerful defense was created in the Crimea.

By the beginning of January, the largest enemy grouping, composed of army group "South" of General Field-Marshal E. Mannstein (the 4th, 1st tan, 8th, and 6th armies)** and army group "A" of General Field-Marshal E. Kleist (the 17th German and 3rd Rumanian armies, and the 44th detached army corps) operated south of Poles'ye. In the Right-Bank Ukraine the enemy had 93 divisions, of which 18 were tank and 4 were montorized divisions, and 2 brigades. The 17th Army, blockaded in the Crimea, consisted of eight infantry and two cavalry divisions. In all, army groups "South" and "A" had 103 divisions and 2 brigades, or about

* Kriegstagebuch des Oberkommandos der Wehrmacht [War Diary of the Oberkommando of the Wehrmacht], Vol. IV, First half-volume. Frankfurt am Main, 1961, p. 107.
** On 2 February, the 6th army was transferred to army group "A".

41% of all divisions and 72% of the tank divisions which were located on the Soviet-German Front.** The aviation of the 4th air fleet supported the "South" and "A" army groups.

The Soviet troops in the Right-Bank Ukraine by the beginning of January had 168 rifle and 9 cavalry divisions. The rifle divisions numbered from 2600 to 6500 people, while the German infantry divisions had from 7,000 to 9,000 men. The actual ratio of manpower was 1.3:1 in favor of the Soviet troops. Our troops were armed with 28,800 guns and mortars (excluding the troop anti-aircraft artillery), more than 2,000 tanks and self-propelled artillery devices, and 2,360 aircraft.** The German-Fascist troops had approximately 16,800 guns and mortars, up to 2,200 tanks and assault weapons, and about 1,460 aircraft. Thus the Soviet troops had 1.7 times as many guns and mortars and military aircraft as the enemy and slightly fewer tanks and self-propelled artillery devices.

The concentration of millions of troops and the large amount of artillery, tanks, aircraft, and other military technical equipment made it apparent that a fierce battle of enormous dimensions was impending.

The operations for the liberation of the Right-Bank Ukraine developed on an enormous territory from the Dnepr to the Carpathians and from Poles'ye to the shores of the Black Sea, including the forested and swampy regions, the broad

---

* Nemetskiye trofeynye karty OKKh /German War Maps of Sbornik materialov po sostavu voysk fashistskoi Germanii /Collection of Materials on the Composition of the Troops of Fascist Germany/, 4th edition, pp. 14-20.

** Archive of the MD of the USSR, folio 236, inv.13316, d. 8, sheets 7-93; folio 240, inv.16636, d. 1, sheets 143-211; folio 244, inv. 7143, d. 1, sheets 8-18.

expanses of the steppes, and mountains. Such rivers as the Southern Bug, the Dnestr, and the Prut, flowing chiefly in a southeasterly direction, were natural obstacles to the advance of our troops. But as a whole, the terrain permitted broad offensive operations and allowed the use of large mobile units.

In 1944, spring came earlier than usual to the Ukraine. Already at the end of January the snow began to melt, it rained often, the rivers swelled and overflowed their banks, and the country roads became impassable. The thaw created very difficult conditions for the maneuvers of mobile troops, for artillery operations. It was difficult to bring up ammunition, fuel, and provisions, the more so as a result of previous operations the rears of the fronts were stretched out to a depth of up to 500 kilometers. Many rear units and front and army installations lagged behind. Reserves of materiel with the troops were reduced. In several armies there remained only from 0.5 to 1 fire unit of ammunition and from 0,6 to 1.2 refuelling supplies. There was a severe shortage of military uniforms. Automobile transport was in disrepair. For example, on the 2nd Ukrainian front, out of 1,272 machines in the automobile units subordinate to the front, only 640 were in repair.* Due to the thaw, many field airports became unusable, which made for serious difficulties in supply and operations of our aviation. All this increased tension in the work of the command and the headquarters of all degrees, organs of the rear, and required skillful control of the troops and hard labor on the part of the soldiers.

2. THE OFFENSIVE OF SOVIET TROOPS IN JANUARY-FEBRUARY. ENCIRCLEMENT OF THE ENEMY IN THE REGION OF KORSUN'-SHEVCHENKOVSKIY

In accordance with the general plan of the Soviet Supreme High Command, the four Ukrainian fronts renewed the offensive at the end of December 1943 and the

* IML. Documents and materials of the Department of History of the Great Patriotic War, invl No. 17368, sheets 5-6.

beginning of January 1944. During January and February, the troops of these fronts conducted the Zhitomir-Berdicher, Kirovograd, Korsun' - Shevchenkovskiy Rovno-Lutsk, and Nikopol'-Krivoy Rog offensives, pursuing a common goal - to rout the enemy in the eastern regions of Right-Bank Ukraine, finally to clear the right bank of the Dnepr, and to create conditions for a further decisive offensive. The coordination of the actions of the fronts was carried out by representatives of Headquarters: for the 1st and 2nd Ukrainian fronts - Marshal of the Soviet Union G. K. Zhukov; for the 3rd and 4th Ukrainian fronts - Marshal of the Soviet Union A. M. Vasilevskiy.

The fourth enemy tank army, consisting of 30 divisions, including 8 tank and 1 motorized division and 1 brigade, operated in front of the 1st Ukrainian front. It was no accident, the Hitlerites concentrated a third of all their tank divisions located on the Soviet-German front in this place. From the time that the Germans were forced out of Kiev, the bridgehead seized by our troops in this region did not give them any peace. It isolated the flanks of army groups "Center" and "South" and hung from the north over the entire enemy grouping which operated in the Right-Bank Ukraine. Therefore the enemy made one attempt after another to throw the Red Army troops back across the Dnepr.

The Soviet Supreme High Command, feeling that the enemy would in the future try to return to Kiev, decided to rout the 4th tank army and to push it back to the Southern Bug. But our command felt that the 1st Ukrainian front, after constant battles, which had lasted since July 1943, was unable to advance with the forces it possessed. Therefore, the 18th army, the 1st tank army, and two detached tank corps were transferred to the front from the Headquarters Reserve.

The 1st Ukrainian front was commanded by General of the Army N. F. Vatutin, the members of the Military Council were member of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the AUCP (b), Lieutenant-General N. S. Krushchev, and Lieutenant-

General K. V. Kraynyukov; and the chief of staff was Lieutenant-General A. N. Bogolyubov. On 28 November 1943, the command of the 1st Ukrainian front received a directive from Headquarters to transfer immediately to firm defense, with the intention of tiring the enemy, who had begun the attack in the first days of December, and then, with the arrival of fresh forces, to organize a counterattack with the intention of routing the enemy and breaking out on the Southern Bug.* Executing the directives of Headquarters, the troops of the front wore out the enemy tank grouping in defensive battles and after a short preparation, began the Zhitomir-Berdichev operation.

The idea of this operation by the 1st Ukrainian front was to strike the main blow with forces of the 1st guards, 18th, and 38th armies, with the 3rd guard and 1st tank armies to rout the enemy in the region of Radomyshl'-Brusilov, and to emerge on the line Lyubar-Vinnitsa-Lipovets. Auxiliary strikes were made by the 13th and 60th armies in the directions of Sarna and Shepetovka, and by the 40th and 27th armies in the direction of Belaya Tserkov'. Later the armies of the left wing of the front were to continue the attack in the direction of Khristinovka and here to unite with the troops of the 2nd Ukrainian front.** The aircraft of the 2nd air army was given the assignment of supporting the troops of the front, under the command of Lieutenant-General of Aviation S. A. Krasovskiy.

In the morning of 24 December, after artillery and aviation preparation, the troops of the shock group of the 1st Ukrainian front transferred to the attack, and on 25-28 December the attack of the remaining armies began. In the first three

* IML. Documents and materials of the Department of History of the Great Patriotic War, inv. No. 9491, sheet 464.
** Archive of the MD of the USSR, folio 236, inv.2673, d. 114, sheets 68-73.

days of offensive operations, the troops of the front, with the active support of aircraft routed the large forces of the enemy and seized a powerful center of resistance, Radomyshl'. By 30 December the breakthrough was widened to 300 kilometers along the front and to 100 kilometers in the interior.

At the end of December and the beginning of January, our troops, continuing to develop the attack, liberated Korosten', Novograd-Volynskiy Zhitomir, Berdichev, and Belaya Tserkov'. In the battles for Belaya Tserkov', the 1st Czechoslovak brigade, commanded by General L. Svoboda, fought bravely with the troops of the 40th army. The Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet awarded the Order of Bogdan Khmel'nitskiy for successful military actions.

With the transfer of the Soviet troops to the offensive, the operations of the partisans in the rear of the enemy were activated. Thus, on 2 January 1944 the partisans of the formation commanded by S. F. Malikov liberated the population center of Ignatopol', the rayon center Lugina, and aided the troops of the 13th army in the liberation of Korosten'. On 12 January, our troops, with the active assistance of partisans from A. N. Saburov's formation , took possession of the population center of Bukhlicha (55 kilometers north of Sarna). The partisan detachments of Zhitomir Oblast' on 14 January liberated the city of Kostopol'.

Supporting the offensive of the troops of the front, the aircraft of the 2nd air army, despite the poor weather, bombed the troops, the enemy's defensive structures, and also the railroad junctions in the rear of the enemy. On 7 January a blow was struck at Shepetovka. Soviet pilots broke through to this railroad junction, although the enemy's antiaircraft artillery counteracted strongly. Bombing the enemy echelons and shooting them with cannon and machine-guns, our aircraft caused serious losses to the Hitlerites. Several enemy

trains, , hundreds of Fascist soldiers and officers were annihilated, the chief buildings of the railroad junction were destroyed. This effective blow was dealt by the pilots of the 525th assault regiment -- Major N. V. Sharonov, Lieutenants I. M. Dolgov, I. V. Ukhabov, Junior Lieutenants G. F. Pastukhov, N. I. Rodin, A. S. Kosolapov, and L. A. Breskalenko.* The Soviet pilots were given a government award for their brave and highly-effective raid.

The German-Fascist command, which had so recently evaluated its situation optimistically and had considered the return of Kiev a real possibility, was suddenly forced to an agonizing reevaluation of the situation. In an enormous expanse, the defensive front cracked threateningly. The 4th tank army rolled westward. It was necessary to take extreme measures. Twelve divisions (two of them tank divisions) were hurriedly transferred to the offensive zone of the 1st Ukrainian front by 10 January. From the south, from below Krivoy Rog, the administration of the 1st tank army was immediately transferred, which headed the troops operating in the direction of Vinnitsa and Uman' . The enemy, after reinforcing his grouping, at this time had concentrated three tank and four infantry divisions southeast of Vinnitsa** and undertook a counterattack in the direction of Lipovets against the 38th and 1st tank armies, which were advancing forward.*** Somewhat later, two tank divisions made a counterattack in the region northwest of Uman', where units of the 40th army and the 5th guards tank corps had broken out. The troops of the 1st Ukrainian front were forced to stop the offensive and take measures to repulse the enemy blows.**** Fierce battles were

* Archive of the MD of the USSR, folio 236, inv. 250985, d. 18 (newspaper of the 1st Ukrainian front, Za chest' Rodiny [For the Honor of the Motherland] 21 February, 1944.

**German captured maps of the OKKh for 10-14 January 1944.

***Archive of the MD of the USSR, folio 236, inv. 13315, d. 112, sheet 107.

****Ibid., sheet 153.

joined, which lasted almost two weeks. The enemy succeeded in pressing our troops back 25-30 kilometers, but his further advance was stopped.

As a result of the Zhitomir-Berdichev operation of the 1st Ukrainian front, the 1st and 4th tank armies of the enemy suffered serious losses and were thrown back far from Kiev. Advancing 80-120 kilometers, the troops of the front threatened army group "South" still more and outflanked from the north the enemy troops which were continuing to hold the right bank of the Dnepr at Kanev.

***

The second Ukrainian front, which was commanded by General of the Army I. S. Konev - the member of the Military Council was Lieutenant-General of the tank troops I. Z. Susaykov, and chief of staff was Colonel-General of the tank troops I. Z. Susaykov, and chief of staff was Colonel-General M. V. Zakharov - even before 20 December 1943, after severe battles on the right bank of the Dnepr, which lasted three months, temporarily went over to the defense. It was necessary to consolidate on the boundaries which had been occupied, to allow the troops to rest, to reinforce them and bring them to order, and to prepare for further attack. The front was allotted materiel, arms, and ammunition. In particular, at the end of December it received 300 tanks and 100 self-propelled artillery installations. At the same time, the 5th guards cavalry corps was transferred to the front.

The 8th and part of the forces of the 6th army, which included 22 divisions, 5 of them tank and 2 motorized, took up the defense before the 2nd Ukrainian front. The main forces of the enemy were operating in the first echelon. Two tank, one motorized, and three infantry divisions were in reserve.*

* German captured map of the OKKh for 5 January 1944.

On 29 December, Headquarters ordered the front to prepare for a new operation. Striking the chief blow at Kirovograd-Novokrainka-Pervomaysk, the front was to break out on the Southern Bug, and with part of its forces to advance on Shpola-Khristinovka* and, operating together with the 1st Ukrainian front, to rout the enemy in the region of Zvenigorodka-Kanev. The command of the 1st Ukrainian front decided to strike a blow with the forces of the 52nd army under the command of Lieutenant-General K.A. Koroteyev in the direction of Smela-Shpola-Khristinovka, turning part of the forces on Korsun-Shevchenkov, in order to route the enemy in this region and to establish communications with the 1st Ukrainian front. The 53rd army, commanded by Lieutenant-General I.V. Galanin, was to strike a blow at Malaya Viska with the 5th guards mechanized corps. The plan was to carry out the offensive in the direction of Kirovograd with two shock groupings. The fifth guards army of Lieutenant-General A.S. Zhadov and the 7th mechanized corps were to surround Kirovograd from the northwest, and the 7th guards army of Colonel-General M.S. Shumilov and the 5th guards tank army of Colonel-General of the Tank Troops P.A. Rotmistrov -- from the southwest. The shock groups had the assignment of surrounding and destroying the enemy in the region of Kirovograd, and later to develop a strike in the direction of Novoukrainka-Pomoshnaya.** The support of the troops from the air was assigned to the 5th air army, commanded by Lieutenant-General of Aviation S.K. Goryunov.

On the morning of 5 January, the front transferred to the attack. A thick fog hung over the earth like a dense shroud. Aircraft could not operated under these conditions. But artillery was able to suppress the enemy defense. The Soviet troops rose to the attack. The 53rd and 5th guards armies, attacking north of Kirovograd, achieved the greatest success. By the end of the day, they had advanced

---

* IML. Documents and Materials of the Department of History of the Great Patriotic War, inv. No. 9491, sheet 498.

** Archive of the MD of the USSR, folio 240, inv. 14668, d. 2, sheets 211-217.

from 4 to 24 kilometers. In order to achieve success, the front commander regrouped in this direction the 8th mechanized corps from the 5th guards tank army.* The troops, advancing southeast of Kirovograd, advanced more slowly. They had to wage heavy battles with a strong enemy grouping, consisting of two tank and three infantry divisions, which was concentrated north of Novgorodka. In a day, they moved forward 4-5 kilometers. In order to complete the breach in this direction, the front command led the 5th guards tank army into battle.

On the following days, the offensive of our troops, despite the furious enemy counterattacks, developed successfully. On the night of 7 January, the 29th tank corps of the 5th guards tank army broke out toward the southern edge of Kirovograd, and after it units of the 279th and 50th rifle divisions broke into the city. By the morning of this day our mobile troops, having advanced north of Kirovograd, surrounded the city from the northwest and at the station of Lelekovka (10 kilometers west of Kirovograd) they cut through the highway and the Kirovograd-Novoukrainka railroad. At the same time, units of the 18th tank corps of the 5th guards tank army cut off the Kirovograd-Rovnoye road. The chief paths of withdrawal of the enemy to the west were intercepted.**

The whole day of the 7th of January there were fierce battles in the region of Kirovograd. They lasted through the night, too. The underground fighters of Kirovograd, who led the Soviet units out on the path of the enemy's retreat and executed other assignments of the command, gave active assistance to our troops.

* Ibid., inv. 16363, d. 22, sheet 122.
** Ibid., sheets 123-124.

By the morning of 8 January, the troops of the Red Army had broken the enemy resistance and liberated Kirovograd. During the next two days they inflicted heavy losses on four enemy divisions, which had been pressed northwest of Kirovograd, and pursuing the routed enemy units, advanced westward from the city.

The troops of the right wing of the front, having begun the attack on 5 January, advanced up to 40 kilometers ahead, but on the line Smela-Kanizh they met stubborn enemy resistance. The enemy, which had transferred three tank divisions in this direction, undertook counterattacks against the 4th guards and 53rd armies.*

The partisans took part in offensive battles. For example, two partisan detachments, with a total of about 1,500 people, had a close connection with the command of the 4th guards army. On the instructions of headquarters of this army, an officer and a radioman were parachuted into the partisan detachments, which allowed the coordination of operations between the partisans and the advancing troops. On the night of 7 January, the partisan detachments struck a blow in the region of the village of Zamyatnitsa (30 kilometers southeast of Smela) and joined with the Red Army units.** Thousands of Soviet citizens, hiding in the forests for fear of being driven into Germany, joined our troops together with the partisans. Together with the military units, the partisan detachments for three days waged offensive battles and occupied several population centers.***

Trying to execute the assignment - to break out in the region of Khristinovka to join with the troops of the 1st Ukrainian front, the front commander on 16

* Archive of the MD of the USSR, folio 240, inv. 16362, d. 22, sheets 123-124.
**Ibid., inv. 9870, d. 10, sheet 528.
***Party Archive of the Institute of History of the Party of the CC of the CP of the Ukraine, folio 1, inv. 1-9, d. 18, sheets 136-137.

January regrouped into the zone of the 53rd army the 5th guards tank army, which, however, could not achieve success, since it had been weakened in previous battles. In view of the increased enemy resistance, the attack of the troops of the front ceased on the line east of Smela and west of Kirovograd.

In the course of the Kirovograd operation, the troops of the 2nd Ukrainian front repused the enemy 40-50 kilometers to the west and gained possession of a strong enemy center of resistance--Kirovograd. The wedge of our forces into the defense of the enemy in the direction of Kirovograd threatened the flanks of both the Korsun'-Shevchenkov and the Krivoy Rog Hitlerite groupings.

* * *

Despite the successful offensive by the troops of the 1st Ukrainian front southwest of Kiev and by the 2nd Ukrainian front in the direction of Kirovograd, these fronts, due to the strong enemy resistance, did not succeed in closing their flanks west of the Dnepr. Here, in the region of Korsun'-Shevchenkov, the enemy continued to hold a salient, which pressed deep into the position of our troops.

The stubbornness with which the enemy clung to the Korsun'-Shevchenkov salient was by no means accidental. The attempt of several former Hitlerite generals to prove now that retention of this salient was the result of the lack of military skill and the foolish stubbornness of Hitler is full of holes. The former commander of army group "South", General Field Marshal Mannstein, who especially forcefully presents this view in his book Lost Victories, simply tries to get away with clean hands, for it is easier to point to the military ignorance of the dead Führer than to confess that his own operational-strategic concepts were a failure. Actually, in the middle of January the Fascist command, including the command of army group "South" group of armies, still did not wish to reconcile itself to the fact

that the Eastern defensive barrage had crumbled. It still hoped to reestablish the defense along the Dnepr. The Korsun'-Shevchenkov salient seemed to Hitler's command to be a favorable bridgehead, which could be used for strikes at the left wing of the 1st Ukrainian and the right wing of the 2nd Ukrainian fronts. Trying in every way possible to hold the salient, the Fascist bosses were also guided by propagandistic ideas: they continued to proclaim that German cooks would draw water from the Dnepr.

The enemy exerted every effort to create a steady defense in the region of the salient. The terrain favored this. The large number of ravines, gullies, hills, and population centers could easily be used for defense. The salient in the sector from Tynovka to Kanev was defended by troops of the 1st tank army, and in the sector Kanev-Balandino by troops of the 8th army. Here there were nine infantry divisions, one tank division, and one motorized brigade.*

In the situation which had evolved by the end of the first ten days of January, the Soviet command considered it necessary to take resolute measures to liquidate the Korsun'-Shevchenkov enemy grouping, which threatened the wings of the 1st and 2nd Ukrainian fronts and coordinated their operations. On 12 January, the Supreme High Command, specifying the mission which had been decreed earlier, ordered that the enemy grouping in the region of Korsun'Shevchenkov salient be surrounded and destroyed. For this purpose, the 1st and 2nd Ukrainian fronts were to deal powerful blows at the base of the salient with troops located on the adjacent wings and to join together in the region of Shpola.**

The command of the 1st Ukrainian front created a grouping consisting of part of the forces of the 40th army of Lieutenant-General F. F. Zhmachenko, of the

---

* German War Map of the OKKh for 24 January 1944.
**IML. Documents and Materials of the Department of History of the Great Patriotic War, inv. No. 9492, sheets 10-11.

27th army of Lieutenant-General S. G. Trofimenko, and of the 6th tank army*, under the command of Lieutenant-General of Tank Troops A. G. Kravchenko. The troops in this grouping were to deal the chief blow from a region south of Tarashcha in the general direction of Zvenigorodka-Shpola and to join with the 2nd Ukrainian front, and with part of the forces to advance in the directions of Tal'noye and Boguslav.**

The commander of the 2nd Ukrainian front decided to strike a blow from the region of Balandino in the general direction of Shpola-Zvenigorodka with forces of the 4th guards army, commanded by Major-General A.I. Ryzhov (from 3 February, Lieutenant-General I.K. Smirnov became the army commander) and the 53rd army. The 5th guards tank army, transferred from the region of Kirovograd and in possession of 205 tanks and self-propelled artillery pieces, was designated to develop the success of the combined-arms armies in the main direction. In order to distract the enemy's attention from the direction of the main thrust of the front, to pin down the enemy troops, and not to allow them to be transferred to the main direction, it was planned to strike auxiliary blows with the forces of the 5th and 7th guards armies.*** The 2nd and 5th air armies were charged with supporting the shock groupings of the fronts. A total of 27 rifle divisions, 4 tank corps and 1 mechanized corps, which had 3,900 guns and mortars, 370 tanks and self-propelled artillery, took part in the operation.**** This ensured 1.7 times superiority

---

* The 6th tank army began to be formed on the orders of Headquarters of 20 January. The 5th mechanized and 5th guards tank corps became part of it. Before the operation, the army had only 107 tanks and self-propelled artillery.

** Archive of the MD of the USSR, folio 236, inv. 2673, d. 974, sheets 145-147.

***Ibid., folio 240, inv.16362, d. 22, sheets 130-131.

****IML. Documents and Materials of the Department of History of the Great Patriotic War, inv. No. 9608, p. 106.

over the enemy in infantry. 2.4 times in guns and mortars, and 2.6 times in tanks and self-propelled artillery.

But general superiority in forces of itself still could not determine success. It was necessary to operate during the thaw, which favored the defending side. The broken-up and limp roads made the maneuvering of the troops difficult, and the bringing up of materiel difficult. The majority of our airports were not fit for taking off and landing of aircraft. Therefore the organization of the attack and the direction of the troops in the course of military operations acquired very great importance. Especially important was the fighting morale of the personnel, its political and moral condition, and its ability to withstand enormous physical tension.

The morale of our soldiers was immeasurably greater than the morale of the enemy soldiers and officers. The great victories of the Armed Forces of the USSR over the German-Fascist army increased even more the morale of the Soviet troops. The command, the political organs, and the Party and Komsomol organizations inspired in the personnel a high degree of offensive spirit and an unflinching resolution to rout the enemy. The preparation for the operation was made on the eve of the 20th anniversary of the death of the founder of the Communist Party and the Soviet state, V. I. Lenin. On 21 January in many units special numbers of Red Army newspapers and military pamphlets were published. In them the ideas of V. I. Lenin were widely propagandized on the protection of the socialist Fatherland, his pronouncements on the Red Army The soldiers of the Ukrainian fronts in those January days followed the successful operations of the troops of the Leningrad and Volkhov fronts. Information about these successes was quickly spread in the units and subunits, imbuing the fighters with pride and confidence, inspiring them to new exploits.

The commanders and political workers did a great deal of work with the recruits, who arrived chiefly from the liberated regions. The soldiers who were tempered in battle met the young soldiers. Thus, at a meeting dedicated to the arrival of new recruits, the commander of the 69th guards rifle division, Major-General K.K. Dzhakhua, told about the military exploits of the formation, about its famed traditions and heroes. Discussions were conducted with the young fighters on the military oath of allegiance, on the holy obligation to the socialist Motherland. Veterans of the famed battles near Moscow, Stalingrad, and Kursk, and those who participated in forcing the Dnepr shared their military experience.

In many units meetings of military cooperation between soldiers and officers--representatives of various types of troops--took place. Riflemen, machine-gunners, antitank gunners, artillerymen, mortarmen, tank crew members, and signallers told about the battle qualities of their weapons and promised to use their power in order to achieve success.*

Serious attention was devoted to strengthening Party and Komsomol organizations first of all in those subunits which were obligated to solve the most important assignments. In the units and subunits Party and Komsomol meetings took place. The speakers talked about the positive and negative aspects of the operations of the soldiers in the period of battles for Kiev, Kazatin, Kirovograd, and about the characteristics of forthcoming battles. The meetings called upon all Communists and Komsomol members to be an example in the fulfillment of soldierly obligations.

During the preparation for the attack, the troops received additional arms, ammunition, fuel and lubricating materials, and food. But the short time-period for preparation and the great difficulties faced by the transport due to the thaw did not allow the creation of the necessary reserves of ammunition and fuel. In several armies (the 4th guards, the 52nd, and the 27th) there was only 0.6-0.8

* Archive of the MD of the USSR, folio 320, inv. 4532, d. 58, sheet 40.

units of the basic types of ammunition. The shortage of mines was especially severe. At the beginning of the operation, the troops had 1-2 units of automobile gas, and from 1.5 to 7 fuelling units of diesel fuel. The organs of the rear had to expend great effort to supply the troops with ammunition, fuel, and food during the course of the operation.

The 4th guards army and the 53rd army of the 2nd Ukrainian front on 24 January began battle reconnaissance with the forces of the advanced battalions, and on the morning of 25 January their chief forces went over to the offensive. Together with the advanced brigades of the 20th and 29th corps of the 5th guards tank army, they made a breakthrough in the chief zone of defense and expanded it to the flanks. Assault aviation, which in groups of four to eight aircraft suppressed the enemy fire points, supported the attacking troops from the air. The chief forces of the 5th guards tank army were brought into battle at 14 hours on 25 January. On the next day, the 20th and 29th corps [of the tank army] broke through the second defensive zone of the enemy and rushed into the operational depth of defense.

Trying to liquidate the breakthrough, the enemy on 27 January with three tank divisions dealt a counterblow from Novomirgorod at Ositnyazhka. At the same time, units of one tank and two infantry divisions struck a blow from the north also in the direction of Ositnyazhka. Fierce battles were joined , in the course of which the enemy succeeded in closing the breach which had formed in his defense and cutting off our 20th and 29th tank corps from the chief forces of the front.

Despite the difficult situation, the personnel of the corps continued persistently to execute the chief assignment. Acting decisively and boldly, the 20th tank corps, commanded by Lieutenant-General of Tank Troops I. G. Lazarev,

on 27 January in a night attack took possession of the city of Shpola, and on 28 January reached Zvenigorodka. The 29th tank corps, commanded by Major-General of the Tank Troops I. F. Kirichenko, broke out in the region of Lipyanka. Meanwhile, the chief forces of the shock grouping of the front, including the second echelon of the 5th guards tank army--the 18th tank corps under the command of Major-General of the Tank Troops V. I. Polozkov and the 5th guards calvary corps, commanded by Major-General A. G. Selivanov and brought into battle from the reserve of the front--continued to wage stubborn battles with the counter-attacking German divisions north of Novomirgorod. By 30 January they had routed these divisions and began to develop an attack in pursuit of the 20th and 29th tank corps.

The 1st Ukrainian front began the attack on 26 January. The troops went into the attack after artillery preparation with the support of small groups of assault aircraft. The enemy, relying on strongly fortified strong points, showed fierce resistance, but was forced to retreat under the blows by our troops. In the breakthrough of the enemy defense, the troops of the 27th and 6th tank armies operated especially successfully. On 28 January the mobile detachment of the 6th tank army, consisting of the 233rd tank brigade, the 1,228th self-propelled artillery regiment, a motorized rifle battalion and a battery of fighter-antitank artillery, under the general command of Major-General of the Tank Troops M. I. Savel'yev, after making an encirclement maneuver, broke through Lysyanka to Zvenigorodka, where it joined with the troops of the 5th guards tank army of the 2nd Ukrainian front.*

As a result of the strikes by troops of the 1st and 2nd Ukrainian fronts, made from two sides at the base of the Korsun'-Shevchenkov salient, the German-

* Archive of the MD of the USSR, folio 236, inv. 2673, d. 974, sheet 245.

Fascist grouping, which consisted of ten divisions, one brigade, add several artillery, tank, and engineering units and subunits, was cut off from the chief enemy forces. But in the battle formations of our troops there were gaps through which the enemy could rush from encirclement or receive help from outside. It was necessary to create continuous internal and external encirclement fronts. The formations of the 27th and 4th guards armies, and also the 5th guards cavalry corps, advancing forward, formed the internal front. The 6th and 5th guards tank armies, reinforced by rifle troops, artillery and engineering units, firmly defended the external front. Formations of the 40th and 53rd armies joined the flanks of these armies.

Finding themselves in a "pocket," the enemy divisions from the very first day began to experience difficulties with fuel and food. Hitler's command tried to organize their supply by air, concentrating a large amount of transport aviation for this purpose. But our aviation and antiaircraft artillery almost completely blocked the surrounded grouping from the air. Despite unfavorable conditions, the Soviet pilots shot down 257 enemy aircraft, including 31 transports. At the same time, blows were struck at airports and landing strips of the enemy, as a result of which about 200 aircraft were destroyed, chiefly transports. Finally, our aircraft bombarded and assaulted the enemy troops, his artillery, and the railroad junctions.

Using the conditions of the terrain, which were favorable for defense, the enemy clung to every line, to every population point, and showed stiff resistance. The Soviet units, advancing under conditions where there were no roads, moved stubbornly and assuredly ahead. Infantrymen and artillerymen, with the help of local inhabitants, carried ammunition and food in their hands, and pulled weapons out of the mud. The tank crew memebers also had a difficult time, especially

because of the difficulties in delivery of fuel and ammunition. Enormous courage and steadfastness were needed in order to conduct the offensive under such conditions and to fight the enemy without any respite.

The encirclement of the Korsun'-Shevchenkov enemy grouping coincided with the first anniversary of the destruction of enemy troops on the Volga. Meetings were held in the units in connection with this. The speakers told of the fearlessness and courage of the Soviet soldiers, and called for a continuation of their glorious traditions on the banks of the Dnepr. The military Council of the 1st Ukrainian front sent a summons to the officers and soldiers to rout the enemy in a short time. Great encouragement was aroused among the troops by the news that the title "Zvenigorodsk" was awarded to the 62nd guards infantry division (the commander of the division was Colonel I. N. Moshlyak, and the chief of the political division was Lieutenant-Colonel A. M. Sanin); to the 69th guards rifle division (the commander was Major-General K. K. Dzhakhua and chief of the political department was Lieutenant-Colonel M. N. Ryabov); to the 94th guards rifle division (the commander was Colonel G. N. Shostatskiy, and chief of the political department was Lieutenant-Colonel A. N. Svetochev); and the 20th tank corps (the commander was Lieutenant-General I. G. Lazarev and chief of the political department was Lieutenant-Colonel A. K. Pogosov), and to other units and formations.

The ring of encirclement tightened more and more. On 8 February the Soviet command, in order to avoid needless bloodshed, suggested that the enemy divisions lay down their arms. The conditions of surrender were humane. In particular, all soldiers and officers were guaranteed life and safety.* But the German-

* Archive of the MD of the USSR, folio 32, inv.65607, d. 13, sheets 64-66.

Fascist command refused the proposal, which doomed tens of thousands of their people to senseless death. The battles were renewed with new strength. The position of the enemy grew worse every day. By 10 February, all the territory occupied by the enemy was covered by Soviet artillery fire.

At this time, on the exterior front fierce battles were taking place with the large forces of the enemy, which were trying to break through our defense and come to the aid of the encircled troops. While on 27 January three enemy tank and three infantry divisions operated in front of the external front of the Soviet troops, by 11 February there were already eight tank and six infantry divisions.* The Hitlerites tried with special persistence to break through the external front in the zone of the 2nd Ukrainian front, in the regions of Novomirgorod and Tolmach. But all their attempts met with failure. Then the German-Fascist command transferred the center of gravity of the battles into the zone of the 1st Ukrainian front, into the region of Rizino, concentrating three tank divisions there. The enemy decided to penetrate the breach in our defense with a powerful tank breakthrough in the direction of Lysyanka and to join with the encircled troops. The offensive from the region of Rizino began on 4 February. At the same time, three other tank divisions of Germans renewed the attack in the region of Tolmach.

The Soviet troops in all sectors met the enemy with organized fire. Our artillery played an especially important role in repulsing the enemy tank attacks. But at the price of great losses, the enemy, attacking in the region of Rizino, succeeded in driving a wedge into the defense of the Soviet troops. Our command brought up rifle troops and artillery to the breakthrough spot. The second tank army, under

* German war maps of the OKKh for 27 January and 11 February 1944.

the command of Lieutenant-General of the Tank Troops S. I. Bogdanov, was regrouped here, transferred to the 1st Ukrainian front from Headquarters Reserve.* The German-Fascist troops were stopped.

But the enemy, who did not lose hope of breaking through to the encircled troops, began to prepare for a new attack on Lysyanka. He pulled up another tank division, a battalion of tanks, and two divisions of assault guns into the region of Rizino. The enemy regrouped three tank divisions from the region of Tolmach into the region of Erka, from which they were to strike a blow at Lysyanka also. At the same time, large forces from the surrounded grouping gathered in the region of Steblev for a strike through Shenderovka on Lysyanka. In undertaking the strikes, the Hitlerites counted not only on freeing their divisions which were located in the "pocket," but also on surrounding our troops which were operating in the region Ryzhanovka-Lysyanka-Zvenigorodka.

On 11 February the enemy again began an attack on the external front. Stubborn battles broke out. The advance of the enemy from the region of Erka was stopped by the troops of the 2nd Ukrainian front. But the enemy tank divisions, which were advancing from the region of Rizino, nevertheless pressed our units and broke out into the region of Lysyanka. The surrounded Fascist troops on 12 February struck a blow from the region of Steblev to the southwest, in the hope of breaking through in the region of Lysyanka and joining with the tank divisions. Here serious battles were also engaged, often transferring to hand-to-hand combat. The enemy stopped at nothing, throwing new forces continually into battle. He succeeded in breaking through into the region of Shenderovka, as a result of which the distance between the surrounded grouping and the tank divisions which had broken through from the external front into the region of Lysyanka was reduced to 10-12 kilometers.

* Archive of the MD of the USSR, folio 236, inv. 2573, d. 985, sheet 19.

In order finally to stop the enemy and to destroy the surrounded divisions quickly, our command pulled rifle and tank troops, artillery, and engineering units from other sectors to the dangerous sectors. The regrouping, for example, of the 29th tank corps from the 5th guards tank army and the 5th guards cavalry corps into the region of Komarovka-Novaya Buda played a large role.* In order to coordinate more efficiently the operations of the troops which were spearheaded for destruction of the enemy, their leadership was given to the commander of the 2nd Ukrainian front, to whom the 27th army of the 1st Ukrainian front was also subordinated. The 5th air army received the assignment to support the troops of the 2nd Ukrainian front with all its forces; the 2nd air army, together with the 10th fighter corps of air defense was ordered not to allow the breakthrough of enemy aviation to the surrounded troops. The advance of the enemy from without and from the "pocket" was stopped. The Soviet troops drew the iron ring more and more tightly around the German-Fascist grouping. On 14 February they drove the enemy out of Korsun'-Shevchenkov --a large road junction and a powerful center of resistance.**

During the liquidation of the surrounded Hitlerite divisions, the local population helped the Soviet troops. The inhabitants of the liberated Ukrainian villages repaired the roads, built defensive structures, and delivered ammunition. Those who were capable of bearing arms voluntarily entered the ranks of the Soviet Armed Forces. In the village of Kvitka alone, 500 men joined the 180th rifle division, and around 600 women, old people and young people dug trenches, furnished cartridges and shells, carried the wounded from the battlefield, and gave them first aid. Many inhabitants of Kvitka were given government awards for bravery

* Ibid., folio 240, op. 16362, d. 23, sheets 45, 47.
** Ibid., sheet 55.

The partisans actively aided our troops in destroying the encircled enemy grouping. They attacked the retreating enemy subunits, his communications, and large strong points. Thus the T. G. Shevchenko partisan detachment, under the command of N. A. Dudchenko, aided units of the 27th army in gaining possession of the enemy strong point of Brovakha (15 kilometers northeast of Korsun'-Shevchenkov).

Having lost any hope for aid from without, the command of the German-Fascist troops which were in the "pocket" decided to undertake a last desperate attempt to break out of the encirclement. The remnants of the enemy units were gathered into the region of Shenderovka.* On the night of 17 February, the enemy moved in columns from this region to the southwest. Despite the strong wind and the snowfall, aircraft of the 312th night light-bomber aviation division of the 5th air army rose into the air and bombed the fascist troops. Our rocket artillery opened powerful fire, and after that tanks, infantry, and cavalry attacked the enemy from various directions. But the enemy stopped at nothing, despite any losses.

Formations of the 27th and 4th guards army received a concentrated blow from the enemy. The Soviet soldiers met the Hitlerites with intensely-concentrated artillery and rifle fire. In a blinding snowstorm, mortal combat was joined. On the outskirts of the village of Pochapintsa, students in the training battalion of the 41st guards rifle division fought heroically. Student N. Ye. Sergiyenko and two of his comrades killed more than 100 Fascists. The bravely-fighting artillerymen of the 438th fighter-antitank regiment, commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel V. K. Novikov, inflicted great losses on the enemy.** For courage and bravery displayed in battles, student N. Ye. Sergiyenko and Lieutenant-Colonel V. K. Novikov were awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union.

* Archive of the MD of the USSR, folio 240, inv. 16362, d. 23/2, sheet 66.
**Ibid. fo 110 320, op. 4522, d. 110, sheet 13.

The enemy, trying to break out of the encirclement, was destroyed. Only a small group of enemy tanks and armored personnel carriers, with generals and senior officers, throwing the troops to the whim of fate, broke through under cover of a snowstorm in the direction of Lysyanka.* Before this, Hitler's command was able to transport 2-3 thousand soldiers and officers out of the "pocket" by aircraft. This is all they succeeded in saving from encirclement!

The Korsun'-Shevchenkov operation was completed with the encirclement and liquidation of ten divisions and one brigade. Fifty-five thousand Fascist soldiers and officers were killed and wounded, and 18,200 men were taken captive.** The enemy lost all its arms and military technical equipment. This weakened the enemy grouping and demoralized the troops.

The destruction of the German-Fascist grouping in the region of Korsun'-Shevchenkov produced a good impression abroad: friends of the Soviet people met this news with joy; enemies, with malice and irritation. Hitler's Headquarters was in confusion, not knowing what to do: to acknowledge the fact and announce mourning for the divisions which had perished at Korsun'-Shevchenkov, as had been the case after Stalingrad, or to try to hide the true situation. Apparently considering the fact of a new encirclement on the Dneper to be politically unfavorable, Hitler's Headquarters played a farce: it held an awards ceremony for the division commanders who had abandoned their troops, Generals T. Lieb and G. Gille. This was to serve as proof that the German divisions at Korsun'-Shevchenkov had apparently broken out of the encirclement. The beaten Hitlerite generals, who now are coming forward in the role of military historians, are reviving the

* Ibid., sheet 6.
** Ibid., folio 240, inv.16362, d. 23/2, sheet 83.

legend that 30,000-32,000 German-Fascist troops avoided annihilation at Korsun'-Shevchenkov.* However, they do not bother to cite documents in this regard, but base everything on the same farce about the awards to the generals who fled the field of battle. Nevertheless, the German historians who participated in the war had to confess that the result of the Korsun'-Shevchenkov operation "was a new Stalingrad--true, the dimensions of the catastrophe were smaller this time,...but the losses, especially in artillery, were enormous."**

The Korsun'-Shevchenkov operation went down in the history of the Great Patriotic War as a remarkable example of encirclement and destruction of a large enemy grouping, supplied with all kinds of military technical equipment. The Red Army again showed its ability to conduct encirclement operations, which is the most difficult form of military operation. This operation is not only a clear example of the high level of Soviet military skill, but also an indicator

*Manstein claims that only six divisions and one brigade were encircled (cf. Erich V. Manstein, Verlorene Siege /Lost Battles/, Bonn, 1955, p. 585. The same idea is repeated in a footnote made by the West German editors to the translation of a book by B. S. Tel'pukhovskiy (cf. B. S. Telpuchowski, Die Sowjetische Geschichte des Grossen Vaterländischen Krieges 1941-1945 /The Soviet History of the Great Patriotic War, 1941-1945/, Frankfurt am Main, 1961, pp. 336-337.

But these claims contradict the historical facts. According to data from the captured maps of the German General Staff, the commands of the 11th and 42nd army corps; the 57th, 72nd, 88th, 112th, 255th, 332nd, and 389th infantry divisions; the SS "Viking" tank division; the SS "Valonia" motorized brigade,; the regiment of the 168th infantry division; the regiment of the 14th tank division; and the 905th division of assault weapons were encircled. Furthermore, according to indications of captives it has been established that individual units of the 82nd, 167th, and 198th infantry divisions, subunits of the 213th security division, a detached cavalry regiment, a detached infantry battalion, a communications detachment, 3 security battalions, and also 9 artillery divisions, 7 engineering and construction battalions, and other detached units were also encircled. (Archive of the MD of the USSR, folio 240, op. 16362, d. 23, sheet 51; folio 320, inv. 4522, d. 110, sheets 6-7). Consequently, not six divisions and 1 brigade, numbering 54,000 people, as Manstein states, but up to 10 divisions and 1 brigade, numbering about 80,000 people, were encircled.

**F. V. Mellentin, Tankovye srazheniya 1939-1945 gg. Boyevoye primeneniye tankov vo vtoroy mirovoy voyne [Tank Battles of 1939-1945. The Military Use of Tanks in the Second World War], Moscow, Foreign Literature Publishers, 1957, p. 228.

of the moral superiority of the Soviet troops. Fighting battles under exceptionally poor weather conditions, the Soviet soldiers displayed endurance, self-sacrifice, and unflinching resolve to rout the enemy.

The work of the rear during the course of the operation was extremely intense. In certain sectors, due to the thaw, it was necessary every 10-15 kilometers to reload the materiel from automobile transport to animal-drawn transport, and back. In all formations, horse and ox teams were used. Some of the ammunition and fuel was transported by aircraft. For example, the 326th night bomber division of the 2nd air army, which in the period from 8 through 16 February transported 49 tons of fuel and lubricating materials and up to 70 tons of ammunition, took part in supplying the 2nd and 6th tank armies.

As a result of the destruction of the Korsun'-Shevchenkov grouping of the enemy, the situation at the junction of the 1st and 2nd Ukrainian fronts changed radically. Favorable conditions were created for the further offensive of our troops toward the Southern Bug and the Dnestr. The liquidation of the Korsun'-Shevchenkov salient eliminated the threat to the wings of the 1st and 2nd Ukrainian fronts and meanwhile ensured the maneuver of our troops along the front. The very important belt railroad on the right bank of the Dnepr, Fastov-Belaya Tserkov'-Korsun'-Shevchenkov-Znamenka-Dnepropetrovsk, was cleared throughout its entire extent. With the liquidation of the salient, a large number of our troops were liberated, which facilitated the formation of a shock grouping for the subsequent attack by troops of the 2nd Ukrainian front on Uman' and Mogilev-Podol'skiy. The enemy was finally repulsed from the Dnepr in its middle flow. The plans of the German-Fascist command for reviving the defense along the Dnepr were crushed.

* * *

At the end of January, simultaneously with the Korsun'-Shevchenkov operation, the troops of the right wing of the 1st Ukrainian front began the Rovno-Lutsk operation, with the aim of routing the enemy and gaining possession of the region Rovno-Lutsk-Shepetovka.

According to the decision of the front commander, the main blow was struck by the forces of the 13th army, commanded by Lieutenant-General N. P. Pukhov, from the region of Sarna in the general direction of Kovel'. Emerging into the region of Manevich , part of the forces of this army turned to the south to surround Lutsk from the northwest. The left-flank formations of the 13th army were to strike a frontal blow from the region of Goshch. The right-flank formations of the 60th army, commanded by Lieutenant-General I. D. Chernyakhovskiy received the assignment to take possession of the Ostrog-Slavuta-Shepetovka line.*

Troops of the 4th enemy tank army, consisting of ten divisions, took up the defense in front of the 13th and 60th armies.** Furthermore, 24 SS and police battalions operated in the zone of the 13th army. The enemy did not expect an attack by large forces of Soviet troops here. His defense was not continuous; only the chief roads were covered by strong defended posts. The swampy and forested, sometimes impassable terrain was really very difficult for conducting military operations on a large scale. Floods, rains, and lack of roads made the already extremely difficult conditions even worse. The enemy felt that Soviet troops would not be able to conduct active military operations in such a situation. Our command took this into consideration. In this very

* Archive of the MD of the USSR, folio 236, inv. 2673, d. 974, sheet 215.
**German war map of the OKH for 27 January 1944.

sector they concentrated the cavalry formations, which were able to maneuver broadly.

Large partisan forces operated in the region of the forthcoming battles. Even before the beginning of the operation, the partisans made more frequent strikes at the rear and at enemy communications. They kept the enemy in constant state of tension, inflicted great losses of personnel and technical equipment on him, destroyed roads and railroads, and blocked the regroupings of troops and the transport of cargoes. The partisan detachments occupied and held the rayon centers of Rovensk and Volynsk oblasts--Ostrog, Rafalovka, Kolki, and others--until the arrival of Red Army units.*

Our troops began the attack on 27 January. Already on 29 January, the 1st and 6th guards cavalry corps, led into battle from the second echelon of the 13th army, broke out to the Styr' River. Then, on command from the front commander, they turned southwest and began to develp an attack at the flank and the rear of the enemy which was defending in the regions of Rovno and Lutsk. On 31 January the 1st guards cavalry corps, commanded by Lieutenant-General V. K. Baranov, broke out into the region of Kivertsev, while the 6th guards cavalry corps, commanded by Lieutenant-General S. V. Sokolov, took possession of Klevan' in a surprise strike. Developing the attack from Kivertsev to the southwest, units of the 1st guards cavalry corps in the morning of 2 February occupied Lutsk. Formations of the 6th guards cavalry corps from the region of Klevan' struck a blow at the southeast and by evening of that same day, operating with the troops which had attacked from the front, and with the assistance of the partisans, they took possession of Rovno. On 3 February an important railroad center, Zdolbunov, was liberated.

---

* Party Archive of the Institute of the History of the Party of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Ukraine, folio 1, inv. 14, d. 897, sheet 2.

During the battles for Rovno, the partisan formations commanded by V. A. Begma, I. F. Fedorov, and N. V. Taratuto pounded the rear of the German-Fascist troops. On 2 February the partisans occupied the village of Tsuman' and broke out onto the approaches to Rovno. Striking from the west, they aided in the liberation of this oblast center of the Ukraine, where the residence of Reichskommissar Koch was located for a long time. Here, in the den of Hitler's "deputy," the partisans and underground patriotic groups also operated. Nine underground rayon Party committees and 12 Komsomol raion committees conducted a selfless struggle under the leadership of the Rovno underground Party oblast' committee. In the same city, three underground organizations, led by T. F. Novak, N. M. Astafov, and P. M. Miryushchenko operated actively. The partisans N. I. Kuznetsov, Ya. S. Kaminskiy, N. V. Strutinskiy, N. A. Gnidyuk, and many others glorified their names with selfless bravery and courage. On the eve of the entrance of Soviet troops into Rovno, the partisans produced explosions in the station, in the German officers' dining-room, and derailed a train. The partisan formations of S. F. Malikov, A. M. Grabchak, I. I. Shitov, M. I. Naumov, and others disrupted enemy communications at this time. They liberated tens of population centers in the rear of the enemy.*

Troops of the right flank of the 60th army in the first days of February broke out onto the approaches to Shepetovka. The enemy, trying to hold this important railroad junction, strongly reinforced the city, concentrating a large grouping of troops here. The Soviet troops prepared for the assault over a period of several days. On 10 February the renewed the attack and on 11 February after fierce battles, they took complete possession of Shepetovka. Advancing

* Party archive of the Institute of History of the Party of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Ukraine, folio 62, inv.. 11, d. 29, sheets 58-63.

onto the line Lutsk-Mlinov-Izyaslav, troops of the right wing of the front deeply envoloped the flank of German-Fascist army group "South", which assured a favorable situation for further advance.

* * *

At the beginning of January, fierce battles developed in the direction of Nikopol-Krivoy Rog. Here the troops of the 3rd Ukrainian front operated, commanded by General of the Army R. Ya. Malinovskiy, member of the Military Council was Lieutenant-General A. S. Zheltov, chief of staff was Lieutenant-General F. K. Korzhenevich. Also operating here were troops of the 4th Ukrainian front, commanded by General of the Army F. I. Tolbukhin, member of the Military Council Major-General N. Ye. Subbotin, chief of staff Lieutenant-General S. S. Biryuzov. These units were given the assignment by Headquarters to rout the enemy troops in the region of Nikopol' and in the Nikopol' bridgehead.*

The German-Fascist command tried at any price to retain Nikopol' and Krivoy Rog--an important region economically for its manganese and iron-ore mining, and also the Nikopol' bridgehead, which they planned to use for striking at the Crimea and reestablishing land communications with the Crimean grouping. The enemy took all measures to strengthen its defense. The first line consisted of three rows of trenches and foxholes, covered with barbed wire and mine fields. All the heights and population centers which were located in the closest interior of the defense were turned into strong points by the enemy. Intermediate lines were quickly prepared in the operational interior. Before the 3rd Ukrainian front a line was fortified along the Kamenka River, and before the troops of the 4th Ukranian front the Dnepr was a powerful natural barrier. Operating in

* IML. Documents and Materials of the Department of History of the Great Patriotic War, inv. No. 9492, sheet 4.

the region of Nikopol' and Krivoy Rog, the 6th German army by the beginning of our offensive had 23 divisions, including 4 tank and 1 motorized division.*

On 10 January the 3rd Ukrainian front transferred to the attack, striking the chief blow in the direction of Apostolovo. On the following day, troops of the 4th Ukrainian front began active operations against the enemy, who had taken up a position on the Nikopol' bridgehead. In the course of fierce battles which lasted five and six days, the troops of both fronts advanced several kilometers, but did not achieve decisive results. This was chiefly due to the fact that they did not have at all the complete complement of personnel and technical equipment, especially tanks, and that they also had an extremely limited amount of ammunition. Therefore a decision was made to cease the attacks temporarily and to prepare for the operation more carefully. The 3rd Ukrainian front, which was given the chief role in the forthcoming operation, was reinforced by the 37th army from the 2nd Ukrainian front, the 31st guards rifle corps from Headquarters Reserve, and the 4th guards mechanized corps from the 4th Ukrainian front. Furthermore, it received 64 more tanks. Both fronts received additional ammunition and fuel. Thus Headquarters undertook the necessary measures to ensure the success of the operation.

The commander of the 3rd Ukrainian front decided to inflict the chief blow from the region of Novonikolayevka with the forces of the 46th army, commanded by Lieutenant-General Glagolev, the 8th guards army, commanded by Colonel-General V. I. Chukov, and the 4th guards mechanized corps of Lieutenant-General T. I. Tanaschishin. The shock grouping was given the assignment of penetrating the

* Sbornik materialov po sostavu voysk fashistskoy Germanii [Collection of Materials on the Composition of Troops of Fascist Germany], 4th ed., p. 16.

enemy defense and developing an offensive on Apostolovo and further toward the Dnepr, in order to rout the enemy in the region of Nikopol', operating together with the troops of the 4th Ukrainian front. The 37th army, commanded by Lieutenant-General M. I. Sharokhin, and the 6th army, commanded by Lieutenant-General I. T. Shlemin, made auxiliary strikes. The offensive of the combined-arms armies was to be supported by the 17th air army, commanded by Lieutenant-General of Aviation V. A. Sudets.*

The troops of the 4th Ukrainian front--the 3rd guards army, commanded by Lieutenant-General D. D. Lelyushenko, the 5th shock army, commanded by Colonel-General V. D. Tsvetayev, and the 28th army, commanded by Lieutenant-General A. A. Grechkin--with the support of the 8th air army, commanded by Lieutenant-General of Aviation T. T. Khryukin, was to advance on the Nikopol' bridgehead and aid the 3rd Ukrainian front in the rout of the Nikopol' enemy grouping.**

On the morning of 30 January the offensive of troops of the 3rd Ukrainian front began in the directions of the auxiliary strikes, and at dawn on 31 January, after strong artillery and aviation preparation, the 46th and 8th guards armies went over to the attack. On the following day, the 4th guards mechanized corps, which consisted of a mobile group of the front, was brought into the breach in the zone of the 8th guards army. Thus the Nikopol'-Krivoy Rog operation began. In a short time the Soviet troops crushed the enemy defense. The 46th, 123rd, and 306th infantry and the 16th motorized division of the enemy, which came under attack by our troops, were destroyed. The commander of the 16th motorized division,

* Ibid., folio 244, inv. 71463, d. 1, sheets 47, 94, 95, 99.
**Archive of the MD of the USSR, folio 243, inv. 71480, d. 1-2, sheets 39, 44, 48.

in a letter to the commander of the 6th German-Fascist army, reported:"Many machines were lost in the mud during the retreat from Mikhaylovka to the west. The retreating infantry lost its last heavy weapons and ammunition...By the hundreds, these tired people fled step by step through the mud, which reached their knees...The spirit of catastrophe loomed over us."* The enemy, who had counted on the spring thaw as its ally, was now ready to lay the blame for the defeat on the mud and lack of roads.

Developing the attack under the difficult conditions of the thaw, our troops moved steadily forward, and on 5 February they took possession of the large railroad junction of Apostolovo.

The troops of the 4th Ukrainian front on 31 January transferred to the attack on the Nikopol' bridgehead of the enemy and by 8 February had completely cleared the entire left bank of the Dnepr. On the same day, Nikopol' was liberated by the joint efforts of troops of the 3rd and 4th Ukrainian fronts. In battles for the city, the soldiers of the 203rd, 333rd, 266th rifle divisions and the 5th detached motorized rifle brigade distinguished themselves. Subdivisions of the motorized rifle brigade, operating within the 3rd guards army, forced the Dnepr and were among the first to burst into Nikopol'. The population met its liberators very warmly. Soldiers of this brigade--Private A. Ye. Mikhaylichenko, Sergeants N. M. Martynov, A. I. Svechkarev, K. N. Khokhlov, and battalion commander Major G. M. Nadezhkin--were awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union for the courage and bravery they displayed. From Apostolovo,

* Quoted in Soobshcheniya Sovetskogo Informbyuro [Reports of the Soviet Information Bureau], Book 6, January - June 1944, Moscow, published by Soviet Information Bureau, 1944, pp. 249-250.

the 3rd Ukrainian front continued the attack to the west and southeast. The 46th army advanced to the west, toward the Ingul'ets River, while formations of the right flank of the 8th guards army and the 4th guards mechanized corps advanced southeastward, toward the Dnepr, with the goal of cutting off the path of retreat of five German divisions which were operating in the region of Nikopol'. Trying not to allow its Nikopol' grouping to be encircled, the German command concentrated nine infantry and two tank divisions against the 8th guards army. On 10 February the enemy struck a strong counterblow in the direction of Apostolovo. Our 8th guards army was extended on a broad front at this time. A significant part of the artillery lagged behind and there was not enough ammunition. The spring floods slowed the maneuver of units and formations, the advance of the artillery, and the supply of ammunition. Nevertheless, the Soviet troops succeeded in repulsing the enemy counterattack. But they could not develop an offensive. As a result, the Nikopol' grouping, having avoided the impending threat of encirclement, retreated to the west. But in the retreat, the enemy suffered huge losses of men and especially of technical equipment. According to the testimony of Tippelskirch, the rout of the German-Fascist troops in the region of Nikopol' was "a serious defeat, not much smaller in dimension than the catastrophe to the 8th army* (near Korsun'-Shevchenkov--Ed.).

After the victory over the Nikopol' grouping of the enemy, the troops of the 3rd Ukrainian front over the course of several days pulled up artillery, tanks, and brought up ammunition. On 17 February they renewed the offensive, with the goal of routing the Krivoy Rog enemy grouping. The blow was struck at Krivoy Rog from two sides: from the northeast by the forces of the 37th army, and from the southeast by the forces of the 46th army. Overcoming stubborn enemy resistance,

* K. Tippel'skirch, Istoriya vtoroy mirovoy voyny [History of the Second World War], p. 355.

the Soviet soldiers advanced step by step through the swampy mud. The battles at the approaches to Krivoy Rog had an exceptionally fierce character. On 22 February the city was liberated. In the capture of Krivoy Rog, the 20th, 48th, and 92nd guards rifle divisions, the 462nd mortar, the 28th detached guards tank, the 371st night bomber regiments, and other formations and units distinguished themselves. Many of them were awarded the honored title "Krivoy Rog." In subsequent days, our troops broke out on the Ingul'ets River and joined battles for the bridgehead.

The troops of the 5th shock army of the 4th Ukrainian front forced the Dnepr in the region of Bol'shaya Lepetikha, and then struck in a southwesterly direction. By 29 February they broke out onto the Blakitnoye-Kachkarovka line.

In intense battles, which lasted throughout February, the troops of the 3rd and 4th Ukrainian fronts routed the Nikopol'-Krivoy Rog enemy grouping, inflicting serious defeat on the 6th German army. The operatively important enemy bridgehead on the left bank of the Dnepr, south of Nikopol', was liquidated. The 4th Ukrainian front could now advance to the preparation for the operation for the liberation of the Crimea, without fearing an attack in the rear. The emergence on the line of the Ingul'ets River created favorable conditions for our troops for the development of the further advance in the direction of Nikolayev-Odessa.

* * *

In the course of the January-February offensive, four Ikrainian fronts routed large enemy groupings near Zhitomir and Berdichev, Kirovograd and Korsun'-Shevchenkovskiy, Rovno and Lutsk, Nikopol' and Krivoy Rog, and ten divisions and one brigade of the enemy were completely destroyed. In two months the Soviet troops had completed the liberation of Kiev, Dnepropetrovsk, and Zaporozh'ye Oblasts, had cleared

the enemy from all of Zhitomir, almost all of Rovensk and Kirovograd Oblasts, and also from several rayons of Vinnitsa, Nikolayev, Kamenets-Podol'sk, and Volynsk Oblasts.

Retreating under attacks by the Red Army, the Hitlerites set fire to cities and villages. On the day our troops entered Belaya Tserkov', its outskirts were burning. In one of the houses the occupiers burned 60 inhabitants before they retreated. In the center of Krivoy Rog all the best buildings were burned, at the G. K. Ordzhonikidze Mine the shafts were flooded, the shaft was blown up, and the Cowper stove was thrown over. The miners' settlement was disfigured by fires. The blast-furnace shop of the metallurgical factory was a formless heap of ruins. The socialist town of the factory was enveloped in flames. The rayon electric station and substation lay in ruins. Twisted structures, steel framework, stones, broken glass, and smoking logs were piled up everywhere. With the arrival of the Red Army, life began to be restored where it seemed that everything had been destroyed. The inhabitants of the cities and villages came out of the cellars, basements, and dugouts, returned from deep in the rear of the country, often following directly after the invading Soviet units, and eagerly set to work. The population of the liberated cities actively participated in extinguishing fires, cleaning the streets, repairing the roads, organizing public feeding, arranging the work of baths and laundries, in reestablishing factories and cultural-educational institutions. The railroad workers returned from the Urals to Smela Station after the advance troop units, and started reconstruction work. The toilers of Krivoy Rog set in order the premises of factories. The people of Zhitomir on 20 January 1944 reported to the country that the electric power plant was switched on, that the grain factory and two grain-mills had begun to function, that ten schools, a dramatic theater, and three movie theaters renewed operation. The liberated

cities and villages of Right-Bank Ukraine joined the general struggle of the Soviet people for the complete rout of the enemy from the borders of our Motherland, for final victory.

3. The March-April offensive. The entrance of the Soviet forces into the northeastern regions of Rumania. /74

The military-political situation in the Ukraine before the start of the March-April offensive was disclosed in the report of the First Secretary of the CC CP(b) Ukr., Chairman of the Ukrainian SSR Council of People's Commissars N. S. Khrushchev, given at the VIth session of the Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian SSR, which opened March 1, 1944 in Kiev. N. S. Khrushchev

spoke of the great contribution of the Ukrainian people in the common matter of the struggle against fascist Germany. Shoulder to shoulder with soldiers of all nationalities of our boundless Motherland, millions of sons and daughters of the Soviet Ukraine fought in the ranks of the Red Army. For outstanding combat service and deeds, by spring of 1944 299,000 Ukrainian soldiers had been conferred government awards.* 544 Ukrainians received the title of Hero of the Soviet Union, including A. I. Molodchiy, T. M. Shashlo, B. B. Glinka, D. B. Glinka and P. F. Khar'kovskiy. Partisans displayed mass heroism in the struggle with the fascist invaders in the occupied lands of the Ukraine. By March 1, 1944 over 10,000 partisan men and women had been decorated for courage and heroism. V. N. Druzhinin, M. I. Naumov, S. V. Rudnyev, A. N. Saburov and other renowned commanders and commissars, as well as rank and file partisan men and women, received the title of Hero of the Soviet Union. The outstanding commanders and organizers of the partisan movement S. A. Kovpak and A. F. Fyodorov were awarded this honorary title twice. Conscription into the Red Army in the liberated regions of the Ukraine was successful and well-organized. Tens of thousands of Soviet citizens, expressing the intense love of the Ukrainian people for the Motherland, joined the army voluntarily, not awaiting the conscription announcement, in order to fight with a weapon in their hands for total victory over fascist Germany. /75

In the deep rear of our country - in the Urals, in Kazakhstan, Irkutsk, Ufa and other republics, districts, and cities - operated evacuated Ukrainian plants, factories, sovkhozes, scientific, and cultural and educational establishments. Since 1943 the state economy in the liberated regions of the Ukraine had begun to be reborn. In the Donbass by spring of 1944, 17 main and 460 small coal mines had been restored and constructed, which had

* See N. S. Khrushchev. "The Liberation of the Ukrainian Lands from the German Invaders and the Immediate Tasks to Restore the State Economy of the Soviet Ukraine." Report of the Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of the Ukrainian SSR, March 1, 1944 in Kiev. Moscow, Gospolitizdat, 1944, p. 11.

already given the country an average of 31,000 tons of coal per day. Reconstruction had begun on metallurgical enterprises, electrical stations, railroads, residential houses, and the communal economy of the cities. In February 1944 work was renewed on 570 automobile-tractor stations, 20 capital repairs workshops, and 6 motor repair plants.* In cities and towns, schools, theaters, cinemas, clubs and libraries were being restored.

The Communist Party and the government of the Soviet Union rendered daily assistance to the reborn Ukraine. The Xth session of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR approved the Union budget according to which 3,640,000,000 rubles were released for restoration work in the Left Bank Ukraine alone. For restoration of only the main branches of industry in the Ukrainian SSR, the Soviet government designated up to 4,500 units of industrial machines and special equipment, approximately 6,000 automobiles, 30,000 tons of metal, pipes, beams, 450,000 cubic meters of lumber, 15,000 tons of cement, and 300,000 square meters of glass.** Large quantities of tractors, cattle, fowl, and seed were designated for agriculture. The workers of many regions of the country sent to the Soviet Ukraine equipment, various materials, cattle and seed. The liberated cities and villages of the Ukraine were immediately surrounded by the warm concern of the Motherland.

The rapid rebirth of the economy and culture of the republic became possible thanks to the enormous patriotic upsurge of the masses of people of the liberated regions. The Soviet people, rid of fascist slavery by the Red Army, put all of their energy and ability into the work, sparing neither strength nor means for the final victory over the enemy. In the Donbass among the coal-hewers, cutters, loaders, and workers of other professions socialist competition developed. Kolkhoz workers, who in short periods provided the state with several tens of millions of poods of grain and other products, made a great contribution to the matter of victory over the fascist invaders. The patriotism of the Ukrainian people also found

---

* See N. S. Khrushchev. "The Liberation of the Ukrainian Lands from the German Invaders and the Immediate Tasks to Restore the State Economy of the Soviet Ukraine," pp. 26, 32.

** Ibid, pp. 31, 53.

expression in the widely developing collection of resources for the country's defense fund. In a negligible interval of time half a billion rubles were deposited.

In the spring of 1944 the insidious plans of the Ukrainian nationalists and their armed bands were utterly dispelled. The Ukrainian-German nationalists, as N. S. Khrushchev called them in his report, were brought to the Ukraine by the occupiers in the train of their army. The German fascists hoped with their help to tear the Ukraine away from the Soviet Union and transform it to their obedient domain, to their colony. But the Ukrainian-German nationalists soon became convinced that between them and the working masses of the Ukraine lay an impassable chasm. The Hitlerite lackeys encountered the hostile attitude, the burning hatred of the local population. They then took recourse to maneuver: they declared themselves opponents of the occupiers and formed armed bands, ostensibly to fight against them. In /76
fact, however, they conducted a struggle against the Soviet partisans and destroyed the Polish population. The nationalist leaders established direct contact with the German command group and with the commanders of German fascist units.* All of this exposed the nationalists as direct Hitlerite agents.

Such was the political situation in the Ukraine in the spring of 1944. The population of the liberated regions greeted the Red Army with enthusiasm and did all it could to support its advance and hasten the day of the complete liberation of the republic.

By the beginning of March the Soviet forces, having expelled the enemy from a considerable territory of the Right Bank Ukraine and thrown him back from the Dnepr, occupied an advantagoue position for a further advance.

The enemy, having suffered a major defeat, no longer thought of restoring the defense along the Dnepr; he attempted to hold the regions of the

* See. N. S. Khrushchev. "The Liberation of the Ukrainian Lands from the German Invaders and the Immediate Tasks to Restore the State Economy of the Soviet Ukraine," pp. 15-19.

Right Bank Ukraine still remaining in his hands. The grouping of German fascist troops, which had been weakened in the preceding battles, was still strong. By March army groups "South" (4th, 1st Panzer and 8th Armies) and "A" (6th German and 3rd Rumanian Armies) numbered 83 divisions in all, including 18 Panzer and 4 motorized divisions and 1 brigade.*

The Soviet Supreme High Command decided to develop a broad offensive in March with the forces of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts with the goal of completing the liberation of the Right Bank Ukraine. For this Headquarters effected a large regrouping of the forces of the fronts, establishing new boundary lines between them. The 4th Tank Army was transferred to the composition of the 1st Ukrainian front from Headquarters Reserves. The liberation of Rovno and Lutsk had opened up the possibility of developing an advance on Kovel' on the right wing of the 1st Ukrainian front, and further on Brest and Lublin. In this direction it was decided to form a new front, the 2nd Belorussian.**

The main idea of the coming advance was to break the enemy forces up into parts with powerful blows on a huge front from Poles'ye to the mouth of the Dnepr, and to destroy them separately. The 2nd Belorussian front was to strike a blow on Kovel'-Brest and the 1st Ukrainian front from the region of Shepetovka on Chertkov - Chernovitsy, cutting off the lines of retreat of army group "South" in the area north of the Dnestr. The 2nd Ukrainian front was to strike a blow from the area of Zvenigorodka on Uman' - Iasi and the 3rd Ukrainian front from the area south of Krivoy Rog on Nikolayev - Odessa. The 4th Ukrainian front was not drawn upon for the further operations in the Right Bank Ukraine: it began thorough preparations for an offensive in the Crimea.

---

* Collected materials on the composition of the forces of fascist Germany, 4th Ed., pp. 48-52. The divisions of the 17th Army located in the Crimea are not counted here.

** On the basis of Headquarters' directive of February 17, 1944, the 2nd Belorussian front was formed in the boundary of the 1st Belorussian and 1st Ukrainian fronts in the Kovel' direction on February 24, 1944. It included the 61st Army and 77th rifle corps from the adjacent fronts, and the 47th, 70th and 6th Airborne Armies from Headquarters Reserves.

In accordance with this concept the fronts received instructions on preparations for offensive operations. On February 18 objectives were assigned to the 1st and 2nd Ukrainian fronts, on February 28 to the 3rd Ukrainian, and on March 4 to the 2nd Belorussian.

Preparations for the offensive demanded large and complex interfront regroupings to concentrate the troops in the directions of the main strikes. In spite of unfavorable weather and bad roads, the regroupings were, on the /77 whole, completed in the assigned periods. Measures were taken to replenish the troops as quickly as possible with personnel, equipment, ammunition, fuel and provisions. However, the delivery of material and technical resources was made difficult by the poor state of the roads. For this reason in some formations it was not possible to create the necessary supplies of material resources, and it was necessary to supply them in the course of the operation.

The most important task of the commanders, political organizers, party and Komsomol organizations was consolidation and dispersal among the troops of the experience of previous battles, and elucidation to the soldiers of their new combat objectives. The personnel were inspired by the great goal, which after two and a half years of war had become close and real - to break through to the national border, to throw the fascist invaders beyond the boundaries of the Soviet Union. On February 23 meetings were held in the units, devoted to the 26th Anniversary of the Red Army. As before, the political organs devoted great attention to growth in the Party organizations and their strengthening. In February 1944 in the 1st Ukrainian front 13,546 persons were accepted into the ranks of the AUCP(b), and by March 1 there were 181,603 Communists on the rolls of the Party organizations.* At the same time in the 2nd Ukrainian front 12,888 persons joined the Party and there were 159,441 Communists in all;** the Party organizations of the 3rd Ukrainian front accepted 8,944 persons into their ranks and had 131,641

---

* Archive of MD USSR, col. 236, inv. 2675, div. 244, pp. 6-7.

** Ibid, col. 240, inv. 352060, div. 2, pp. 1-2.

Communists in all.* Given such numbers of Party members the political organs could cover all sections, combat details and crews with the Party's influence.

During the advance the troops were to force the large Southern Bug and Dnestr Rivers, as well as a large number of small rivers. Therefore the command group and political organs devoted particular attention to supporting operations during the crossings of rivers. In the subunits the actions of the participants in the forcing of the Dnepr were practiced, and leaflets and booklets were printed in which methods of overcoming rivers on the move were related clearly and intelligibly. Advance detachments were formed which were assigned the objective of forcing the river first. Water crossing equipment was brought up. Great significance was attached to timely preparation and capable use of means at hand.

In the first days of March the Soviet forces operating in the Right Bank Ukraine went over almost simultaneously to the offensive. The powerful blow unleashed on the enemy shook his defenses. To this day the history of war has not known an example of a vaster offensive with the participation of such a huge quantity of forces and fighting equipment under very difficult spring road conditions.

Before the 1st Ukrainian front in a sector from Lutsk to the inhabited area of Il'intsa the forces of the enemy's 4th and 1st Panzer Armies were on the defensive, consisting of 26 divisions including 9 Panzer and 1 motorized division, and 1 brigade.**

In accordance with the directive of Headquarters of February 18 and the general idea of the advance, the commander of the 1st Ukrainian front planned to strike his main blow from the line of Shumskoye - Shepetovka - Lyubar, in the general direction of Chertkov. To complete this task he drew on the forces of the 60th Army, the 1st Guards Army under the command of Col.-Gen. A. A. Grechko, the 4th Tank Army commanded by Lt. Gen. of tank

---

* Archive of MD USSR, col. 243, inv. 32277, div. 2, pp. 1-2.

**German captured OKH map for March 5, 1944.

forces V. N. Badanov, and after March 13 by Lt. Gen. D. D. Lelyushenko, and the 3rd Guards Tank Army under the command of Col.-Gen. of tank forces. P. S. Rybalko. The 13th Army was to rout the opposing enemy with a blow from the region of Mlinov on Brody and seize the line of Berestechko - Brody. The 18th Army under the command of Lt. Gen. E. P. Zhuravlyov was assigned the task of striking a blow on Khmel'nik. The 38th Army - commander Col.-Gen. K. S. Moskalenko - was to conduct a special operation with the goal of assisting the troops of the 2nd Ukrainian front to defeat the enemy in the area of Gaysin. The 1st Tank Army, commanded by Lt. Gen. M. E. Katukov, remained in the area of Pogrebishchenskiy in the front's reserve.* Support /78 of the troops from the air was entrusted to the 2nd Airborne Army.

In preparing the operations the Soviet troops bore a heavy loss. On February 29 while riding out to the forces to organize the operation, the commander of the 1st Ukrainian front, Gen. N. F. Vatutin, was mortally wounded. The automobile in which N. F. Vatutin and the persons accompanying him were riding was attacked villainously and underhandedly by fire by Ukrainian-German nationalists. On April 15, 1944 N. F. Vatutin died. "In the person of Comrade Vatutin," it was said in the message of the CC AU CP(b), SNC and People's Commissariat of Defense, "the state has lost one of the most talented young generals who have come to the forefront during the Patriotic War." **

On March 1, Marshal of the Soviet Union G. K. Zhukov took command of the front. He left the assignments to the troops of the front unchanged, except the assignment of the 13th Army, which was ordered to defend the occupied line with its main forces and with its left flank division in cooperation with the 60th Army to advance to the southwest.

On the morning of March 4 the troops of the front went over to the offensive. The Proskurov - Chernovitsy operation had begun. The formations of the 60th and 1st Guards Army with artillery and air support attacked the

---

* Archive of MD USSR, col. 236, inv. 2673, div. 985, pp. 104-115.
** "Pravda," April 15, 1944.

enemy's positions. On the first day in the zone of the 60th Army the main forces of the 3rd Guards and 4th Tank Armies, which had in their composition only 475 tanks and 47 assault guns, were brought into the battle. On March 5 the 18th Army began the advance, and on March 11 the 38th Army.

From March 7 through 11 the troops of the shock grouping of the front seized the area of Volochisk - Chernyy Ostrov and cut off the main L'vov - Odessa railroad, progressing 100 kilometers.* The enemy, attaching great significance to holding this railroad as well as the cities of Tarnopol' and Proskurov, offered stubborn resistance to the further progress of our forces to the south. At the end of February the enemy, having discovered the preparations of the 1st Ukrainian front for the advance, had already begun to transfer five Panzer divisions from the area of Uman' to the sector. Between Tarnopol' and Proskurov up to ten Panzer and six infantry divisions were concentrated, which undertook a number of strong counterstrikes. In the course of fierce battles the Soviet forces not only held the railroad, but pushed the enemy toward the south. However, he was nonetheless able to hold back the further advance of the shock group of the 1st Ukrainian front.**

In connection with this it was required that the decision be further clarified and additional measures be taken to concentrate forces in the direction of the main blow. Specifically, on instructions from Headquarters the shock group of the front was strengthened with the 1st Tank Army, which had been transferred from the area of Pogrebishchenskiy to the area of Volochisk. The army had a considerable shortage of tanks. The assignments to the armies of the shock grouping were clarified. The 13th Army also received an active assignment: it was ordered to seize the line of Berestechko - Brody - Zalozhtsy. On March 15 the 13th Army went over to the offensive. On March 17 it seized Dubno and on March 20 broke through to the approaches to Brody.

The advance of the shock grouping of the front was renewed on March 21. In the zone of the 60th Army on that day the 1st and 4th Tank Armies were

---

* Archive of MD USSR, col. 236, inv. 2673, div. 994, p. 21.

** Ibid, inv. 13315, div. 110, pp. 26-54.

brought into the battle. Not the spring floods, not the deep gorges and ravines filled with water, not the enormous stress on the people who had known no rest - nothing could stop the Soviet troops driving southward. The 1st Tank Army operated particularly successfully. Its 20th Guards mechanized brigade, which was commanded by Col. A. Kh. Babadzhanyan, on March 24 had already broken through to the Dnestr in the region of the inhabited area of Zaleshchiki. Forcing the river on the move, the troops of the 1st Tank Army rushed to the south. On March 28 the units of the 1st Guards tank brigade struck a rapid blow and seized the city of Kolomyya. /79 The 64th Guards tank brigade under the command of Lt. Col. I. N. Boyko engaged in battle for Chernovitsy. The enemy was able to blow up the bridge across the Prut River. But this did not stop our units. The 64th Guards tank brigade, the arriving units of the 45th Guards tank brigade and the 24th rifle division, with the support of the 227th assault aircraft division, forded the Prut, and on March 29 liberated a Ukrainian regional center, the city of Chernovitsy. The formations and units that had distinguished themselves in the battles received the name "Chernovitsy". The 64th Guards tank brigade, furthermore, was awarded the Order of Lenin, and its commander, Lt. Col. Boyko, received his second "Gold Star" medal, becoming a two-time Hero of the Soviet Union.* The 4th Tank Army also moved rapidly forward and on March 26 occupied Kamenets -Podol'skiy.

With a strong blow the troops of the 1st Ukrainian front split the German fascist army group "South": its 4th Tank Army was thrown back to the west, and the left flank formation of the 1st Tank Army to the east. From the north and east the enemy's 1st Tank Army was pressed by the troops of the left wing and center of the 1st Ukrainian front. The lines of retreat of the 1st Tank Army to the south were also threatened, because the right flank 40th Army of the adjacent 2nd Ukrainian front broke through by the end of March to the approaches to Khotin.

Thus by March 28 the enemy's 1st Tank Army, consisting of ten infantry, nine Panzer, one motorized, and one artillery division, and several Panzer,

---

* Archive of MD USSR, col. 299, inv. 37805, div. 4, p. 251; inv. 20541, div. 3, pp. 27-30; col. 236, inv. 213658, div. 4, p. 582.

artillery and engineer units, was developed in the area north of Kamenyets-Podol'skiy by the troops of the 3rd Guards and 4th Tank, 1st Guards, 18th, 38th and 40th combined-arms Armies. However, the ring of our forces around the enemy grouping was not solid or sufficiently strong. Between the right flank of the 1st Guards Army and the left flank of the 4th Tank Army a breach of up to 15 kilometers existed. The 4th Tank Army, forming the southwestern part of the ring of encirclement, numbered only approximately 60 tanks.* The 30th rifle corps (two divisions), which had been transferred to it from the 1st Guards Army, did not have an adequate quantity of artillery. The 4th Tank Army and 30th rifle corps were experiencing a shortage of ammunition and fuel, which were only dropped by air. The external perimeter of encirclement was also weak, especially in the zone of the 18th Guards rifle corps, which in a composition of 2 divisions had moved out by March 30 to the line of Podgaytsy - Mar'yampol' which was up to 35 kilometers in length. In connection with the poor spring road conditions our air force had not had time to redeploy to new airfields, and therefore could not carry out effective military operations in the area of encirclement.

The commander of the 1st Ukrainian front had not taken timely, decisive measures to strengthen the grouping of our forces on the outer front in the zone of the 18th Guards rifle corps and on the inner front in the zone of the 4th Tank Army. It was not possible to blockade the enemy from the air, reconnaissance of the enemy was weak, and administrative points had fallen behind the troops. Exploiting all of this, the 1st German Panzer Army concentrated a large grouping consisting of seven Panzer and three infantry divisions. At the end of March it struck a heavy blow in the direction of Lyantskorun' - Chertkov and on April 7 broke through to the area of Buchach, losing a large number of people and almost all of its heavy armaments and fighting equipment in the process.

Somewhat earlier, on April 4, the enemy struck a blow in the area of the city of Podgaytsy with one Panzer and two infantry divisions, which had

---

* Archive of MD USSR, col. 324, inv. 4756, div. 37, p. 39.

been transferred from France and Yugoslavia, in the zone of the 18th Guards rifle corps, forcing it to retreat to the south. On April 7 the Podgaytsy enemy grouping joined in the area of Buchach with units of the 1st Panzer Army.* At the price of heavy losses the enemy troops broke out of the encirclement.

On the orders of Headquarters of the Supreme High Command, on April 17 /80 the 1st Ukrainian front went over to the defense on the line of Torchin - Berestechko - Zolozhtsy - Chertkov - Kolomyya - Kuty.** In the course of the advance from March 4 to April 17 the troops of the 1st Ukrainian front had progressed 80-350 kilometers, liberated a considerable part of the Right Bank Ukraine and its regional centers of Vinnitsa, Kamenyets-Podol'skiy, Tarnopol', and Chernovitsy, as well as over 700 large inhabited areas. The troops of the front had broken through to the foothills of the Carpathians, and jointly with the troops of the 2nd Ukrainian front had split the front of the German fascist forces into two parts. The enemy's southern grouping found itself isolated from the grouping located in the area of L'vov and was forced to use only roads running through Rumania and Hungary, i.e. south of the Carpathians. The 4th and 1st German Panzer Armies, comprising the nucleus of army group "South," had suffered heavy losses. In 20 divisions of these armies the losses were over 50 percent of the numerical strength of the entire personnel. Our troops seized many enemy armaments, a great deal of fighting equipment, and other military equipment.

While the 1st Ukrainian front was moving in the direction of Proskurov - Chernovitsy, its neighbor on the right, the 2nd Belorussian front, began its advance on March 17 in the Kovel' direction. The front was commanded by Col.-Gen. P. A. Kurochkin, Military Council member was Lt. Gen. F.E. Bokov, and Chief of Staff was Lt. Gen. V. Ya. Kolpakchi. In accordance with the decision of the commander of the front, the 47th, 70th and 6th Airborne Armies were drawn upon to carry out the operation. The 61st Army was given the assignment of supporting the right flank of the shock grouping, having seized the sector from the mouth of the Ptich' River to Stolin (map 1). The

---

* Archive of MD USSR, col. 292, inv. 37961, div. 0, p. 83; col. 236, inv. 41377, div. 10, p. 61.

** IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #9492, p. 176.

Soviet forces progressing 50-70 kilometers, threw the enemy back to Kovel', and surrounded the city's garrison. The German fascist command group, considering that the loss of Kovel' would threaten the south wing and rear of army group "Centre," brought up three Panzer and four infantry divisions there. In order to clear the blockade on the encircled forces fierce counterattacks were undertaken. At the price of great losses the enemy joined the garrison located in Kovel'. The troops of the 2nd Belorussian front consolidated in the eastern approaches to the city. Although they had not completely fulfilled the assigned objective, they had nonetheless forced the enemy through their military operations to transfer considerable forces to the Kovel' sector of the front and thereby promoted the further success of the Ukrainian fronts.*

Almost simultaneously with the Proskurov - Chernovitsy operation, the Uman' - Botosani operation of the 2nd Ukrainian front began. In its zone the 8th Army and part of the forces of the 6th German Army consisting of 20 divisions, including 4 Panzer and 2 motorized divisions, occupied the defense.** The strongest grouping of enemy forces was concentrated in the Uman' direction. Unlike the 1st Ukrainian front, which breached the enemy defenses in five sectors, the 2nd Ukrainian front struck a blow in two sectors. The main blow was struck with the forces of the 27th, 52nd, and 4th Guards combined-arms, 2nd, 5th Guards and 6th Tank Armies from the area of Zvenigorodka in the general direction of Uman'.*** The tank armies, having 415 tanks and 247 assault guns, were designated for development of the success of the combined-arms armies in the main direction. An auxiliary /81
blow by the forces of the 5th and 7th Guards Armies was planned in the general direction of Novoukrainka. Support of the ground forces was entrusted to the 5th Airborne Army.

---

*On April 4 the 2nd Belorussian front was abolished. Its troops entered the composition of the 1st Belorussian front and its administration was brought into the Headquarters Reserves and disbanded.

**Captured German OKH map for March 5, 1944.

***Archive of MD USSR, col. 240, inv. 16362, div. 23/4, pp. 4-6.

At dawn on March 5 several thousand guns and mortars began artillery preparation. The troops of the main shock grouping went over to the offensive unexpectedly for the enemy. The suddenness and overwhelming strength of the strike ensured a rapid break-in of the enemy defense. In order to liquidate the breach by the Soviet forces in the Uman' direction the enemy threw his reserves into the battle. Hundreds of tanks and thousands of guns on both sides took part in the battle, which ended in the victory of the Soviet forces.

Having suffered heavy losses, the enemy began to withdraw to Uman'. The Hitlerite command group issued an order to the troops - to hold the city at all costs, in order to win time and bring the broken divisions into order. But not threatening orders, not the hope of impassable roads, which hindered the advance of our forces, saved the enemy from defeat. On March 10 the troops of the tank armies burst into Uman' on the move, and on the same day seized the large railroad junction of Khristinovka.

The advance of the troops of the 5th and 7th Guards Armies from the area west of Kirovograd began on March 8. Having breached the enemy defenses, they moved forward in the general direction of Novoukrainka.*

In the path of the further advance of the troops of the 2nd Ukrainian front a major natural obstacle was the overflowing South Bug. The enemy placed great hopes in being able to entrench there and stop the Red Army. He attempted to withdraw as quickly as possible beyond the river in order to bring his divisions into order and organize a strong defense. The retreat was covered by rear guards, which offered stubborn resistance to our troops. But the enemy's calculations were not borne out. Destroying the enemy rear guards, on March 11 our forward detachments progressed over 30 kilometers and with a sudden, rapid blow seized the cities of Dzhulinka and Gayvoron located on the South Bug.

Along the right bank of the South Bug the enemy had created a system of defensive installations and obstacles which in combination with a natural

* Archive of MD USSR, col. 240, inv. 16362, div. 23/3, p. 35.

obstacle like the flooded river was a line difficult to overcome. The greatest courage and heroism of the Soviet forces were needed to breach the enemy defenses on the South Bug.

Giving the enemy no respite, our troops began to force the river on the move on a broad, 100-kilometer front, in boats provided by the local inhabitants, pontoons, and ferries. Attempting to prevent this, the German command group rapidly drew up infantry, tanks and assault guns to the water crossing sectors and threw them into counterattacks. However, our forward subunits, forcing the river, beat off all of the counterattacks by the Hitlerites and secured the crossing by their main forces. Reaching the right bank of the South Bug, the troops unleashed all of their might on the enemy and drove to the west and southwest.

On March 16 the units of the 2nd Tank Army burst into the city and large railroad junction of Vapnyarka, cutting off an extremely important enemy line of communication, the Zhmerinka - Odessa railroad.* Continuing the advance, on March 17-18 the troops of the 2nd Ukrainian front reached the Dnestr, and, forcing it, seized a large beachhead on the opposite bank in the area south of Mogilev-Podol'skiy. By the end of March the troops of the 40th Army broke through to the approaches to Khotin.

With the approach of the troops of the 2nd Ukrainian front to the border of Moldavia the partisans operating there intensified their strikes on the enemy, lending support to our units. The partisan detachment "Soviet Moldavia," for instance, conducted a battle for two days against superior enemy forces in the area northeast of Rybnitsa and thereby ensured the /82
crossing of the Dnestr by the 5th Guards air assault landing division. Other detachments of the avengers of the people also fought bravely.

With their overwhelming blow on the enemy and their breakthrough beyond the Dnestr, the troops of the 2nd Ukrainian front broke the front of the German army group "South" in this direction as well into two parts: the

* Archive of MD USSR, col. 240, inv. 16362, div. 23/3, p. 73.

right flank of the 1st German Panzer Army was thrown back to the northwest, and the left flank of the 8th German Army to the south.

March 26, 1944 became one of the portentous days of the Great Patriotic War: the troops of the 2nd Ukrainian front, developing the advance to the south and southwest, broke through on an 85-kilometer sector to the Prut River, the state boundary of the USSR. For 20 days the troops of the front, pounding the stubbornly defending enemy, giving him no respite either day or night, progressed forward. Finally, from hills covered with vineyards, the troops saw the silver ribbon of the broadly overflowing Prut. "There it is," "Pravda" wrote then, "... the long awaited, thrice-desired state boundary of our native land, violated thirty-three months ago by the enemy." *

The news of the breakthrough of the 2nd Ukrainian front to the national border flew through the whole Red Army and the whole country, and caused rightful joy and pride in the soldiers and the workers of the rear. The Communist Party and the Soviet government fittingly valued the deed of the troops of the 2nd Ukrainian front. Moscow ceremoniously saluted the valorous Soviet troops. Thousands of soldiers and officers received high government awards. Lance Corporal M. N. Baskov, Sr. Lt. G.I. Golikov, Sgt. V.I. Demchenko, Lt. V. A. Kosaryev and many other soldiers of the front were awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union. Squadron commander Hero of the Soviet Union N.D. Gulyayev received his second "Gold Star" medal for new combat deeds - shooting down 13 enemy aircraft.

Faced with the fact of the disintegration of the defenses in the Right Bank Ukraine and the threat of encirclement of the 6th and 8th German and the 3rd Rumanian Army, the enemy moved the fresh 4th Rumanian Army out to the area of Iasi, which with its main forces seized the most important mountain passes in the Carpathians and the line along the Paşkani line and north of Iaşi. At the same time the 6th German Army began to retreat hastily under the blows of the troops of the 3rd Ukrainian front, from the South Bug

* "Pravda," March 27, 1944.

to the Dnestr. With this six of its divisions were quickly transferred to the Kishinyev direction against the troops of the 2nd Ukrainian front.*

By the end of March and the middle of April the troops of the 2nd Ukrainian front reached the line of Râdâuți - Paşkani - Orgeyev - Dubossary and on the orders of the Supreme High Command went over to the defense on May 6.**

Thus, as a result of the powerful blow of the 2nd Ukrainian front, the grouping of German fascist troops in the Uman' - Iasi sector was routed, and its remnants thrown back beyond the Dnestr, to the Carpathian foothills. Progressing 200-400 kilometers, the troops of the front liberated hundreds of Soviet cities, thousands of towns and villages, forced three major water obstacles - the Southern Bug, the Dnestr, and the Prut - on the move, broke through to the national boundary of the USSR and moved military operations onto the territory of Rumania. Our forces seized the first 800 inhabited areas of Rumania, including the district cities of Botoşani, Dorohoi, Râdâuți, Suceava and Faltiçeni.

In connection with the breakthrough of the Red Army to the northeastern regions of Rumania, on April 2, 1944 the government of the USSR made the following announcement: "The Soviet Government brings notice that the advancing units of the Red Army, pursuing the German Army and Rumanian troops allied with it, have crossed the Prut River in several sectors and entered Rumanian territory. An order has been given by the Supreme High Command of the Red Army to the advancing Soviet units to pursue the enemy up until his defeat and capitulation."

"Furthermore, the Soviet government announces that it does not pursue /83 the goal of acquiring any part of Rumanian territory or changing the existing social order in Rumania, and that the entrance of the Soviet forces into the bounds of Rumania is dictated exclusively by military necessity and

---

* Captured German OKH map for March 21-30, 1944.

** IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #9492, p. 245.

the continuing resistance of the enemy forces."* This announcement had great political significance. It stated clearly that the Soviet government was proceeding from the necessity of resolving a fundamental task of the war - the final defeat of German fascism; that it was not pursuing any aggressive aims and was leaving to the liberated peoples the full right to decide their fate themselves.

The entrance of the Soviet forces into Rumania placed new tasks before the command group, political organizers and party organizations, which they had not previously encountered. It was necessary to establish correct relations with the population of the liberated regions of a country the government of which was still continuing the war against the USSR. Here in a territory approximately 10,000 square kilometers in size lived about 400,000 persons. At first a considerable number of the Rumanians met the Red Army with caution. Under the influence of anti-Soviet propaganda spreading every kind of fable about the Red Army, business owners, landholders, and upper officials evacuated from the cities and towns, but the main mass of the Rumanian population - the peasants and workers - remained in their places.

In these circumstances, the Military Council of the 2nd Ukrainian front was sent a proclamation by the State Defense Committee (SDC) of April 10, 1944, in which specific instructions were given on the line of behavior of our troops and the command group in Rumanian territory.** The SDC proposed that the Military Council issue the Rumanian population a declaration, and in it confirm the main position of the Soviet government's announcement of April 2 concerning the fact that the Red Army was entering Rumania not as a conqueror, but as a liberator of the Rumanian people from the German fascist yoke. The State Defense Committee placed on the Military Council of the front the obligation to carry out general control of the organization of civil administration and supervise its activity in the whole of the liberated territory of Rumania, placing personal responsibility for this on

---

* Foreign Policy of the Soviet Union during the Patriotic War. Documents and Materials. Vol. II. 1 January - 31 December 1944. Moscow, Gospolitizdat, 1946, p. 105.

** Archive of MD USSR, col. 243, inv. 63942, div. 31, pp. 209-211.

the Military Council member of the front, Lt. Gen. of tank forces I. Z. Susaykov. The SDC demanded that the Rumanian agencies of authority not be broken up nor the economic and political systems, and that the personal and property rights of the citizens and private societies be protected. The proclamation placed on the Soviet command group the obligation of observing the enactments of the Rumanian organs of authority, called for the introduction of Soviet military administration, and defined the nature of its activities.

On the basis of the SDC instructions the military councils of the front and armies, political organs and party organizations carried out broad educational work. Soon the workers of regions of Rumania occupied by Soviet troops were convinced that the Red Army was not at all as fascist propaganda had depicted it. The Soviet officers and soldiers related to the people, the local order and customs with loyalty. Normal relations were established between the Rumanian population and the troops of the Red Army.

Meanwhile, in the main part of the Rumanian territory occupied by the German forces, the situation of Antonescu's ruling clique was becoming hopeless. The government of Rumania made an inquiry of the Soviet Union on truce conditions. On April 12 our government sent an answer in which the following conditions were advanced: a break with the Germans and joint struggle by the Rumanian forces with the Red Army against Germany in the aims of restoring Rumania's independence and sovereignty; the restoration of the Soviet-Rumanian border according to the treaty of 1940; compensation of losses caused to the Soviet Union by military operations and Rumanian occupation; the return of all Soviet and allied prisoners of war and internees; and provision of the opportunity to freely move through the territory of Rumania in accordance with the requirements of the military situation for Soviet forces and other allied forces. Simultaneously the Soviet government declared its willingness to annul the decision of the Vienna "arbitration" on Transylvania and render assistance in the liberation of its occupied section.* Antonescu's clique repudiated the proposed truce conditions. But this could no longer change the situation. The days of the Rumanian fascist regime were numbered. /84

* See Foreign Policy of the Soviet Union during the Patriotic War, Vol. II, pp. 174-175.

In accordance with the plan of Headquarters of the Supreme High Command calling for a coordinated advance by three fronts in the Right Bank Ukraine, the troops of the 3rd Ukrainian front were to advance in the Nikolayev - Odessa direction. The 6th German and 3rd Rumanian Armies operating in the zone of this front, consisting of 34 divisions including 4 tank and 1 motorized division,* attempted at the end of February and the beginning of March not to allow our troops to force the Ingulets River. The difficulty in forcing was made more acute by the fact that in places the river had broken out of its banks. But the courage and heroism of the Soviet troops were boundless. With stubborn battles lasting several days they crossed the Ingulets and at the beginning of March had already seized several beachheads. An important beachhead was seized south of Krivoy Rog to the west of Shirokiy. From it the troops of the 3rd Ukrainian front also struck their main blow in the new Bereznegovato-Snigiryevskaya operation.

The front commander decided to strike the main blow in the general direction of Novyy Bug with the forces of the 46th and 8th Guards Armies, the mounted-mechanized group of Lt. Gen. I. A. Pliyev (4th Guards cavalry and 4th Guards mechanized corps) and the 23rd tank corps, split the front of the 6th German Army, and then, turning the mobile forces to the south, strike the rears of the enemy forces operating east of Nikolayev. The 57th, 37th, 6th, 5th shock and 28th Armies struck auxiliary blows, each in its own sector. The 17th Airborne Army was to support the ground forces.

At dawn on March 6 the troops of the front attacked the enemy after artillery and air preparation. In the evening the mounted-mechanized group was brought into the battle. Losing one position after another, bearing great losses of men and equipment, the enemy began to retreat. On March 8 formations of the mounted-mechanized group seized Novyy Bug, cutting off the Dolinskaya - Nikolayev railroad and breaking in the front of the 6th German Army. From the area of Novyy Bug the units of the mounted-mechanized

---

* Captured German OKH map for March 5, 1944.

group struck a blow to the south, advancing rapidly along the rear of the enemy forces operating in the area of Bereznegovatoye - Snigiryevka. Simultaneously the 6th, 5th Shock and 28th Armies of the front struck blows on the enemy from the east and southeast. Thirteen German fascist divisions occupying the defense in the area of Bereznegovatoye - Snigiryevka found themselves under the threat of encirclement. In order to accomplish the encirclement and split the enemy grouping it was necessary to rapidly move out the right flank formations of the 8th Guards Army in the southern direction. But a large part of the army's strength at that time had been drawn into heavy battles with the enemy in the area of Vladimirovka - Bashtanka. The forces of one mounted-mechanized group to create a solid inner perimeter of encirclement were found to be insufficient. As a result the troops of the 6th German Army operating in this region were able to break through in separate groups beyond the South Bug and in the direction of Nikolayev. However, in so doing they bore heavy losses of men and abandoned a considerable part of their equipment - weapons, tanks, and vehicles.

Meanwhile, the troops of the right wing of the 3rd Ukrainian front /85 advancing from the area northwest of Krivoy Rog breached the enemy's defense, seized the railroad junction station of Dolinskaya and the inhabited area of Bobrinets, and then broke through to the South Bug in the area of Voznesensk.*

Thus the 6th German Army, having suffered a serious defeat in February near Nikopol' and Krivoy Rog, received another strong blow in the first half of March 1944: eight of its divisions lost up to 50 percent of their personnel and a large quantity of fighting equipment and armaments.

Crushed between Ingul'ets and the South Bug, the enemy attempted to retreat beyond the South Bug and stop the further progress of the troops of the 3rd Ukrainian front. As in many cases before, the Soviet troops were again faced with the task of forcing a river on the move and seizing beachheads on its opposite shore. The call of the Military Council of the front

* Archive of MD USSR, col. 243, inv. 20370, div. 55, p. 127.

sounded as a war cry: "Forward, to the west bank of the South Bug!" The troops responded to this call with heroic deeds. In seven days, from March 18 through 24, in spite of the enemy's furious resistance and exceptional difficulties caused by the high water, our units forced the river in several places and seized beachheads.

On March 11, still during the advance from Ingul'ets to the South Bug, Headquarters of the Supreme High Command ordered the 3rd Ukrainian front to pursue the enemy, seize crossings on the South Bug, then seize Tiraspol' and Odessa and continue the advance with the goal of breaking through to the Prut and the Danube - the national border of the Soviet Union.* The front was to carry out the new operation, which entered the history of the war under the name of the Odessa operation, without a pause.

On the decision of the commander of the 3rd Ukrainian front it was planned for the first time to strike the main blow in the center of the front with the forces of the 46th and 8th Guards Armies, a mounted-mechanized group and the 23rd tank corps. On the night of March 27 the troops of the 57th, 37th, 46th and 8th Guards Armies began to force the South Bug with their main forces. Throughout March 27 the greatest success was achieved by the troops of the right wing of the front, the 57th Army commanded by Lt. Gen. N. A. Gagen and the 37th Army. In connection with this the commander of the front decided to move his main efforts to the zone of these armies.** Toward the morning of March 29, to develop the advance in the direction of Razdel'naya a mounted-mechanized group and the 23rd tank corps were transferred there. The 46th, 8th Guards and 6th Armies were to strike a flanking blow on Odessa, and the 5th Shock and 28th Armies along the coast of the Black Sea.

On the night of March 28 the troops of the right wing of the 3rd Ukrainian front, exploiting the seized beachheads on the west bank of the South Bug, went over to a decisive offensive. Having broken the enemy's resistance,

---

* IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #9492, p. 109.

**Archive of MD USSR, col. 345, inv. 9866, div. 3, pp. 176-177.

by the end of the following day the 57th and 37th Armies had expanded the breach to 45 kilometers on the front and from 4 to 25 kilometers in depth.* At this time the troops of the 5th Shock and 28th Armies in cooperation with a naval assault landing detachment crushed the enemy in fierce battles in the approaches to Nikolayev, and seized the city on March 28.

Among many examples of courage, fortitude, valor and heroism displayed by Soviet soldiers and officers during the battles, the feat of the assault landing group should be noted. On the night of March 26, 55 seamen from the 384th marine infantry battalion and 12 soldiers from one of the units of the 3rd Ukrainian front landed covertly in the port of Nikolayev. The assault landing, the commander of which was Sr. Lt. K. F. Ol'shanskiy and political unit second in command Capt. A. F. Golovlyev, had the assignment of facilitating the seizure of the city by Soviet troops with operations /86 in the enemy's rear.** Silently removing the enemy sentries, the members of the assault landing team seized the buildings of the new elevator and the port and adapted them for defense. In the morning a fierce battle ensued with the enemy, who was forced to draw up three battalions of infantry, weapons, mortars, and tanks. The Germans undertook 18 attacks and bore heavy losses in so doing but could not drive the detachment from the elevator. The assault landing team held the elevator until the arrival of the Soviet forces. They responded with fire to the Germans' demands that they surrender. In the difficult hours of battle the courageous soldiers broadcast a radiogram in which they announced: "We,soldiers, officers, and seamen of the detachment of Comrade Ol'shanskiy, swear before the Motherland that we will fulfill the task before us to the last drop of blood, not begrudging our lives." In the makeup of the assault landing fought soldiers of various nationalities - Russians M. V. Konovalov and P. P. Artemov, Ukrainians V.I. Kinenko and G. I. Kovtun, Belorussian A. S. Lyutyy, Tatar A. D. Abdulmedzhikov, Azerbaydzhani A. A. Mamedov, Kirgiz A. M. Khayrutdinov and sons of other peoples of the USSR. Of 67 persons only 12 remained alive;

---

* Archive of MD USSR, col. 243, inv. 20371, div. 55, p. 151.

** Archive of Naval IO , div. 32925, pp. 16-17.

the rest died the death of the brave. The Motherland highly valued the actions of the detachment: all 67 soldiers were awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union. One of the streets of Nikolayev was given the name of Sr. Lt. K. F. Ol'shanskiy. In honor of the heroic assault landing team a monument was erected in the city.

Under the blows of the 3rd Ukrainian front the flank formations of the 6th German Army rolled back to the west. Meanwhile the troops of the 2nd Ukrainian front, as has been shown, approached Iaşi. The prospect of deeply flanking the enemy far to the west could be seen. The 6th German Army was forced to begin a retreat along the entire front. On April 4 the 37th Army and mounted-mechanized group seized the station of Razdel'naya, splitting the enemy grouping into two parts. The German fascist troops, thrown back to the south from Razdel'naya, undertook an attempt on April 6 to break through to Tiraspol'. Fierce battles continued April 6 and 7. Major losses were inflicted on the enemy. However, a unit of Hitlerite troops was nonetheless able to break through the battle order of the formations of the 37th Army and retreat to Tiraspol'.

The troops of the center and left wing of the front approached even closer to Odessa, and on April 9 engaged in battle on its northern outskirts. The units of the mobile group of Gen. I. A. Pliyev struck a blow from the region of Razdel'naya to the south, seized Belyayevka on April 8 and broke through to Odessa from the west. To defend the city the enemy command group used the 72nd army corps consisting of 4 divisions and up to 25 special units, largely SS units. The defense of Odessa was aided by the strong fortifications in its northern and northwestern outskirts, and numerous estuaries, bays and gullies.

The Soviet troops, having broken through to the approaches to Odessa, prepared to liberate it. The political section of the 8th Army addressed the soldiers in a special declaration. "Comrade Guards!" it said. "We came to Odessa overcoming the fierce resistance of the enemy, poor roads, difficulties... And now we stand in the approaches to the city... We, comrade Guards, will return Odessa to the Soviet Motherland!.. We will perform our

military duty to the end, as it was performed by the valorous soldiers who defended Odessa in 1941; we will liberate Odessa from the fascist villains!" *

In the evening of April 9 after brief artillery preparation the Soviet troops began the storming of the city and, routing the resisting enemy, liberated Odessa on the morning of April 10. In the battles for the city the 248th, 416th, and 61st Guards rifle divisions, the 4th Guards cavalry corps, the 9th combined airborne corps, the 62nd engineer-sapper brigade, the 87th Guards mortar regiment, the 91st detached army communications regiment and many others distinguished themselves - 60 formations and units in all. Some of them were recommended for decoration with orders, others for the award of the honorary designations "Odessa" or "Guards." ** The military success of the soldiers of the 3rd Ukrainian front, like those of other /87 fronts, were observed by the Soviet government. In March alone over 13,000 soldiers were rewarded with orders and medals.***

In the difficult years of occupation Odessa had remained faithful to its heroic traditions. In the city and environs the partisan struggle had never ceased. At the beginning of 1944 the partisans, destroying the guard of the catacombs and clearing the mines from their entrances, had prevented an explosion that had threatened several blocks of the city with ruin. At the end of February a depot with ammunition and 60 barrels of gasoline in the area of Blizhniye Mel'nitsy was set on fire. On March 19 the avengers of the people derailed an enemy troop train, and on April 1 they caused two trains with troops and tanks to run into one another on the leg between Razdel'naya and Kuchurgan.**** Upon the approach of the Red Army to the outskirts of the city the partisans of the Odessa brigade under the command of S. I. Drozdov engaged in open battle with the Hitlerites on April 9, put 120 enemy soldiers

---

* Archive of MD USSR, col. 243, inv. 32283, div. 6, p. 198.

** Ibid, inv. 17963, div. 23, pp. 129-134.

*** Ibid, inv. 265679, div. 038, pp. 60, 173.

**** Party archives of the Inst. of Hist. of the Party of CC CP of the Ukraine, col. 1, inv. 1-9, div. 85, pp. 16-18.

and officers out of action and took 75 prisoners. 180 vehicles with arms, ammunition and provisions were also seized. The partisans and underground members of Odessa prevented the enemy from blowing up the dike of Khadzhibeyskiy estuary, which allowed our troops to approach the city from the Peresyp' direction. The partisans helped the Red Army units entering the city to clear the streets ofthe enemy,extinguish fires, and preserve socialist property. Ten thousand Soviet citizens were saved by them from being driven away to fascist forced labor.

Immediately after the liberation, restoration began in Odessa of plants and factories, port installations, residential houses, and cultural and educational establishments. On April 23 a meeting took place of the workers of the city. In a letter sent by the participants in the meeting to the Soviet government it was stated: "We consider it the duty of our citizens' honor to restore as soon as possible all that was destroyed by the Rumanian-German occupiers in Odessa, to renew all forms of our full-blooded Soviet social life... We firmly believe that our dear Odessa will soon again take its place in the most advanced ranks of blooming Soviet cities of the Ukraine."*

Continuing the advance, on April 12 the troops of the 3rd Ukrainian front seized Tiraspol', then forced the Dnestr on the move and seized beachheads on the opposite bank. As the result of the offensive operations, which lasted from March 5 to April 14, the troops of the 3rd Ukrainian front, jointly with the 2nd Ukrainian front, smashed the southern flank of the enemy grouping operating in the Right Bank Ukraine, and completely liberated the Nikolayev and Odessa regions and a considerable part of Soviet Moldavia.

In the course of the March-April offensive our troops cleared a huge territory of the Right Bank Ukraine. The rapid rate of the Red Army's

---

* Odessa in the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union. Collected documents and materials. Vol. III. 9.IV 1944 - 10.X 1945. Odesskoye oblastnoye izd-vo, 1951, p. 28.

advance and the opposition of the partisans and population did not permit the German fascist command group to completely fulfill its insidious plan - to level the remaining inhabited areas to the ground. Nevertheless, the Hitlerites inflicted enormous damage on the Ukrainian cities and towns. In Nikolayev they destroyed the electrical station, mill, meat packing plant and other enterprises, the buildings of the central blocks, schools, and clubs. In Odessa in five to six days before its liberation by the Red Army the fascists set about planned explosions and arson. Port installations, factories and plants, administrative buildings, and the best houses on Derebasovskaya and Pushkin Streets were transformed to a pile of ruins.

The advancing Soviet troops crossed through cities and towns over which hung the smoke of charred ruins, along streets filled with stones and broken metal. Everywhere the soldiers saw ruins. Partisans and Soviet and economic workers came to the cities and districts with the units. For example, the secretary of the obkom, I.M. Filippov, and other workers returned to Nikolayev with the Red Army. They traveled with the troops for many days, conducted propaganda work in the liberated regions, and were under enemy fire several times. The population of the city met them as close, kindred people.

The party, Soviet and economic workers did not have to try to convince the inhabitants of the liberated cities and towns to begin restoration work. The workers themselves went to local and Soviet organs for advice and instructions on what to do - restore enterprises or houses, build roads, bridges, or airfields. Workers and employees delivered machines and brought tools - everything it had been possible to hide from the occupiers - to plants, factories and scientific establishments. In the villages the kolkhoz workers dug out grain and potatoes that had been hidden from the enemy, in order to assist in supplying the army and the cities. With enormous enthusiasm the liberated Soviet people, under the leadership of party organs and organizations, the representatives of Soviet power, set about constructive labor.

Thus the vast offensive of the Soviet troops in the Right Bank Ukraine, which began at the end of December 1943, ended by the middle of April 1944 with the breakthrough of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts to the line

east of Kovel' - Torchin - Kolomyya - Rădăuți - Dubossary and to the Dnestr estuary. The Red Army had gained a very great victory in the Ukraine. Having fulfilled their assigned missions, on the order of Headquarters the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts went over to the defense, in order to bring their troops into order, pull up the rear services, restore communications and begin preparations for the summer offensive.

4. The liberation of the Crimea

Due to the features of its geographic location the Crimean peninsula was an exceptionally important strategic position in the Black Sea basin. Possessing the Crimea, the enemy held the Soviet forces operating in the southern Ukraine under the constant threat of an attack from the rear, and made the operations of our Black Sea fleet difficult. The decision of the German

fascist command group to defend the Crimea was also promoted by ideas of a political nature. The loss of the Crimea would mean a sharp loss of prestige for Germany in the countries of Southeastern Europe and in "neutral" Turkey, which served as important sources for obtaining oil and other strategic materials in acute deficit. Furthermore, the Crimea covered the Balkan strategic flank of the forces of Hitlerite Germany and its important naval communications, which ran along the Black Sea straits to the ports of the west coast of the Black Sea.

However, the defense of the Crimea was a difficult problem for the enemy from the very start. While army group "A" was able to hold a beachhead on the left bank of the Dnepr south of Nikopol', the German fascist command group still hoped to organize encounter attacks with the forces of the 17th Army, which was sealed off in the Crimea, and the Nikopol' grouping, and restore a ground link between them. However, in the course of time these hopes became ever shakier, and after the defeat of the German forces at Nikopol' and Krivoy Rog they collapsed altogether. The Red Army's breakthrough to the region of Odessa and to the Dnestr estuary placed the German fascist grouping in the Crimea in a still more difficult position. Its supplying was complicated and the morale of its soldiers and officers fell.

The enemy forces blockaded in the Crimea continued to entrench themselves and to construct new and improve old defensive positions. The nature of the terrain in the northern part of the Crimean peninsula in the area of /89
Kerch' promoted the formation of a powerful, deeply echeloned defense. The enemy devoted particular attention to reinforcing the defenses in the northern part of the Crimea. On the Perekop isthmus at a depth of up to 35 kilometers three strong defensive zones were constructed. Before the beachhead of our troops on the south bank of the Sivash the enemy, using the numerous defiles and heights between the lakes, constructed two to three defensive zones. Equipped with a thick network of trenches and communication trenches, they had a large number of blockhouses and pill-boxes and were covered by engineering obstacles. On the Kerch' peninsula at a depth of up to 70 kilometers four defensive zones were built.

The 17th Army blockaded in the Crimea was reinforced in January - March 1944 with two divisions, and by the beginning of April numbered five German and seven Rumanian divisions, as well as a large number of special units and subunits (engineers, guard, construction, etc.). The main forces of the army, five divisions, were positioned in the northern part of the Crimea, and on the Kerch' peninsula operated four divisions and an infantry regiment. Three Rumanian divisions guarded the coast of the Crimea.* The army had over 195,000 persons in all, approximately 3,600 guns and mortars, and over 200 tanks and assault guns. They were supported by 150 airplanes located in the Crimea and a part of the air force deployed at airfields in Rumania.

At the end of 1943 the Soviet troops had already made an attempt to seize the Crimean isthmus and break into the Crimea.** But it had not been crowned with success. Taking into consideration the difficulties connected with conducting an operation against the enemy entrenched in advantageous positions, the Soviet Supreme High Command resolved to prepare thoroughly for the offensive. The operation was first planned to begin in March 1944, but unfavorable weather in the Crimean region and heavy storms on the Sea of Azov did not allow them to conduct active military operations at the planned time. It was then decided to go over to the offensive after the breakthrough of the Red Army to the region of Odessa.*** With this it was taken into consideration that with the breakthrough of the Soviet forces to Odessa the position of the Crimean grouping would become still worse and the fortitude and morale of the fascist forces would drop sharply. Furthermore, clearing the Black Sea coast between the Crimea and Odessa of the enemy gave the Soviet fleet and air force the opportunity for broader actions on enemy communications.

To conduct the operation to liberate the Crimea, the 4th Ukrainian front consisting of the the 2nd Guards Army under the command of Lt. Gen. G. F. Zakharov, the 51st Army of Lt. Gen. Ya. G. Kreyzer, the 8th Airborne

---

* Captured German OKH map for April 7, 1944.

** IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #9491, p. 443.

*** Ibid., Inv. #9492, p. 122.

Army of Lt. Gen. of the Air Force T. T. Khryukin, and the 19th tank corps of Lt. Gen. I. D. Vasil'yev; and the Independent Maritime Army commanded by Gen. A. I. Yeremenko; the 4th Airborne Army of Col.-Gen. of the Air Force K. A. Vershinin; the Black Sea fleet under the command of Admiral F. S. Oktyabr'skiy; and the Azov military flotilla commanded by Rear Admiral S. G. Gorshkov, were drawn upon. The troops of the 4th Ukrainian front and the Independent Maritime Army consisted by the start of the operation of 30 rifle divisions, 2 fortified areas, and 2 brigades of naval infantry, their total numerical strength was approximately 470,000 soldiers and officers, and they had at their disposal 5,982 guns and mortars (without jet and 50 mm mortars), 772 organic anti-aircraft artillery guns, 559 tanks and assault guns. They were supported by 1,250 aircraft (including aircraft of the Black Sea fleet). Thus our troops exceeded the enemy in men 2.4-fold, in guns and mortars 1.7-fold, and and in tanks and assault guns 2.6-fold.

The ratio of forces on the sea was also in our favor. The main forces /91 of the Black Sea fleet were deployed at the ports of the Caucasian coast. The enemy fleet was based at the Crimean ports and also at Constanta, Sulina, Varna and Burgas.

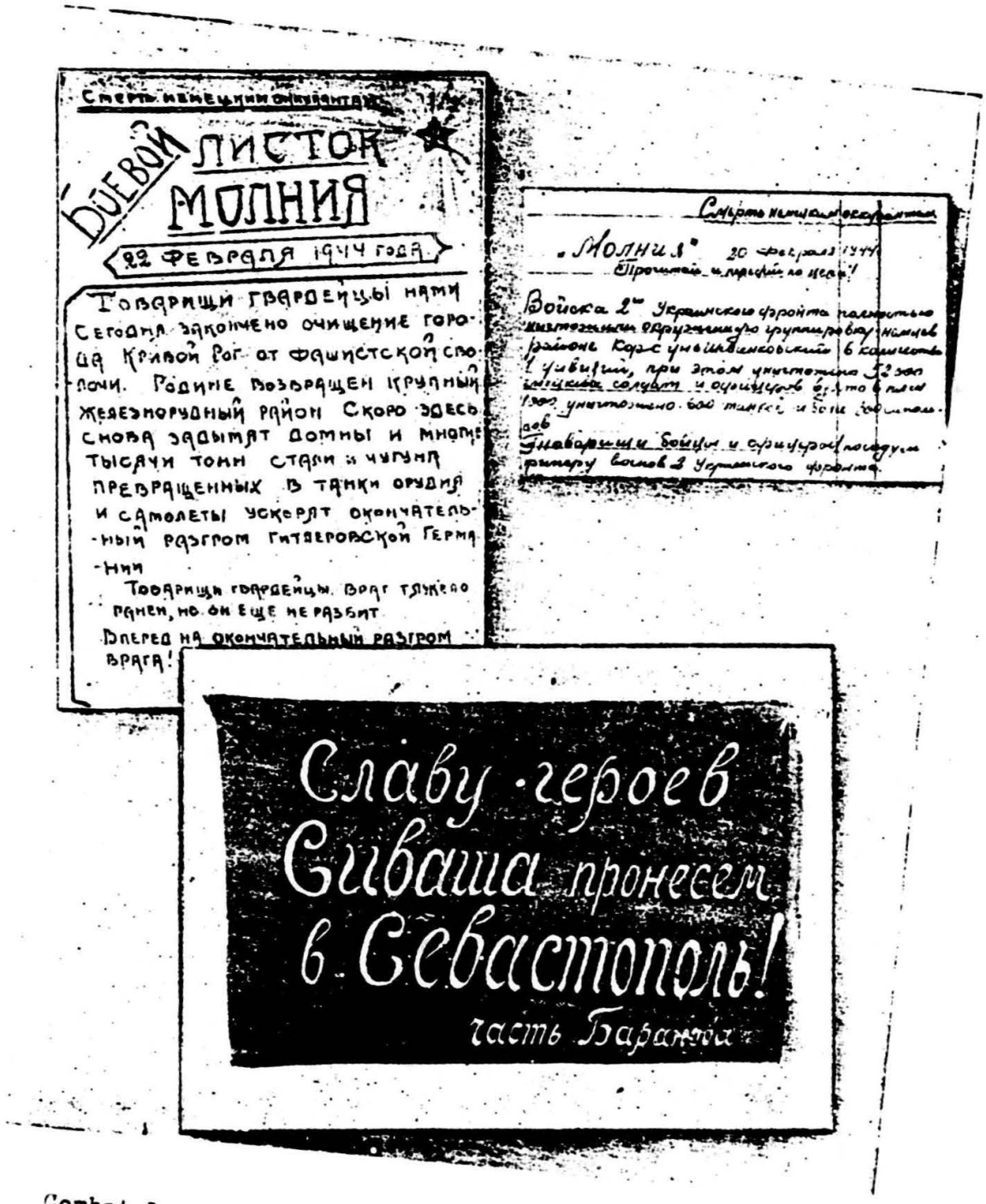
The plan of the operation was to split the enemy forces with simultaneous attacks from the north, from Perekop and the Sivash, and from the east, from the area of Kerch', in the general direction of Simferopol' - Sevastopol', and to prevent their evacuation from the Crimea, that is, to totally destroy the enemy grouping.

The 4th Ukrainian front struck its main blow from the beachhead on the south bank of the Sivash with the forces of the 51st and 19th tank corps in the direction of Simferopol' - Sevastopol', and an auxiliary blow on the Perekop isthmus with the forces of the 2nd Guards Army.* The Independent Maritime Army was to strike its main blow in the direction of Simferopol' - Sevast opol', and with a part of its forces along the south shore of the Crimean Peninsula.**

---

* Archive of MD USSR, col. 244, inv. 26735, div. 5, pp. 171-172.

** Ibid, col. 288, inv. 9921, div. 141, pp. 18-29.



Combat leaflets issued in the subunits during the battles in the Right Bank Ukraine and in the Crimea

/90

The Black Sea fleet was given the assignment of blockading the Crimea, striking blows on enemy communications, supporting the ground forces on the coastal flanks and being prepared to make tactical assault landings.* The forces of the fleet were distributed as follows: motor torpedo boats were to operate in the immediate approaches to Sevastopol'; submarines in cooperation with the air force were to destroy military ships, transports and other vessels on the communications lines in the northwestern and western parts of the Black Sea. The Azov military flotilla was given the assignment of supporting the Independent Maritime Army in its advance on the Kerch' peninsula and continuing the transfer of troops and goods across Kerch' strait.**

The partisans of the Crimea were ordered to attack the enemy's rear services, destroy their centers and lines of communication, prevent the orderly retreat of the enemy forces, disrupting separate sectors of the railroads and arranging barriers and ambushes on mountain roads, and also to prevent the Hitlerites from destroying cities and industrial enterprises. The southern partisan formation, furthermore, was given the assignment of disrupting the operations of the Yalta port.

During the days of preparation for the operation the enemy's defenses and the grouping of his forces were thoroughly studied with all types of reconnaissance. Along with ground observations and searches by reconnaissance groups, aerial photography of enemy positions was also carried out. Serious significance was attached to the military training of units and subunits and the perfection of their skills for the rapid breach of strongly fortified enemy defenses.

The command group and political administration of the front devoted particular attention to propaganda on the glorious traditions of the Red Army connected with battles for the Crimea. These traditions were begun with the defeat of the Wrangel forces and the liberation of the Crimea by

---

* IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #9492, pp. 168-169.

** See "Naval Operations in the Great Patriotic War." Moscow, Voyenizdat, 1956, p. 251.

Red Army in 1920. The heroic defense of Sevastopol' in 1941-1942, developing these traditions, inspired Soviet soldiers throughout the years of the war to feats in battles with the fascist invaders. The commanders and political workers familiarized the soldiers and officers with the experience of the Southern front under the command of M. V. Frunze in breaking through into the Crimea. The Soviet soldiers listened with great attention to the tales of participants in the legendary forcing of the Sivash and storming of Perekop. The heroic past of the Red Army was connected to the combat objectives now before the troops. The political organs and Party organizations took into consideration the particular feature of the impending encounters - the breach of strongly reinforced enemy positions. Communists and Komsomol members were distributed in accordance with the battle orders taken for the storming.

Upon receiving the combat order the commanders and political workers /92 in the few hours remaining before the start of the advance acquainted each soldier with his combat objective and gave assignments to the Communists and Komsomol members. Where circumstances permitted, Party and Komsomol assemblies and meetings of the personnel were held three to five hours before the start of the offensive.

The forces of the 2nd Guards and 51st Armies of the 4th Ukrainian front went over to the offensive on April 8. After powerful artillery and air preparation the infantry rose to the attack and in spite of furious enemy resistance drove a wedge into his defense. On the first day the 2nd Guards Army had already seized Armyansk, but its further progress was halted by the stubbornly resisting enemy. On that day the 51st Army, advancing from the beachhead south of the Sivash, broke through the enemy's main zone of defense on its left flank. This forced the German fascist command group to resolve to withdraw its forces on the night of April 9 from the Perekop isthmus to their Ishun' positions. The enemy, retreating from the region of Armyansk, planned to consolidate in the well-equipped Ishun' positions. However, the advance of the 51st Army formed a threat of encirclement to the enemy occupying the defense there. Therefore on April 10 the Hitlerites had already

begun to withdraw from the Ishun' positions. On the morning of April 11 the 19th tank corps was brought into the breach in the zone of the 51st Army, began to pursue the enemy forces, and on the same day liberated the important road junction of the city of Dzhankoy. For pursuit of the enemy mobile detachments were moved up in other sectors from the composition of the combined-arms formations.

The success achieved in the northern part of the Crimea created favorable conditions for the advance of the Soviet forces on the Kerch' peninsula. On the night of April 11 the Independent Maritime Army went over to the offensive, and on the morning of the same day Kerch' had already been liberated. The enemy occupying the defense on the Kerch' peninsula began to retreat hastily to the west.

On April 12 throughout the Crimea a relentless pursuit began of the German fascist forces retreating to Sevastopol'. On April 13 the enemy was driven out of Yevpatoriya and Simferopol', on April 14 from Bakhchisaray and Sudak, and on April 15 the mobile units of the 4th Ukrainian front broke through to the perimeter defense of Sevastopol'. In the battles for Simferopol' and Bakhchisaray the troops of the 19th tank corps under the command of Lt. Gen. I. D. Vasil'yev and the 63rd rifle corps under the command of Maj. Gen. P.K. Koshevoy operated capably and selflessly. At the same time the troops of the Independent Maritime Army rapidly progressed along the coastal highway, liberating the health resorts of the south coast of the Crimea. On April 16 they seized Yalta and approached Sevastopol' from the east.*

During the pursuit of the enemy the air force of the 8th and 4th Airborne Armies operated effectively. The Soviet bombers, fighters and ground attack aircraft struck massive blows on the retreating German fascist troops, the enemy's means of transportation, highway and railroad junctions, and also conducted constant reconnaissance, thereby promoting the rapid progress of the troops of the 4th Ukrainian front and the Independent Maritime Army.

---

* After the breakthrough of the Independent Maritime Army to Sevastopol' it was renamed the Maritime Army and included in the composition of the 4th Ukrainian front. On April 18 Lt. Gen. K.S. Mel'nik took command of it.

From the beginning of the operation the air force and ships of the Black Sea fleet intensified their operations, striking blows on the ships and transports of the enemy in ports and on communications connecting the Crimea with the ports of the western part of the Black Sea. On April 11 the bomber and ground assault planes of the Black Sea fleet attacked the enemy transports in Feodosiya and Yalta. On April 13, 80 ground assault planes accompanied by 42 fighters poured blows on the concentration of troops and transports in Sudak, sinking 5 mechanized landing craft with troops and damaging two. The attacks of the Black Sea pilots on the enemy ships in the open sea were no less effective. Motor torpedo boats also suddenly attacked the enemy; the /93 aggressiveness of their operations increased with redeployment to Yalta and Yevpatoriya.

The Crimean partisans fought bravely and valiantly. Performing the missions assigned to them, the partisan formations suddenly attacked the enemy, inflicting damage to manpower and equipment, preventing the destruction by the Hitlerites of industrial and communal installations, bridges, and residential houses.

On the roads leading from Simferopol' to Alushta and Karasubazar the Northern partisan formation operated. On April 13 the second brigade of this formation occupied the city of Karasubazar and held it until the approach of units of the Red Army. In the liberation of Simferopol' the 17th and 19th partisan detachments led by the commander of the 1st brigade F. I. Fedorenko cooperated with the troops. They occupied the telephone station, garages, supply depots, mills and other objects, preventing the enemy from demolishing them.

The military operations on the roads between Yalta and Sevastopol' were developed by the Southern formation. The 12th detachment of this formation seized the region of Massandra and prevented the destruction of the renowned Massandra wine cellars. The Eastern formation operated actively on the Simferopol' - Feodosiya and Feodosiya - Sudak highways. On April 11 the Komsomol youth detachment of this formation arranged an ambush and attacked a column of enemy artillery near the village of Izyumovka.

Seizing guns and taking the crews prisoner, the partisans opened fire on the city of Staryy Krym and forced the Hitlerites to flee in panic.* The underground members of Sevastopol' transmitted information by radio to the command group of the Black Sea fleet of the entrance to and exit from port of enemy vessels, assisting our air force and submarines in destroying them. In Yevpatoriya combat groups of underground members shot fascist arsonists attempting to set fire to buildings, and also assisted the troops of the 2nd Guards Army to liquidate the enemy garrison.

Having suffered a defeat and lost almost the entire Crimea, the enemy resolved to hold at least the Sevastopol' beachhead, where the remnants of the Crimean grouping had retreated. The enemy transferred approximately 6,000 soldiers and officers by air and sea to reinforce these troops. For the defense a powerful system of fortifications was used in the approaches to the city, consisting of three zones. The strongest center of resistance was the mountain of Sapun-gora, on which there were six layers of continuous trenches covered by anti-infantry and anti-tank minefields and barbed wire entanglements in several rows. Other powerful centers of resistance were Mekenziyevy Gory, Sakharnaya Golovka, and Inkerman.

Breaking through to the approaches of Sevastopol', our forces began to prepare to storm the city. It was decided to strike the main blow with the forces of the left flank of the 51st Army and the Maritime Army in the sector of Sapun-gora - Karan', to breach the enemy defense and break through to the main wharves of Sevastopol'** which the enemy could use for evacuation. An auxiliary blow was struck by the 2nd Guards Army from the east and northeast, but somewhat earlier, in order to distract the forces of the enemy from the direction of the main blow. With active operations of the air force and ships the Black Sea fleet was to foil the evacuation of the fascist troops.

The preparations for storming Sevastopol' involved a great range of important and complex questions. It was necessary to thoroughly reconnoiter

---

* See Ye. Shamko. "The Partisan Movement in the Crimea in 1941-1944." Simferopol', Krymizdat, 1959, pp. 147-148.

** Archives of MD USSR, col. 244, inv. 26735, div. 5, pp. 382-391.

the defensive installations and guns of the enemy, to well organize air and artillery preparation, and to capably construct the battle formations of infantry and tanks. During the period of preparations in all units assault groups were created, which were taught to conduct battles in the mountains and in the city. The assault groups had strong party and Komsomol organizations. The best Communist and Komsomol soldiers were entrusted with a honorable mission - to raise red flags at central heights near Sevastopol' /94 and on administrative buildings in the city itself.*

Six days before the beginning of the storming of Sevastopol' the long range bomber aircraft and the 8th Airborne Army conducted preliminary air preparation of the offensive. They dropped over 2,000 tons of bombs on the enemy's fortifications.**

On May 5 after artillery and aviation preparation the 2nd Guards Army went over to the offensive. In two days of battles the troops breached two, and in places three lines of trenches. Assuming that the main blow would be struck there, the enemy began to transfer infantry and artillery from the right flank of his defense to that sector.

The advance of the Soviet forces in the direction of the main blow began May 2 after one and a half hours of artillery and air preparation. In the first minutes heavy, bloody battles were joined. However, the enemy's furious resistance could not hold back the advancing surge of the troops of the 51st and Maritime Armies. By the end of the day the enemy had already been driven out of Sapun-gora.

The storming of Sapun-gora is one of the brilliant pages in the chronicle of the Great Patriotic War. From generation to generation the exciting tale will be passed of how heroically, with unwavering courage and steadfastness, the soldiers of the 63rd rifle corps commanded by Maj. Gen. P.K.

---

* Archive of MD USSR, col. 244, inv. 10118, div. 6, p. 628.

** Ibid, col. 346, inv. 5755, div. 172, pp. 3-7.

Koshevoy and the 11th Guards rifle corps commanded by Maj. Gen. S. Ye. Rozhdestvenskiy carried red flags to the crest of Sapun-gora. The flag bearers became casualties, but the red flags, passed from hand to hand under the hail of enemy fire, moved steadily forward, calling the soldiers storming the enemy fortifications to commit a great deed with them. In the battles for Sapun-gora Capt. N. V. Shilov, Sr. Lt. P. M. Kalinichenko, Lts. V.F. Zhukov and M. Ya. Dzigunskiy, Jr. Lt. V. F. Gromakov, Sgt. Maj. A. M. Fisenko, Sr. Sgt. F. N. Skoryatin, Lance Corporal V. I. Drobyazko, Pvts. S. P. Yevglevskiy, I. K. Yatsunenko, Dadash Babadzhanov, Ashot Markaryan and many other brave soldiers and officers of the 51st and Maritime Armies distinguished themselves.

On the same day the height of Sakharnaya Golovka, which covered the entrance to Inkerman valley, was taken. The troops of the 2nd Guards Army, having seized the small station of Mekenziyevy Gory after a four hour battle, moved to the Severnaya Bukhta.

On May 8 the troops of the 4th Ukrainian front broke through to the inner perimeter of Sevastopol. The following day they broke the enemy's defense there, crossed Severnaya Bukhta and burst into the city. With coordinated blows from the north, east and southeast our troops crushed the enemy, and on May 9 completely liberated the city of Russian, Soviet glory, Sevastopol', from the fascist invaders. The scattered remains of the enemy forces ran to Khersones Cape, where they were soon liquidated.

The Crimean offensive operation ended on May 12 with the victory of the Red Army. The 17th German Army consisting of 12 divisions had been subjected to overwhelming defeat. One hundred thousand soldiers and officers were killed or taken prisoner. The Soviet forces seized all of the enemy's fighting equipment. Furthermore, our air force and the ships of the Black Sea fleet sank a large number of ships with troops and military cargo. While in 1941-1942 the Hitlerite troops had needed 250 days to take Sevastopol', which the Soviet troops defended selflessly, in 1944 the Red Army broke in the powerful defenses of the enemy in the Crimea in only 35 days, and utterly defeated a 200,000-strong enemy grouping.

The heroic feat of the Soviet forces was highly valued by the Motherland. Five times Moscow saluted the valorous soldiers of the army and navy, who had liberated the Crimea from the German fascist invaders. Many formations /95 and units were awarded the honorary designations "Perekop," "Sivash," "Kerch'," "Feosodiya," "Simferopol'," and "Sevastopol'." The title of Hero of the Soviet Union was awarded to 126 Soviet soldiers,* among them Maj. Gen. Ye. Ya. Savitskiy, Capt. F. D. Dibrov, Sr. Lt. L. I.Beda, Lts. M. Ya. Dzigunskiy and V. F.Zhukov, Sgt. Maj. F. I. Ozerin, Pvts. I. I. Polikakhin and I. K. Yatsunenko. Squadron Commander, Hero of the Soviet Union, V. D. Lavrinenkov was awarded his second "Gold Star" medal. Thousands were decorated with government awards. In the 2nd Guards Army alone 5,229 soldiers and officers were awarded orders and medals; of them 3,743 were Communists and Komsomol members.** All of this testified to the mass heroism of the Soviet soldiers, who had been found to be worthy successors to the glorious traditions of the Red Army. The Crimea - the most important strategic position in the Black Sea - had been torn out of the hands of the enemy. The situation in the Black Sea basin had changed sharply. The liberation of Sevastopol', the main military base of the Black Sea fleet, and of Odessa enabled our fleet to take a more favorable position to participate in the subsequent operations of the Soviet troops in the Balkans. After the expulsion of the fascist invaders from the Crimea the Black Sea fleet intensified its activities on enemy communications, using for this the air force, submarines, and motor torpedo boats.

The military operations of the Armed Forces of the USSR to liberate the Right Bank Ukraine and the Crimea had enormous political, economic and strategic significance.

In interconnected operations conducted from January through May 1944 the Soviet forces defeated an extremely large strategic enemy grouping, threw it back by 250-400 kilometers to the west, and liberated the Crimea.

---

* See "Bol'shevik," 1944, No. 10-11, p. 61.

** IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #11060, p. 61.

From January 1 through May 12, 22 divisions and 1 brigade of the enemy were eliminated, 8 divisions and 1 brigade were dissolved, and 8 divisions lost up to 75 percent and 61 divisions up to 50 percent of their personnel. According to the testimony of K. Tippelskirch, this was the greatest loss "since the time when the German army walked the thorny path from the Volga and the Caucasus, retreating to the Dnepr."*

Such great losses could not be borne without consequences for the enemy. They seriously weakened his forces, not only on the Soviet-German front, but in the countries of Europe. To restore the front on the southern sector the fascist command group was forced from January through April to bring up 34 divisions and 4 brigades from Rumania, Hungary, France, Yugoslavia, Denmark and Germany, and also 9 divisions from other sectors of the Soviet-German front,** not including the current reinforcement of the forces operating there with men, fighting equipment and armaments.

As the result of the successful advance of the Red Army, the metallurgy of the South, the ore of Krivoy Rog, Nikopol' and Kerch', the fruitful lands between the Dnepr and the Prut, the Crimea, and the first-class ports on the Black Sea - Sevastopol', Odessa and Nikolayev - were returned to the Motherland. Our troops liberated a considerable territory of Soviet Moldavia and the western regions of the Ukraine. Millions of Soviet people were liberated from fascist slavery. Fulfilling an historic mission to liberate the Soviet land occupied by the enemy, the Red Army broke through to the southwestern border of the Soviet Union and moved military operations onto the territory of Rumania.

The defeat of a major German fascist grouping and the clearing of the /96
Right Bank Ukraine and the Crimea of occupiers fundamentally altered the strategic situation in the south. With their breakthrough to the Carpathians our forces split the enemy's strategic front, as a result of which the

---

* K. Tippelskirch. "History of the Second World War," p. 356.

** Collected Materials on the Composition of the Forces of Fascist Germany, 4th Ed., pp. 8-82.

joint operation of army groups "North Ukraine" and"South Ukraine"* was greatly hindered. The Soviet forces obtained the opportunity to develop blows in the Lublin direction and on the flank and rear of army group "Centre", toward L'vov, and also through Rumania toward the Balkans. The liberation of the Crimea and Odessa ensured favorable conditions for the deployment and operations of our fleet on the Black Sea. The troops of the Red Army found themselves in the approaches to the sources of Rumanian oil and Balkan raw materials, so vitally important for Germany.

The entrance of the Soviet Armed Forces into the borders of Rumania made the political situation in the countries of Southeastern Europe allied with Germany more acute, causing panic and confusion among the ruling classes of these countries. The Hitlerite marionettes in power understood how close and inevitable was the ruin of fascist Germany. They began to search for ways out of the Hitlerite bloc. At the same time the victorious advance of the Red Army promoted to an enormous degree the intensification of the national liberation struggle in these states.

A great role in the achievement of the victories was played by political organs, party and Komsomol organizations, all of the activities of which were directed toward fulfillment of their combat objectives. Communists and Komsomol members were true inspirers of the soldiers, the force cementing units and subunits. In the most difficult minutes of an encounter, in the most crucial sectors of the battle they were always in the forefront, inspiring the soldiers to heroic deeds with their personal example. The innumerable examples of courage and valor displayed by our troops in battles for the Motherland are a clear expression of the Soviet patrictism of soldiers, seamen, officers, generals and admirals of the Red Army and navy, their boundless devotion to their people, dear Communist Party and Soviet government.

The successes gained by the Armed Forces of the USSR testified to the high level of the Soviet art of war. They overturned the previously existing

* After April 5, 1944 army group "South" was renamed army group "North Ukraine," and army group "A" was renamed army group "South Ukraine."

concept of the impossibility of conducting large scale military operations under poor spring road conditions. In the liberation of the Right Bank Ukraine the Red Army conducted a group of simultaneous and consistent offensive operations, the greatest of which were the Korzun'-Shevchenkovskiy, Proskurov-Chernovitsy, Uman'-Botosani and Odessa operations. The operations of the Soviet forces were characterized by great scope, decisiveness and rapidity, the variety of forms of military operations, and good supply. In the course of the advance such a method of operation as the encirclement and elimination of enemy groupings was used. The Korsun'-Shevchenkovskiy operation serves as a clear example of this. Furthermore, blows were also struck on a broad front with the goal of splitting the enemy and destroying him by units. In this way the advance of the troops of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts in March 1944 was organized. The blows of the 1st and 2nd Ukrainian fronts, inflicted at great depth, led to the splitting of the enemy's entire strategic front.

For the offensive operations in the Right Bank Ukraine the use of large forces of armored and mechanized troops was characteristic. In the history of the Great Patriotic War there is no other strategic operation in which six tank armies participated simultaneously. In spite of roadlessness and relatively weak numerical strength of the tank armies, their military operations were distinguished by high maneuverability and great depth of breaching the enemy defenses. The tank armies as well as detached tank and /97
mechanized corps were used in mass to complete the main tasks - encirclement of the enemy, rapid development of success to depth, seizure of important lines and objects, and repulsion of blows by the enemy's large tank groupings.

In conducting the operation the Soviet command group capably effected cooperation between the fronts, as well as between the ground forces and the air force and navy, coordinating their efforts according to time and goal. This contained the enemy on a wide front, deprived him of freedom for maneuvering, and ensured the rapid defeat of the enemy groupings. It was thus in the Korsun'-Shevchenkovskiy and Nikopol'-Krivoy Rog operations, and it was thus in the March offensive. Precise coordination of efforts by ground forces, air force and the Black Sea fleet made it possible to defeat the German

fascist grouping in the Crimea. The Black Sea fleet played an important role in the solution of operative-strategic problems facing the troops of the Red Army. The air force, submarines and motor torpedo boats of the fleet, operating on the enemy communications, blocked the shipment of troops and military equipment to the Crimea and also the evacuation of the remnants of the routed enemy grouping. The Azov military flotilla effected the transfer of troops and military equipment of the Independent Maritime Army. From January through May it transferred to Kerch' peninsula over 77,000 persons, a great deal of military equipment and various cargos.

The success of the advance in the Right Bank Ukraine and in the Crimea to a significant degree determined the activity of the rear, which took place under extremely difficult conditions. Supplying the troops was a complex problem. To solve it the military councils, organs of administrative services of the fronts and armies first of all took the most decisive measures to restore railroads as quickly as possible. The personnel of the railroad forces and special PCMS (People's Commissariat of Means of Communication) formations of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts restored approximately 7,000 kilometers of railroad lines from January through May, in spite of the poor road conditions. From February through April the Ukrainian fronts were supplied 400,000 cars of troops and cargo. The poor spring road conditions made the operation of automobile transportation extremely complicated. In some sectors the average daily run of automobiles was 70-80 kilometers, but in a number of cases it was only 10-15 kilometers. It was sometimes necessary to tow the vehicles, for which all means were used, including tanks. Nevertheless, autotransportation moved a considerable quantity of material resources. The 20th automobile brigade alone during the Uman'-Botosani operation delivered over 100,000 tons of cargo to the troops. Particularly great difficulties arose during the transfer of cargo from Army depots. Therefore in almost all armies animal-drawn and pack-horse columns and special teams from the local population were formed. Ammunition, fuel and provisions were also delivered to the troops by air. From March 12 through 17 alone the 2nd Airborne Army conducted approximately 1,200 airplane flights to supply cargo to the 3rd Guards and the 4th Tank Armies. From April 7 through 15, 2,160,000 cartridges, over 27,000 shells

and mines, over 50 tons of fuel, 24 guns of 76 mm caliber and other supplies were airlifted to the 1st Tank Army. On return flights the airplanes removed the wounded.*

During the liberation of the Right Bank Ukraine and the Crimea the partisans demolished railroad lines and bridges on automobile roads in the enemy's rear, hampered the transfer of fascist troops and the supply of ammunition, provisions and fuel. They attacked retreating enemy troops, smashed their rear services, seized crossings on rivers and held them until the arrival of Red Army units, and conducted reconnaissance in the enemy's rear. The information from this reconnaissance, transmitted across the front line, helped our command group to make more expedient decisions. Ukrainian partisans saved hundreds of thousands of Soviet people from being driven away to fascist slavery, and prevented the German invaders from removing all of the property and provisions that had been stolen.

The workers of the liberated cities and towns greeted the Soviet troops /98 joyfully, and offered them active assistance: they restored roads and bridges, delivered ammunition and provisions in vehicles and on foot, and helped to care for wounded. The inhabitants of the liberated regions voluntarily entered the ranks of the Red Army in order to do their part with gun in hand in the common matter of defeating the enemy.

---

*IML. Documents and materials of the Dept. of the History of the Great Patriotic War, No. 17368, pp 7-9.

5. Military operations in the central sector of the Soviet-German front in the winter of 1944.

By the beginning of 1944 three of our fronts were operating in the central sector of the Soviet-German front in the zone between Nevel' and the Pripyat' River: the 1st Baltic, Western and Belorussian fronts. The 1st Baltic front - commander Gen. I. Kh. Bagramyan, Military Council member Lt. Gen. D. S. Leonov, Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. V. V. Kurasov - consisting of the 4th Shock, 11th Guards, 39th, 43rd, 51st and 3rd Airborne Armies operated in the Vitebsk direction. The Western front, the commander of which was Gen. V. D. Sokolovskiy, Military Council member Lt. Gen. L. Z. /98

Mekhlis, and Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. A.P. Pokrovskiy, was deployed in the Orsha direction. Its composition included the 5th, 10th, 31st, 33rd, 49th and 1st Airborne Armies. The Belorussian front,* including the 3rd, 48th, 50th, 61st, 63rd, 65th and 16th Airborne Armies, operated in the Bobruisk direction. The front was commanded by Gen. K.K. Rokossovskiy, Military Council member Lt. Gen. K. F. Telyegin, and Chief of Staff Col.-Gen. M. S. Malinin.

These three fronts were opposed by army group "Centre" (2nd, 4th, 9th, and 3rd Panzer Armies), which was supported by the 6th Air Force. The composition of this group numbered 63 divisions, including 6 Panzer and 3 motorized, and 1 brigade.**

Headquarters' plan for the winter campaign of 1944, as has been shown, called for active operations by the 1st Baltic, Western and Belorussian fronts in the central sector of the Soviet-German front, in addition to major offensive operations in the Right Bank Ukraine and near Leningrad. The goal of their advance was the rout of the Vitebsk, Orsha and Bobruisk enemy groupings and a breakthrough to the line of Polotsk - Lepel' - Mogilev - and the Ptich' River (map 1). The troops of the Belorussian front were then to advance in the general direction of Minsk. The advance of our forces in the central sector of the Soviet-German front could not avoid influencing the development of events in the Right Bank Ukraine and also in the region of Leningrad and Novgorod.

In accordance with the general concept of the winter campaign, in this period Headquarters of the Supreme High Command sent its main forces and material resources to the Right Bank Ukraine as well as to Leningrad and Novgorod. The fronts operating in the central sector received considerably less of them. Thus, for example, from January through March 1944 the forces of these fronts received 19 percent of the total quantity of reserve reinforcements, 26 percent of the guns and mortars and only 4.2 percent of the tanks and assault guns.

---

* Upon a directive from Headquarters of Feb. 17, 1944 on the formation of the 2nd Belorussian front, the Belorussian front was renamed the 1st Belorussian.

** Collected Materials on the Comp. of the Forces of Fascist Germany, 4th Ed., p. 14.

In the central sector of the Soviet-German front the main events in the winter of 1944 developed in the Vitebsk and Bobruisk directions.

Vitebsk - a major junction of railroads and highways - was an extremely /99 important center of defense on the northern wing of army group "Centre."

As early as autumn of 1943 our forces, having breached the defense in the area of Nevel' in a very narrow sector, penetrated deeply into the enemy dispositions west of Vitebsk. However, all attempts to expand this breach toward the flanks were unsuccessful due to the insufficiency of forces. As a result the troops of the 6th Guards and 3rd Shock Armies of the 2nd Baltic front and the 4th Shock Army of the 1st Baltic front, pulling themselves through the narrow corridor into the enemy disposition, found themselves in an extremely constrained operative position. In the beginning of January 1944 the 1st Baltic front, with the forces of the 4th Shock, 11th Guards, 43rd and 39th Armies, undertook an offensive with the goal of encircling and routing the major enemy forces overhanging the Nevel' grouping of our forces, flanking Vitebsk from the northwest and southeast and seizing the city. Heavy battles lasting until January 18 ended in the defeat of the grouping of enemy forces in the region north of Gorodok; in this defeat two of the divisions of its composition were totally destroyed. The troops of the front seized Gorodok, cut off the Polotsk-Vitebsk railroad and occupied a flanking position in relation to the enemy's Vitebsk grouping. However, the goals of the operation were not fully achieved. Headquarters of the Supreme High command then drew the Western front into the operation as well, transferring the 39th Army to its composition from the 1st Baltic front.* On February 3 our troops renewed the offensive. The 1st Baltic front advanced northwest, and the Western front southwest of Vitebsk. Fierce battles were again joined, which, however, did not lead to fulfillment of the main assignment, the seizure of Vitebsk. Nonetheless the Soviet forces inflicted damage on the enemy's 3rd Panzer Army, which had concentrated in the Vitebsk area all of its 15 divisions, 3 Panzer battalions, and 3 divisions of assault guns,** outflanked Vitebsk from the northwest and southeast still more deeply, and cut off the Vitebsk-Orsha highway to the south of the city.

---

* IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of Great Patriotic War, Inv. #9492, pp. 21-22.

** Captured German OKH map for Feb. 1944.

On January 2 the Belorussian front received the assignment to begin the advance with the forces of its left wing, break the Mozyr' grouping of the enemy, and then advance on Bobruisk - Minsk.* On January 8 the front went over to the offensive with the forces of the 65th and 61st Armies. In heavy battles our troops breached the defense of the 2nd German Army, and on January 14 they seized the district center of the Belorussian SSR, the city of Mozyr', and the major railroad junction of Kalinkovichi. In the course of the subsequent advance the troops of the 2nd Army were thrown back to the Ptich' River and to the region of Petrikov. With this the 61st Army, attempting to maintain contact with the right flank formations of the successfully advancing 13th Army of the 1st Ukrainian front, began to extend its left flank along the southern bank of the Pripyat' in the direction of Stolin. This forced the enemy as well to extend the right flank of his 2nd Army along the northern bank of the Pripyat', in order to cover the southern wing of army group "Centre."

On Feb. 21 the troops of the 3rd and 50th Armies of the 1st Belorussian front struck a blow on the enemy in the area of Rogachev. In three days of intense fighting our troops breached the strongly fortified defense of the 9th German Army and forced the Dnepr, and on Feb. 24 seized the city of Rogachev, an important enemy strong point in the Bobruisk direction. As a result of this the Mogilev-Zhlobin lateral railroad line was cut off and the Soviet troops seized a beachhead on the right bank of the Dnepr, between Bykhov and Rogachev, approximately 60 kilometers in width and up to 25 kilometers in depth.

Thus the 1st Baltic, Western** and 1st Belorussian fronts did not totally fulfill the missions that had been assigned to them. This was due above all to the fact that Headquarters, assigning the fronts objectives of no small depth, did not provide them with the corresponding forces and equipment, specifically tanks, ammunition and fuel. On the whole the Soviet /100

* IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #9492, p. 1.

** On April 24 the Western front was renamed the 3rd Belorussian front.

forces advancing in winter and spring of 1944 in the central sector of the front played an important role in achieving success in the main direction, in the Right Bank Ukraine. They contained army group "Centre," did not allow it to render assistance to army groups "South" and "A," which at that time were suffering catastrophic defeats. In the course of military operations our forces improved their strategic position.

On April 15 all three fronts operating in the central sector of the Soviet-German front went over to the defensive and began to prepare for the summer advance.

THE RESULTS OF THE MILITARY OPERATIONS OF THE RED ARMY IN THE WINTER CAMPAIGN OF 1944

The winter campaign of 1944 took place under the badge of the Red Army's major victories in the southern part of the country and also at Leningrad and Novgorod. The Soviet Union, which in 1943 had achieved a fundamental break in the course of the war, did all it could in the first months of 1944 to develop its successes. The Red Army on the whole fulfilled the missions assigned it by the Supreme High Command for the winter campaign. On the south wing of the Soviet-German front the forces of the four Ukrainian fronts in cooperation with the Black Sea fleet expelled the enemy from the Right Bank Ukraine and from the Crimea, reached the line of Lutsk - Tarnopol' - Chernovitsy - Odessa, broke through to the Carpathians, liberated a large part of Soviet Moldavia, crossed the national border, and entered the northeastern regions of Rumania. The troops of the Leningrad, Volkhov and

2nd Baltic fronts in cooperation with the Red Banner Baltic fleet cleared the western part of the Leningrad region of the enemy, completed the liberation of Kalinin region and entered the territory of Soviet Estonia. In all, 329,000 square kilometers of Soviet territory were cleared of the enemy during the winter campaign, where 18,950,000 persons had lived before the war.* The Red Army liberated the cities of Novgorod, Zhitomir, Berdichev, Tiraspol', Rovno, Lutsk, Vinnitsa, Proskurov, Tarnopol', Kamenyets-Podol'sk, Chernovitsy, Kirovograd, Uman', Krivoy Rog, Nikopol', Nikolayev, Odessa, Simferopol', Sevastopol' and thousands of other inhabited areas.

The forces operating in the winter campaign of 1944 in the central region of the Soviet-German front contained the forces of the powerful German army group "Centre" and thereby promoted the successes of the flank groupings of the Red Army. However, the missions assigned them in the winter campaign were, as has been noted, not completely fulfilled. In his report dedicated to the 27th anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution, Supreme High Commander Stalin, appraising the military operations of the Red Army in the winter campaign of 1944, named only the operations at Leningrad and Novgorod, in the Right Bank Ukraine and the Crimea. He was silent about the fronts operating in Belorussia. This was no accident. The Supreme High Commander did not want to acknowledge that in planning the operations in the central sector of the Soviet-German front Headquarters had miscalculated, and had not supplied the fronts with the corresponding forces and equipment.

In the course of the winter offensive the Armed Forces of the USSR conclusively foiled the plans of the Hitlerite command group, which was attempting to restore the defense of the German forces along the Dnepr and hold strongly fortified positions at Leningrad and Novgorod. The winter campaign of 1944 obviously showed the illusoriness of the enemy's calculations that his defenses could not be overcome. The Soviet troops, possessing initiative, /102

* According to the data of USSR Central Statistical Directorate (CSD). IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #9605, p. 39.

having great striking power and reserves at their disposal, and superior to the enemy in military art, broke in the Hitlerites' defensive fortifications, inflicted enormous losses on them in manpower and fighting equipment, encircled and destroyed separate groupings of enemy forces. During the winter campaign on the Soviet-German front 30 enemy divisions and 1 brigade were totally destroyed, 142 divisions and 5 brigades were routed; of these, 14 divisions and 3 brigades suffered such great losses that they were disbanded.* The enemy lost over 1 million soldiers and officers, 20,000 guns and mortars, 4,200 tanks, 4,200 assault guns and approximately 5,000 airplanes.**

The Soviet forces progressed hundreds of kilometers in the Southwest and Northwest theaters of military operations, threateningly enveloped the flanks of the German army group "Centre" which occupied the defense in Belorussia on the most important routes to the borders of Germany. Our forces operating in the central sector of the Soviet-German front now had favorable conditions in which to strike an overwhelming blow on the powerful enemy grouping. In the south the Soviet troops breaking through to the Carpathians intersected the front of the enemy's defense, isolated army groups "North Ukraine" and "South Ukraine" from one another. The Red Army obtained the opportunity to advance on L'vov and Lublin and also on Bucharest and deep into the Balkan Peninsula. Due to the liquidation of the Crimean enemy grouping the troops of the 4th Ukrainian front were freed, which made it possible to strengthen the strategic reserves of Headquarters of the Supreme High Command. In the Northwest theater of military operations, as the result of the defeat inflicted on army group "North" the Red Army could organize an advance with the goal of liberating the Baltic region and Karelia. The strategic situation for the Baltic and particularly for the Black Sea military fleets changed favorably.

The operations conducted by the Armed Forces of the USSR in January-May 1944 testified to the further development of the Soviet art of war. The

---

* Collected Materials on the Composition of the Forces of Fascist Germany, 4th Ed., pp. 20, 38, 54, 70, 84.

** IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #17936, p. 654.

strengthened staffs of the fronts, armies and corps, as well as of Headquarters' reserves, increased fighting equipment, the growth of the art of the command cadres and the high level of morale and combat skill of the soldiers ensured the resolution at a higher level of a number of the main problems of the art of war.

Headquarters of the Supreme High Command, possessing the strategic initiative, continued to impose its will on the enemy. The Hitlerite generals calculated that the "wet" winter and early poor spring road conditions in the south would permit them to bring their troops into order after the losses in the summer-fall campaign of 1943. However, the Soviet command group, developing offensive operations in the Right Bank Ukraine and at Leningrad and Novgorod, deprived the German fascist forces of that breathing space. The previously existing ideas of the impossibility of conducting large scale military operations under spring conditions of roadlessness and river flooding were overturned.

The strategic offensive conducted in the winter of 1944 had another extremely noteworthy feature. Unlike the previous three offensive campaigns, which usually began with a counteroffensive following heavy defensive operations, then grew into a general offensive, the winter campaign began after a successful strategic offensive in the summer and fall of 1943. In the /103
direction of the main blow, in the Right Bank Ukraine, it developed without a pause and was as it were a continuation of the previous campaign. This placed many serious problems before Headquarters of the Supreme High Command and the General Staff. It was necessary to develop plans for operations of enormous scope, taking into consideration the enemy groupings that formed in the course of the advance; to conduct inter- and intrafront regroupings in very short periods and form powerful groupings in the directions of the main blows; to bring up the rear services of the armies and fronts that had fallen greatly behind, and ensure supply of neccessities to the forces under poor spring road conditions; to replenish with men and equipment the armies that had suffered considerable losses during the summer-fall offensive; and to form large Headquarters reserves by the start of the winter campaign. On the whole the Soviet Supreme High Command dealt successfully with these objectives.

The strategic operations of the winter campaign were conducted on a wide front. The offensive operations begun in December of 1943 in a zone of approximately 500 kilometers were in February-March 1944 already being conducted on a front 1,300-1,415 kilometers in length. The depth of the Soviet forces' progress in the winter campaign was approximately 400 kilometers. The huge scope of the operations required that the Supreme High Command organize precise strategic interaction of the fronts, fleets, air force, the air defense forces of the country, and the partisans. Headquarters assigned them timely missions and skillfully exploited all forces and equipment, including strategic reserves.

The offensive operations of the fronts and armies were distinguished by their increased scope, capable selection of the direction of the main blow, mass use of forces and equipment in selected directions, well-prepared and masterfully executed fire strikes that overwhelmed the enemy defense, and improved use of tank and mechanized forces, which made it possible to develop the success of the breach and achieve rapid pursuit speeds. The Korsun'-Shevchenkovskiy operation entered the history of Soviet art of war as a model of encirclement operations. However, the Soviet forces were not able to successfully complete the encirclement of the large enemy groupings at Leningrad, and in the region of Kamenyets-Podol'skiy and Bereznegovatoye-Snigiryevka. In the first case the main cause was above all the insufficient speed of the advance. Complex meteorological conditions played a large part in this. In the remaining cases the main factor was that the command group of the fronts did not supply the inner and outer perimeters of encirclement with the necessary forces.

In the winter of 1944 the Soviet forces advanced as before under conditions of fierce enemy resistance. Thus, for example, in the Right Bank Ukraine alone the enemy inflicted 10 counterstrikes in the tactical zone of defense and 2 counterstrikes at operative depth. From 2 to 15 divisions were drawn upon to execute these, and 2-4 Panzer and motorized divisions participated in each. The majority of the counterstrikes were repelled by the Soviet forces. In this the decisive condition for success was rapid maneuvering of forces and equipment.

Even well known bourgeois military historians were forced to acknowledge the greatness of the victories by the Armed Forces of the USSR in the winter campaign of 1944. Concerning the last (Crimean) operation of this campaign, G. Fuller writes, "... the Russian winter offensive of 1944 ended as one of the most brilliant campaigns in concept and execution of that surprising year."* The Hitlerite general H. Guderian appraises the consequences of the campaign thus: "The heavy, bloody winter battles completely unsettled the high command of the ground forces."**

In the achievement of the Red Army's successes in the winter campaign /104 an enormous role was played by the selfless work of the Soviet rear. The workers of our country produced and delivered to the front in ever growing quantities guns, tanks, airplanes, machine guns, submachine guns, ammunition - everything necessary for a large scale offensive. As before, in the most difficult times in the war and during the period of fundamental change the Communist Party inspired the Soviet people to feats of labor, and stepped forward as the organizer of socialist competition to increase labor productivity.

The success of the troops near Leningrad and Novgorod, in the Ukraine and the Crimea, raised the workers, kolkhoz workers and intelligentsia to remarkable new deeds, and caused in them a feeling of legitimate pride in their Homeland, the Communist Party, which confidently led the people to total victory over fascist Germany. The might of the Country of Soviets increased also thanks to the clearing of a broad Soviet territory of the enemy. The Nikopol' manganese, the ore of Krivoy Rog and Kerch', the industry of Nikolayev, Odessa and other liberated cities, the extremely fruitful lands of the Right Bank Ukraine, the Crimea, and Moldavia, were returned to the Motherland. Millions of Soviet people were rid of fascist slavery.

The victorious advance of the Red Army in winter and spring of 1944 exerted a great influence on the international situation. The breakthrough

---

* G.F.S. Fuller. "Second World War 1939-1945. Strategic and Tactical Survey," Moscow, Izd-vo Inostrannoy literatury, 1956, p. 379.

** Heinz Guderian. Erinnerungen eines Soldaten. Neckargemund, 1960, S. 293.

of the Soviet forces to the approaches to the Balkans and Baltic area intensified the disorder among the fascist states and made their internal political situations more acute. The ruling classes of Rumania, Finland, Bulgaria and Hungary began to search feverishly for a way out of the Hitlerite bloc. In the European countries, including those that had remained allies of Germany, the wave of the antifascist movement rose still higher. In Germany bourgeois opposition circles hastened their preparations for an assassination attempt on Hitler, hoping through the removal of the Führer to create the basis to complete a separate peace with the USA and England. Finally, the winter events on the Soviet-German front strengthened the authority of the Soviet Union in the antifascist coalition still more. They forced the governments of the USA and England to intensify their preparations for the landing of their forces in Northern France. It became impossible to delay the opening of the second front any longer. The international position of the Soviet Union was favorable for increasing strikes on the enemy. Fascist Germany stood on the brink of total external political isolation.

Part Two

COMPLETE EXPULSION OF THE GERMAN INVADERS FROM SOVIET TERRITORY AND THE LIBERATION OF THE PEOPLES OF SOUTHEAST EUROPE

Part Two

COMPLETE EXPULSION OF THE GERMAN INVADERS FROM SOVIET TERRITORY AND THE LIBERATION OF THE PEOPLES OF SOUTHEASTERN EUROPE

Chapter Four

POSITION AND PLANS OF THE BELLIGERENTS BY THE SUMMER OF 1944

1. FURTHER GROWTH OF THE MIGHT OF THE USSR

The third year of the war was drawing to an end. The Soviet Union confidently held its course toward the complete and final rout of the enemy. The Red Army's victories gained near Leningrad, in the Ukraine, and in the Crimea were a brilliant start to the third, concluding period of the Great Patriotic War in Europe. But bitter battles were still to come for the final liberation of Soviet territory, for the release of the European peoples from fascist bondage.

On the eve of the great battles that developed in the summer of 1944 the economic and internal political position of the Soviet Union had become still stronger.

The military economy of the country, overcoming enormous difficulties, was rapidly on the rise. The volume of industrial production in the first half of 1944 in the entire territory of the USSR was 86 percent, and according to the commissariats of military industry 194 percent, of the volume of production in the first half of 1941. Production grew especially rapidly in the rear areas. Here in the first half of 1944 the total value of industrial production was 185 percent, and production by the enterprises of four

commissariats of military industry 570 percent relative to production by enterprises in the same regions in the first half of 1941.* The volume of gross industrial output in the first six months of 1944 increased by 18 percent overall in relation to the corresponding period of 1943. Output of electrical energy increased by 29 percent, coal output by 31 percent, iron production by 30 percent, steel production by 34 percent, sheet metal production by 31 percent, metal-cutting lathes by 64 percent.** The growth in the main branches of heavy industry created a firm foundation for the development of military industry.

Military industry supplied the Red Army with a large quantity of new models of arms. In the first six months were produced approximately 16,000 aircraft, approximately 14,000 heavy and medium tanks and assault guns, 26,000 guns (field, for tanks, and assault guns) 76 mm caliber and greater, 477,000 machine and submachine guns (not counting aircraft machine guns), 91 million shells, aerial bombs and mines.*** In the first five months of 1944 alone the number of tanks and assault guns in the active army increased 25.3 percent, the number of aircraft by 25 percent, of artillery 76 mm caliber and greater (other than anti-aircraft guns and mortars) by almost 6 percent. The number of heavy tanks grew by 34.6 percent, the 122 mm and 152 mm caliber assault guns -- by 34.8 percent. All of the bombers and over 80 percent of the fighter planes entering the forces were new models.

---

*IML. Documents and Materials of the Department of the History of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. 16436, p. 1.

**CSAOR (Central State Archive of the October Revolution), col. 4372, Inv. 4, div. 18, pp. 144, 147-148.

***IML. Documents and Materials of the Department of the History of the Great Patriotic War. Inv. 17936, p. 661; Inv. 7882, p. 5,11,13,15,16, 18.

Noticeable changes also occurred in agriculture. In the spring of 1944 50.6 hectares were sown with spring grain crops, as against 46.5 million hectares sown in the spring of 1943. Sowing of sugar beets, feeds, vegetable and melon crops and potatoes increased considerably.* The better quality of field work and favorable weather made it possible to count on a large harvest. A certain improvement was also seen in the area of animal husbandry.

Transport had made progress. For example, railroad workers overfulfilled their plans of transport for the first quarter by 101.5%, and for the second quater by 100.8%. The average daily load in January to June of 1944 was 25% greater than in the first six months of 1943.**

From ashes and ruins were raised plants and factories, coal and ore mines, kolkhozes and sovkhozes in regions which had been liberated from occupation. From January to June the Donbas yielded about 8 million tons of coal. The plants of the South smelted about 400,000 tons of steel in the same period. By June 30, 1944 the kolkhozes and sovkhozes of the liberated regions had sown over 19 million hectares of land with spring crops.***

These successes of the national economy were achieved under difficult circumstances. During the years of war, the composition of the working class had changed sharply. In the place of those who had gone to the front, many new workers came to the plants and factories, largely women and adolescents. The living conditions of the Soviet people remained difficult as before.

---

*IML. Documents and Materials of the Dept. of History of the Great Patriotic War. Inv. 9605, p. 300.

**Ibid., Inv. 16099, p. 2.

***CSAOR. Col. 4372, Inv. 4, div. 18, p. 158; IML. Documents and Materials of Dept. of History of the Great Patriotic War. Inv. 16099, p. 6.

Food products were issued in the cities on ration cards, the working day was lengthened, and leaves were postponed. In the villages the entire burden of work lay on women and adolescents. There were not enough tractors and other agricultural technology. In spite of all of this, the working class, KOLKHOZ, peasantry and intelligentsia made heroic efforts to perform the tasks before them. In the winter and spring of 1944 an extraordinary increase in Soviet patriotism was seen, caused by the victories of the Red Army. In the middle of the year 15% of all workers over-fulfilled their production norms, and 25% produced two or three norms.* Socialist competition rose to a higher level in the kolkhozes. This increase in the political and labor activity of the Soviet people made it possible to achieve such great success in the national economy.

The internal political position of our Motherland was very strong. The Communist Party and Soviet government enjoyed the total confidence of the workers. At a time of difficulties, the union of workers and peasants was strengthened, the brotherly friendship of the peoples of the USSR was tempered.

Before the summer-fall campaign of 1944 the international position of the Soviet Union had been further strengthened.

The victories of the Red Army furthered an increase in the national liberation movement in the occupied European states. In the winter and spring of 1944 it took on greater scope. The movement was headed as before by Communist and worker's parties. Under their banners hundreds of thousands of patriots took their stand. The working class was in the vanguard of the struggle. The

*CA ACCLU (Central Apparat of All-Union Council of Labor Unions), col. 1, div. 1, p. 22.

peasantry came out in close alliance with them. Hand in hand with the workers and peasants fought progressive, patriotic representatives of other social groups.*

The national liberation struggle continued to develop rapidly in the Balkan countries which were under the yoke of the German fascist invaders. In Yugoslavia in the summer of 1944 Hitler's command group organized an invasion with the goal of routing the main forces of the heroic People's Liberation Army and partisan detachments. However, the People's Army and partisans, who had a great deal of experience in fighting the punitive expeditions of the occupiers and betrayers of the Yugoslav people, foiled this advance by the enemy as well. The Greek patriots achieved great success. In March the democratic organizations of Greece created a Political Committee for National Liberation, which became essentially a provisional government. The armed forces of the Greek people liberated a broad area of their country. In May of 1944 a celebrated event occurred in Albania. At the Congress meeting in the city of Permeti central organs of the national liberation movement were formed, specifically the Antifascist Committee, with the authority of a provisional government. In June the German divisions and armed detachments of the Albanian counter-revolution began a new advance, which, however, did not justify the hopes of its organizers. By the middle of the year the partisan war in Yugoslavia, Greece and Albania had diverted 19 German fascist divisions.

With the Red Army's breakout to the threshhold of the Balkans in the

*The struggle for liberation by the peoples of Europe is discussed here only insofar as it is necessary to understand the political and military situation at the beginning of the summer-fall campaign. A more detailed discussion of this question is given in Chapters 8-11, 13, 14, and 17.

first half of 1944, the antifascist movement was activated in Germany's satellite countries. In Bulgaria the Patriotic Front, uniting patriotic forces, had the support of all peoples. The Peoples' Liberation insurrectional army increased several times over. In the summer the units and formations, the partisan detachments and combat groups numbered about 30,000 people. The Hungarian ommunists made a step toward uniting the democratic forces. In May, on their initiative, the Hungarian front was created. Acts of sabotage and diversions became more frequent in the country. In Rumania, at the suggestion of the Communist Party, the National Democratic bloc was organized in June including the largest political parties. In the summer of 1944, the Rumanian Communists prepared actively for an armed antifascist insurrection. The internal political situation in Bulgaria, Hungary and Rumania caused serious alarm in the German fascist leadership about the rear of the southern wing of the German front, and forced them to maintain troops in that area.

The national liberation movement acquired wide scope in the occupied states of Central Europe. The Polish Peoples' Government, created by the Democratic forces in Poland at the beginning of 1944, had become very active, uniting about itself the working masses. The Polish people, in spite of the traitorous position held by the emigre government and its henchmen within the country, intensified the armed struggle against the fascist invaders. In the first half of the year the Peoples' Army engaged in major battles with the occupation forces. Soviet partisan detachments that had entered Polish territory worked with the army. In many cities and towns in Czechoslovakia national committees, democratic organs of the liberation movement were active. The partisan struggle in Slovakia broadened as the Red Army moved toward the Czechoslovak border. There preparations began for an

antifascist revolt.

The national liberation movement achieved a high degree of development in the occupied countries of Western Europe. In Italy the Milan Committee of National Liberation was transformed into the Committee of National Liberation of Upper Italy, which later took on the function of "extraordinary government". In the summer of 1944 partisan detachments began to unite into the Freedom Volunteer Corps, which was in essence a partisan liberation army. It consisted of several tens of thousands of people. The partisans eliminated the enemy from broad territories. In this area the power of the national liberation committees was established. In France in the spring of 1944, the process was completed of uniting the partisans and franc-tireurs with other combat detachments into the internal armed forces, a combat army of patriots numbering half a million persons. In the first half of the year the internal armed forces engaged in active combat operations in a number of regions of France. Acts of sabotage increased and the armed struggle in Belgium, Norway and other countries became active.

By the summer of 1944, the antifascist movement was a formidable force. The flame of the partisan war enveloped Europe. The German invaders became ill at ease not only in the occupied countries, but also in those allied with them. The peoples who had risen to the battle for liberation made a valuable contribution to the common cause of defeating German fascism.

While the workers of the European countries intensified armed resistance to the invaders, reactionary circles were implementing a traitorous policy.

The emigre Czech government, holding to wait-and-see tactics, called upon its compatriots to abandon the struggle.* The bourgois Polish government in London oriented the Home Army toward a "limited struggle" against the occupiers. Further, it attempted by any means or method to weaken the national liberation movement led by the Polish workers party and the Polish Peoples' Government. In all states of Europe occupied by fascist Germany the exploiting classes watched the growth of the partisan movement with fear. In it they saw a threat to their plans for renewal of the order existing before the Second World War. The reactionary circles of the European countries attempted to maintain their secret services, their illegal organizations and their armed forces in order to seize power on the eve or at the moment of the Red Army's arrival, to gain the "victory" over the democratic forces of their countries.

This policy of the ruling classes of Poland, Czechoslovakia and other European states was not original. When in the summer of 1917, after the July Days, the former head of the Provisional Government, Prince Lvov, made an open anouncement that success in the struggle against internal enemies, the Bolsheviks, was of incomparably greater importance for Russia than a defeat by the external enemy, the Germans, he was stating a truth known to Marxists. In his article, "Gratitude to Prince Lvov", V.I. Lenin wrote, "...Prince Lvov immediately and fully recognized the truth when he declared openly that 'victory' over the class enemy within the country is more important than the situation at the battlefront against an external enemy. An unarguable truth. A useful truth."** The vanguard of the working class in the European states,

---

*See K. Gotval'd. On the need to intensify the struggle with the German occupiers in Czechoslovakia. "Pravda", 16 Jan 1944.

**V.I. Lenin. Papers. Vol. 25, p. 172.

the Communist Parties, knew this truth well, and regardless of the resistance of internal reactionaries they did all they could in the struggle against them to unite the democratic forces of their country to route fascist Germany.

The democratic nature of the antifascist movement also caused serious concern in the ruling circles of the USA and England. They saw that the masses were ready to destroy both fascism and the capitalist system that had engendered it, and spared no effort or means to subject the antifascist movement to their influence, to prevent the development of people's democratic revolutions in the countries of Europe. The question of establishing a system in Europe desirable to the American and English ruling circles could be resolved, in their opinion, by an incursion by the Allied forces into Italy and a landing in Northern France. The situation was more complex with the countries of Southeastern and Central Europe, where the Red Army would soon be arriving. Therefore the governments of the USA and England took diplomatic, military, reconnaissance and various other measures to prevent the victory of the democratic forces in these states.

The British government did not reject plans for an armed incursion into the Balkans, Hungary and Austria. In the middle of July the British Planning Committee continued to study the possibility of advancing from the coast of Istria deep into the country.* The commander of the allied forces in the Mediterranean theater of military operations proposed that an advance be organized "through the Ljubljana gap to the plains of Hungary".** In the winter

---

*See G. Erman. Grand strategy. August 1943-September 1944. Moscow, Izd. Inostrannoy literatury, 1958, p. 291.

**IML. Documents and Materials of Department of History of the Great Patriotic War. Inv. 11635, p. 138.

and spring of 1944, the governments of the USA and England put pressure on Turkey, pushing it to enter the war against fascist Germany. The concentration of Turkish forces in Thrace, in the area of the straits, testified to the fact that Turkey was ready, under circumstances favorable to it, to move them to the Balkans. The question of the occupation of Greece by British forces had been decided in advance.

Attempting to weaken the national liberation movement of the people, the American and English ruling circles increased subversive activities. In Yugoslavia, the British ceased to assist Mihajlović, but, as Churchill hypocritically stated, cooperated with King Peter II out of "chivalry".* This was done in order to place him at the first opportunity on the necks of the Yugoslav peoples. In Greece, the governments of England and the USA supported the monarchistic bands of Zervas. With the help of the Anglo-American forces a revolt by seamen and soldiers of the combat units of the emigre government in Egypt, who were declaring their solidarity with the national liberation front, was suppressed. Preparing for the incursion in Greece, the British carried out subversive activities against the EAM and the ELAS, and did not disdain any methods for doing this. In Albania, the British and American military missions had their representatives both in the headquarters of the national liberation army and in the military political reactionary groups. The latter used allied military missions to combat the national liberation movement.

---

*See Correspondence of the Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers with the Presidents of the USA and the Prime Ministers of Great Britain during the Great Patriotic War 1941-1945. Correspondence with W. Churchill and C. Attlee (July 1941-November 1945). Moscow, Gospolitizdat, 1958, p. 183-184.

The Soviet Union had a different relationship to the antifascist struggle in the European countries. Regarding the national liberation movement as an important component of the military forces of the antifascist coalition, the USSR extended organizational and material aid to it. The Red Army crossed the borders of the European states in order to finally rout Hitler's Germany and its satellites, to free the people from the fascist yoke, giving them the right to decide their fate independently.

The further expansion of the USSR's power, the victories of the Red Army, and the rise of the national liberation movement in Europe exerted a great influence on the state of affairs in the antifascist coalition.

The governments of the Soviet Union, Great Britain and the USA issued a joint statement* on May 13, addressed to the satellites of Hitlerite Germany -- Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria and Finland. The statement spoke of the inevitability of the fascist bloc's defeat, and demands were presented: that they cease their pernicious collaboration with Germany, enter the struggle against it and thereby bring the end of the war closer, ease the calamity in their countries, and their responsibility for the criminal war. The statement of the governments of the three leading states in the antifascist coalition expressed their unity in the desire to bring the war to a complete and final victory. This statement played a well-known role in determining the later positions of the states fighting on the side of fascist Germany.

The opening by the USA and England of the second front in Western Europe on June 6 was of great political and military importance.**

---

*See Foreign Policy of the Soviet Union during the Great Patriotic War. Vol. II, pp. 132-133.

**Combat actions by the American and British forces are discussed in the seventeenth chapter.

In the Soviet Union the news of the Allied forces' landing in Northern France was greeted with approval. Our people regarded this event as a significant achievement of Soviet foreign policy, as an important factor in decreasing the duration of the Second World War. The workers of the USA and England, all the while demandingfrom their governments more active support of the Soviet Union, welcomed the creation of the second front. The French patriots intensified the struggle against the occupiers still more. The internal armed forces liberated one department after another.

However, it must be noted that the American and British troops landed very late. The final decision to effect paratroop operations was made by the Allies only "when the entire course of the Second World War had funadmentally changed, when events had developed for the western countries in such a way that if they delayed in opening the second front the Soviet forces could be not on[illegible]n in Berlin, but in Paris..."* The ill-timed fulfillment by the governments of the United States and England of their obligation as allies cost the people of the Soviet Union and many other countries of Europe colossal sacrifices.

During the three years of the war the Red Army had inflicted many serious defeats on the German fascist armed forces, worn them down and drained them, confronting them with catastrophe. Its victories fanned the flame of partisan war in the countries occupied by fascist Germany. Therefore the landing of the Allied forces in Normandy occurred in extremely favorable conditions. The German fascist command group did not have sufficient forces to prevent the formation of the front in Northern France. As H. Guderian shows, the enormous

*N.S. Khrushchev. World without arms - world without war. Vol I. Jan.-July 1959. Moscow, Gospolitizdat, 1960, p. 165.

losses inflicted on the German fascist forces at the Soviet-German front in the winter of 1944 destroyed plans to create forces in the west to repulse the Anglo-American incursion.*

In spite of the opening of the second front in Western Europe, the decisive role in the war belonged, as before, to the Armed Forces of the USSR. The Soviet-German front remained the most important. Here, as is evident from German sources, the strongest and most battleworthy fascist divisions were located. In the beginning of June 228 divisions and 23 brigades of the enemy faced the Red Army,** while the American and British forces were faced with 60 divisions in France, Belgium and Holland, and 26 divisions in Italy; that is 86 enemy divisions in all. Of the remaining 60 German divisions, 4 were in Denmark, 13 in Norway, 19 in Yugoslavia, Albania and Greece, 24 in the High Command reserve.*** Some of the divisions deployed in Europe could be thrown (as in fact occurred) against the Red Army in the event that it moved into Central and Southeastern Europe. According to the most conservative estimates, Hitler's Germany had designated about two-thirds of all of its divisions for combat operations against the Soviet forces. Nevertheless, with the opening of the second front the German divisions located in Western Europe could no longer be regarded as potential reserves for use against the Red Army. Further, to compensate for their losses and reinforce the Western front fascist Germany was forced to draw on part of its strategic reserves.

---

*See Heinz Guderian. Erinnerungen eines Soldaten. Neckargemünd, 1960, S. 293.

**Collection of materials on the composition of fascist Germany's forces, 4th ed., p. 98.

***IML. Documents and Materials of the Department of History of the Great Patriotic War. Inv. 9608, p. 216.

Germany was faced with the necessity of carrying on the war on two fronts, in the east and in the west; in their time Bismarck, Moltke the Elder, and other celebrated ideologues of German militarism had insistently advised that this be avoided.

The landing of the American and British forces in Western Europe meant a major victory for the cause for which the antifascist coalition had been formed. Effecting coordinated blows from the east and west brought the day of final and complete victory over the enemy closer, which was in accord with the fundamental interests of the USSR, the workers of the USA and England, and the freedom-loving people of other countries.

The opening of the second front put an end to the most major disagreements about questions of the conduct of the war between the Soviet Union on one hand and the USA and England on the other. But there were still issues the solution of which would promote the further strengthening of the antifascist coalition. ThePolish problem, which occupied a large place in the correspondence of the heads of government of the three powers during the first half of 1944, was unsolved. As before, questions of the necessity of democratizing the Polish emigrant government and regularizing its relations with representatives of the democratic forces within the country, the participation of the governments of England, the USA and the USSR in solving these problems and the question of the eastern borders of Poland, remained open.*

Serious disagreements also arose in connection with the situation in Italy. The organs of the Anglo-American military administration, the Allied commar

*See Correspondence of the Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers with the Presidents of the USA and the Prime Ministers of Great Britain during the Great Patriotic War 1941-1945, Vol. I, p. 193-198, 201-205, 208-209, 213-215; Vol. II Correspondence with F. Roosevelt and H. Truman (August 1941-December 1945), Moscow, Gospolitizdat, 1958, pp. 118-120, 126-128.

group and the Badoglio government they supported, connived with reactionaries and counteracted the antifascist movement in very possible way, which violated the joint decisions of the USSR, and USA and England concerning the democratization of Italy. At the insistence of the Soviet government, an Advisory Council on questions of Italy discussed the situation in that country. Soon a new government was formed in Italy which included six representatives of democratic parties, two of whom were representatives of the Communist Party. Thus it was possible to reach agreement on the Italian question.

The approaching victorious conclusion to the war also increased the concern of the leading states in the antifascist coalition about their postwar relations. In the beginning of 1944, the European Advisory Commission went to work. In February and March, the head of the Soviet government and the President of the United States of America exchanged messages in which they confirmed the advisability of creating the apparatus for the United Nations for postwar economic cooperation. Successful negotiations were held on the nature of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration's (UNRRA) activities and on other important questions of the world's postwar structure. All of this indicated that the antifascist coalition was being strengthened, that the Soviet Union, the United States of America and Great Britain were working cooperatively in the war against Germany, in spite of the fundamental difference in their social and governmental systems.

The victories gained by the Red Army in the winter and spring of 1944 inflicted a new heavy blow on the fascist bloc and promoted the further extension of the Soviet Union's international connections.

As the war approached the borders of the satellite countries of fascist Germany, the internal political situation in those countries worsened. The Finnish leadership tested the ground concerning Finland's withdrawal from the war. The leaders of the bourgeois landholding circles of Rumania, with the knowledge and blessing of King Mihai and Antonescu, the head of the government, sent their representatives, B. Stirbei and K. Vishoyan, to determine from the USA and England the possibilities and conditions of Rumania's withdrawal from the war, and consequently from the fascist bloc. The Hungarian government dared, although only in words, to resist Hitler, who demanded from Hungary new divisions and shipments of provisions. This showed serious vacillations among the Hungarian leadership. Bulgarian ruling circles sought wildly for a way out of the serious situation in which they found themselves as a result of their hypocritical policy toward the Soviet Union. In May, they replaced the government of Božilov with the government of Bagryanov, but this maneuver did not change the essence of the Bulgarian ruling class' policy. By the summer of 1944 the bloc of fascist states resembled a sinking ship.

The Polish emigrę government, as well as the government of Japan, considered it timely to stress their "friendly" or at least "loyal" relations with the Soviet Union. The Polish government issued an official statement to the effect that it had taken and would take "all measures in order to restore a friendly, neighborly relationship with Russia".* In fact it continued to be hostile to the Soviet Union. The government of Japan, which since 1941 had delayed negotiations on extending the fishing treaty as well as fulfillment

*"Pravda", 12 February 1944.

of its responsibilities in liquidating Japanese concessions on North Sakhalin, expressed "good will" in March 1944 and signed corresponding statements.* It goes without saying that this "friendly act" was caused by the strengthened might of the Soviet Union and the victories of the Red Army. But the Japanese militarists continued their piratical acts against our vessels at sea.

These are the basic facts characterizing the internal and external position of the Soviet Union by the summer of 1944. They showed the steady growth of the might of our socialist world power. What an enormous distance divided it from Czarist Russia at the time of the First World War!

Then, at the end of 1916, that is, in the third year of the imperialist war, the country's economy was in a state of complete devastation, growing ever worse. The people were bitter; they hated the czarist government. The troops lacked sufficient arms or ammunition. Untalented people and traitors to the Motherland ruled the general staff and in the higher general officers. The army had borne losses and was helpless to achieve a break in the course of the war. The entire world called Russia "a colossus with clay feet".

Now in the middle of 1944, at the end of the third year of the cruelest war in human history, the Soviet Union was one of the most powerful states in the world. The socialist military economy was growing steadily. Educated and united by the Communist Party, the Soviet people were a model of moral and political unity. The Red Army was receiving first class military technology, ammunition, equipment, provisions, in ever increasing quantities. The morale of the troops and Soviet military art were at a high level. The USSR had achieved remarkable successes in solidifying its international position.

---

*See Foreign Policy of the Soviet Union During the Patriotic War, Vol. II, pp. 93-104.

The further growth in the might of the Soviet Union exerted a decisive influence on the plans of the Supreme High Command in the summer-fall campaign of 1944. The Red Army had every opportunity to effect large scale advance operations with major political and strategic goals.

Chapter Four

POSITION AND PLANS OF THE BELLIGERENTS BY THE SUMMER OF 1944

2. INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL POLITICAL POSITION OF GERMANY IN THE MIDDLE OF 1944

In the first half of 1944 German industry continued to increase its production output, reaching in July its highest level of development of all of the war years. War production itself had increased considerably. From January through June over 8,600medium and heavy tanks, 17,200 airplanes, 20,500 guns 75 mm caliber and greater, 15,500 mortars, 393,000 machine and submachine guns, and about 1,675,000 tons of ammunition were produced.* In June 5.1 times more tanks, 2.6 times more airplanes, 3.2 times more artillery and rifles, and 3 times more ammunition were produced than in January-February of 1942.**

Regardless of this growth, German war production was on a lower level than the war production of the Soviet Union. In the fascist Reich the need to sharply increase the output of war production was understood. The country possessed production capacities in the metallurgical, fuel, electric energy and machine construction industries which would permit it to at least double its output of arms and military technology. But this was prevented by the capitalist nature of the German war economy.

---

* This estimate is calculated on the basis of average monthly data for all of 1944. In fact during the first six months, war production was somewhat greater, evidently, as it is known that in the second half of 1944, the drop in war production began. See German industry during the war period 1939-1945, p. 270-271.

** See German industry during the war period 1939-1945, pp. 95-96.

The Nazi leadership during the first half of 1944 worked rapidly to raise the level of war production. Since the spring of 1942 a system had been established in industry of the so-called "personal responsibility of the business owners" or "self-controlling industry". Its essence, according to the Reichsminister of arms and war production, Speer, consisted in the fact that the planning and control of war production was effected by a group of business owners themselves.* With this purpose central committees, amalgamations, special commissions were created. In the spring and summer of 1944, the fascist government took measures toward further increasing the output of war production. In March the so-called "Victory Program" was formulated, calling for a 58% increase in production of arms and military equipment by the end of the year. On April 22 and June 19, Hitler signed new decrees for the concentration of arms production and war industry.** On April 20, Speer issued a circular "On reorganizing the operation of enterprise".*** On June 20, Goering arranged the transfer of all matters of equipping the air-force to Speer's control.**** This promoted the further concentration of the war economy under the control of the ministry of arms and war production, which was transformed into a higher organ of control of Germany's economy. The process of concentrating war production meant still further strengthening of the role of monopolies in the Nazi state.

The "system of the personal responsibility of business owners" in industry

---

*See "Nachrichten des Reichministers für Rüstung und Kriegsproduktion", No. 39, 1944.

**Ibid., Nr. 41, 1944.

***Ibid., Nr. 38, 1944.

****Ibid., Nr. 40, 1944.

which had specific results, involved deep contradictions. The "people of industry", of "private enterprise", filling the ministry of arms and war production, its committees and commissions, were in the majority business owners or highly placed servants of monopolies. Having consolidated their positions in the apparatus controlling industry, they used it above all to increase the profits of their enterprises by increasing the exploitation of German and foreign workers and prisoners of war, and to see that the monopolies swallowed up medium and small businesses. Naturally the competition between the monopolies became ever more acute.

In practice, "planning", "concentrating industry", "reorganizing business" furthered the growth of war production only insofar as they satisfied the interests of the monopolists. In a speech on June 9, before the representatives of Rhine-Westphalian industry, Speer, praising the system of "self-controlling industry" in every way, nevertheless revealed its vices, voluntarily or not. The Reichsminister said that his plenipotentiaries were accused of "giving favors to their enterprises when distributing raw materials or labor forces", and reproached the business owners. "Although", he said, "we are concerned that each enterprise should produce only one type of product, again and again, we find the directors of businesses who are producing the most varied items."* Speer was forced to admit that if he were given 10 years to reorganize business he would, possibly, find other ways to do it.** Thus, the reorganization of industry as applied to the problems of war did not lead to full use of the huge production capacity possessed by heavy industry.

---

*See "Nachrichten des Reichsministers für Rüstung und Kriegsproduktion", No. 39, 1944.

**Ibid.

The defeats suffered by the fascist army in the winter and spring of 1944 were reflected unfavorably in the German war economy. The eastern front, like a great meat grinder, ground up Hitler's divisions. The roads of the German retreat were marked with innumerable crosses on the graves of soldiers and officers, abandoned tanks, guns, vehicles. The retreating army required more and more reinforcements and replenishment of arms and ammunition.

The human losses sustained by the fascist troops forced the commander of the Wehrmacht's reserve army to pose the question of increasing reinforcements for the front. "While at the old figure, the monthly (reinforcement - Ed.) norm was 200,000 men", stated the commander, "it should now be increased by 70,000. Consequently, 270,000 per month are required, and 1.62 million men for the summer period... To supply a figure of 1.6 million, approximately 400,000 men, if not less, are available, according to the plan. The remaining 1.2 million men may be recruited from the reserves."*

Losses in arms and military equipment also increased catastrophically. In the first half of 1944 the captured equipment service of Red Army took from battlefields a huge quantity of the arms, ammunition, and military equipment of the German fascist troops. The following data speak eloquently of this. 8,100 guns, 3,500 mortars, 23,500 machine guns, 184,000 carbines, 3,000 tanks and assault guns, 3,300 tractors and towing vehicles, 61,300 vehicles, 11,700,000 projectiles and 2,300,000 mines were collected.** In some cases, the enemy had time to collect the damaged equipment and send it to Germany. A part of the German arms and equipment fell into the hands of

---

*The defeat of German imperialism in the Second World War., p. 258.

**IML. Documents and Materials of the Department of History of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. 17560, p.3.

partisans as trophies. According to the statements of West German economists, the losses "decreased the available quantity of arms to such an extent that they exceeded the production capacity of industry". The deficit in aircraft was felt particularly acutely. In spite of the growth in aircraft production, their numbers in front aviation not only did not increase, they actually decreased.*

In addition to difficulties connected with the system of "self-controlling industry", the fulfillment of the "Victory Program" also encountered the shortage of human reserves. The balance drawn in May 1944 showed that the number of employed workers and employees had decreased by 700,000 since May 1943. It would be necessary to send 1,200,000 men to the front. Of the 23 million German workers and employees, 11 million were women. The labor of 7,500,000 prisoners of war and forcibly conscripted foreigners was used.**

In the first half of 1944 the Hitlerites tried to find a way out of the position which had been created by relocating people from shut down non-military enterprises, using domestic production, drawing on new contingents of women and foreign citizens. The fascist leaders did all they could to increase labor productivity. Business owners who had not yet completed the transition of plants and mines to two-shift work from a 10-12 hour working day were to do this immediately.*** As regarded "violators of labor discipline",

---

*See German industry during the war period 1939-1945, pp. 115-116.

**Ibid., pp. 125, 127.

***See "Nachrichten des Reichsministers für Rüstung und Kriegsproduktion", No. 37, 1944.

declared "malefactors", strict measures were recommended;* passive resistance by prisoners of war was to be suppressed by armed force.** But this "fight for working hands", according to the testimony of bourgeois West German economists, had "disappointing" results.

In spite of these difficulties, the front received a huge quantity of arms and military equipment. Throughout 1944, the German fascist army was armed to the teeth.

The defeat of Hitler's troops at Leningrad, in the Right Bank Ukraine, and in the Crimea made Germany's internal political situation still more acute. The German people began to understand that the time of victories was past and the time of suffering had begun. Dissatisfaction mounted in the masses of workers, and antiwar and antifascist feelings increased.

Under these circumstances, the German Communist Party (GCP), which had suffered enormous losses, steadfastly continued its heroic fight to end the war and create a new, democratic Germany. The communists were able to make some progress in uniting all enemies of fascism. In the unbelievably difficult conditions of the underground the Communist Party introduced to the workers the National Committee's manifesto "Free Germany".*** It gave a unified direction to the activity of all antifascist groups.

On the basis of the Platform "We Communists and the National Committee

---

*See "Nachrichten des Reichsministers für Rüstung und Kriegsproduktion", No. 35, 1944.

**Archive of the Institute for Marxism-Leninism for ZK of the SED, A-55.

***The National Committee "Free Germany" was formed in July 1943. This committee is treated in more detail in the third volume of this edition on page 541 (of the Russion text).

'Free Germany'" a militant antifascist front began to form composed of Communists, Socialists, non-party workers, peasants, intellectuals, and servicemen. In Berlin a link was established between the Communist and Socialist leaders, Dr. Leber and Prof. Reichwein. The Communists developed a program on the agrarian question, calling upon the peasants to fight against fascism and the war. Underground groups entered into close contact with progressive intellectual circles: doctors, professors, workers in the arts, engineers, technologists. The antifascists carried on selfless work among the soldiers and officers of the Wehrmacht.

The activity of the antifascist groups in Germany was directed by a cell of the central operative leadership of the GCP formed as a result of the increased cooperation among the largest underground party groups. Radio broadcasts made by the Central Committee of the GCP and the National Committee "Free Germany", as well as broadcasts by Moscow radio, were "a very important source of regular and rapid reception of all instructions and directives orginating from the CC GCP".*

Many underground groups had direct contact with antifascist organizations of foreign workers and prisoners of war. German antifascists saw in them reliable allies. A document of the government procurator's officer of Germany from July 18, 1944, mentions of discovery of a large organization in Leipzig numbering approximately 8,000 so-called "eastern" workers. In another document composed August 29 by the directorate of state security, the SS, 18 cities

*"On the role of the German Communist Party and their Central Committee in the antifascist movement". "Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung", 1961, No. 3, p. 563.

are named, including Berlin, Hamburg, Leipzig, Munich and Dortmund, in which 1,660 Soviet citizens who had been forcibly brought to Germany were arrested for illegal work. The same document mentions that in Braunschweig, Hemnitz, and Karlsbad connections had been revealed between German communists and "eastern" workers and prisoners of war.* The collaboration of German and foreign antifascists was one of the factors that undermined the foundations of Hitler's regime.

Within the country, antifascist agitation and propaganda were intensified, and many illegal newspapers began to be published. In April, the newspaper "Widerstand" was issued in Leipzig; in the Ruhr, the militant leaflet of the working class "Unser Kampf" was issued. As an article in the June issue of this leaflet indicates, in Baden the newspaper "Die Wahrheit" was widely circulated, "Arbeiterzeitung" in Stuttgart.** Newspapers were published in other cities as well. In Köln the antifascists, led by communists, capably organized radio broadcasts. Antifascist groups issued brochures and pamphlets and wrote anti-Hitler slogans on the walls of houses and store windows.

In spite of cruel terror, strikes were held in Germany in the first half of 1944 in which, as the Minister of Justice wrote in the Nazi magazine, "Die Lage", approximately 13,000 German and 200,000 foreign workers took part. Hundreds of thousands of Germans, on the admission of the West German economists,

---

*IML. Documents and Materials of Department of History of Great Patriotic War., Inv. 11915, p. 30-31.

**Archives of the Institute for Marxism-Leninism for ZK of the SED. F. Av. 258a, No. 266.

sabotaged work at military enterprises, since "among the people, especially among women, a psychological resistance was rapidly growing to working in military industry".* In January-March of 1944 alone the fascists arrested and subjected to various types of repression over 130,000 Germans and foreign citizens for their struggle against Hitler's regime.**

In the middle of 1944, the antifascist movement in Germany had not achieved sufficient scope to exert a decisive influence on the country's internal political situation. The German monopolistic bourgeoisie, the true masters in fascist Reich, were disturbed by the growth of antimilitary and antifascist feelings among the people. The bourgeoisie were in mortal fear that the approaching defeat of Germany would evoke revolutionary demonstrations. After the defeats of 1942-1943 on the Soviet-German front, the uncrowned kings of capital laid aside until the future their dreams of world rule; their thoughts and concerns were concentrated on how to maintain the capitalist system in the country.

In these circumstances, Hitler, who had served monopolistic capital as faith and truth for over ten years, was superfluous, changed into a handicap. In 1933 the German bourgeoisie had placed Hitler in power, and in 1943 certain of its circles formed an organization to conspire against him. Hitler's downfall had become necessary, in the opinion of the leaders of German monopolistic bourgeois circles and the reactionary militarists, because it would allow them to begin separate negotiations with the governments of the USA and England, to put on the mask of liberators of the people from fascism

---

*German industry during the war period 1939-1945, p. 127.

**IML. Documents and Materials of the Department of History of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. 11915, p. 67.

and place the entire responsibility for the war and Germany's defeat on the Führer.

The participants in the conspiracy made it their goal to remove Hitler before the Red Army entered German territory. They intended to create, using representatives of the capitalist monopolies and the German general officers who were less comprised by Hitler's fascism, a government that would prevent a possible revolutionary demonstration by the working masses. In the event of success, the new government would open the western front to the American and English forces and throw the German divisions to the east, against the Soviet Union, to delay the Red Army's advance and thereby prevent the complete destruction of fascism in Germany.

Since the fate of imperialist Germany, over which hung the threat of total defeat, concerned not only its rulers, but the American and English imperialists as well, the conspirators found in the latter sympathy and support. The ruling circles of the USA were connected with the "top level opposition" through the chief of American reconnaissance in Europe, A. Dulles. As western bourgeois historians testify, the British also did not remain aloof. W. Churchill expressed his readiness through the agency of the Swedish banker, J. Wallenberg, to begin negotiations with the new German government.*

The conspirators were reactionaries such as generals L. Beck and E. Wiesleben, whom Hitler had offended, K. Loser, the general director of the Krupp factories, and H. Moltke and F. Schulenburg, representatives of well-known Junker families.

---

*See Walter Görlitz. Der Zweite Weltkrieg 1939-1945, Vol. II Stuttgart, 1952, p. 309.

Calls by German antifascists to the struggle against Nazism and the war.

But among the conspirators there were also German patriots from officer circles and from the ranks of the bourgeoisie, who rejected the anti-national, anti-people nature of the one-sided orientation toward the American and English ruling circles.* This group included Col. K. Stauffenberg, Sr. Lt. V. Heften, Col. A. Kwiringheim, and the Social Democrats, J. Leben and A. Reichwein. Stauffenberg, who believed that the future government should take the form of a democratic republic, spoke out against Gordeler's constitutional plan.** Stauffenberg and his supporters recognized the necessity of collaborating with the communists and foreign workers in Germany. His group spoke out for establishing contact with the National Committee "Free Germany" and for negotiations with the Soviet Union.*** Reichwein "saw in Russia a great and powerful country of the future without which and against which no further European policy would be possible...."**** The views of Stauffenberg and his supporters were not without errors and confusion, but nevertheless in comparison with the program of the majority of the conspirators they contained much that was progressive.

Under the influence of external and internal events, the top level opposition intensified its activity. Specifically, a call to the German people was formulated. It was meant to be published after Hitler's murder. The call quite clearly exposed the reactionary essence of the new powers, which were to be

---

*See Vol. III of this edition, p. 542.

**See Walter Görlitz. Der deutsche Generalstab. Geschichte und Gestalt 1657-1945. Frankfurt am Main, 1950, p. 621.

***See "Mitteilungsblatt der Arbeitsgemeinschaft ehemaliger Offiziere", 1959, No. 7, pp. 6-7.

****Gerhard Ritter, Carl Gödeler und die deutsche Widerstandsbewegung. Stuttgart, 1956, p. 340.

established after Hitler's downfall; it reflected the bourgeoisie's fear of a people's revolution. "The moment has come", it stated, "to translate this idea into life, since the final moments are running out. Otherwise, we will have to experience for a second time the November revolution of 1918."* In this document the bases of the governmental system were declared. The rulers rested on the Wehrmacht and the fascist police. The concentration camps were retained in their original form; only a vague promise was given to reconsider the matter of the prisoners. Statements about the war were hazy, although it was not difficult to conclude from them that the fascist army would cease military operations in the west and "defend the Fatherland" in the east. The withdrawal of German troops from the occupied countries was not called for.** Thus the approach to power planned for the new government did not herald any serious changes in the regime existing under Hitler.

The conspirators hesitated in the fulfillment of their plans, acted indecisively. But when, in Belorussia and the western regions of Ukraine in July 1944, the German army, as a result of blows by the Soviet forces, was in a critical position, they made bold to act. The assassination attempt was made in Hitler's headquarters at Wolfschanze near Rastenburg (East Prussia). On June 20, Col. Stauffenberg was able, unnoticed, to place a time bomb in the hall where an operations meeting was taking place. The bomb's explosion did not achieve the goal. Hitler escaped with a fright. The participants in the conspiracy did not make use of the convenient moment to overthrow Hitler and seize power. Instead of acting decisively, they gathered in one of the offices

---

*Quoted from Otto Winzer. Twelve years of struggle against fascism and war. Notes on the history of the Communist Party of Germany in the period from 1933 to 1945. Moscow, Izd. inostrannoy literatury, 1956, pp. 219-221.

**Quoted from Otto Winzer. Twelve years of struggle against fascism and war. Notes on the history of the Communist Party of Germany in the period from 1933 to 1945. Moscow, Izd. inostrannoy literatury, 1956, pp. 219-221.

of the main armed forces headquarters in Berlin and became involved in long arguments. Those close to Hitler, recoveringfrom the surprise, ruthlessly suppressed the putsch. The July 20 mutiny failed primarily because its organizers, fearing the masses, attempted to carry out only a palace revolt. The participants in the conspiracy did not want to rely on the workers and soldiers.

The Nazis began mass arrests and executions. In this not only the conspirators and their supporters suffered, but many participants in the anti-fascist movement as well. In one "special operation" over 7,000 people arrested, primarily activists of the Communist and Social Democratic Parties of Germany. The Gestapo inflicted a blow on the core of the antifascist movement "Free Germany", on underground groups in Thuringen and Saxony, in Berlin, Hamburg, Köln and other cities. Many Communists were executed, including Anton Zefkov, Bernhard Bestlein, Franz Jakob, Theodore Neubauer, Georg Schuman, as well as well-known activists in the Social Democratic party such as Wilhelm Leischner, Julius Leber and Adolf Reichwein.*

On August 18, in the Buchenwald concentration camp, the leader of the German working class, the chairman of the Central Committee of the GCP, Ernst Telman, was killed. An inflexible fighter against fascism, even in prison he was frightening to the Nazis. In his last letter written as a free man, Ernst Telman foresaw that because of the defeats on the Soviet-German front "the Hitler regime will not deviate to speedily remove Telman; that is, to eliminate him or finish him once and for all". Telman called for a tireless

---

*IML. Documents and Materials of the Department of History of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. 11915, p. 75.

**Quoted from O. Winzer. Twelve years of struggle against fascism and war. p. 226, 227.

battle for the Communist cause. "The flame that illuminates our hearts and fills our spirit", he wrote, "like a bright lamp, lead us through the battle-fields of our life. Strong and sure in character, confident of victory; only being thus can we guide our fate and fulfill our revolutionary debt in the great historic mission which has been entrusted to us and achieve the final victory of true socialism."* The letter ended with these magnificent lines from Goethe's "Faust":

> To this opinion I am given wholly
> And this is wisdom's final say:
> Freedom and life belong to that man solely
> Who must reconquer them each day.

In the face of death, Telman remained just as inflexible as he had been for all the eleven years spent in fascist torture chambers, as he had been throughout his remarkable life.

Fierce terror, which increased still more after the events of July 20, weakened the antifascist movement. The top-level opposition was routed. However, in 1944 Hitler's government controlled the people not only by bloody repression. Shameless chauvinistic demagogy continued to exert a considerable effect on the population, especially on its petty bourgeois strata. The majority of the German people still worked docilely for the needs of the army.

Fascist Germany's affairs in the international arena were far from bright. The internal political situation in the satellite countries had worsened, and the resistance movement had intensified in the occupied countries. Relations

---

*Translated by Charles E. Passage. The Bobbs-Merrill Co., Inc. 1965.

with Turkey and Sweden had grown worse. Germany was threatened with complete external political isolation.

The Hitlerite government, using all its means, including the use of armed force, attempted to keep the vassal states in check. In June it sent Ribbentrop to Finland for negotiations, and after him Keitel. As a result Finland declared its decision to continue the war. In Bulgaria the fascists exerted strong pressure on the czarist clique and the pro-German inclined bourgeoisie. On their orders, the Bagryanov government carried out mass arrests. On March 19 German troops occupied Hungary. The Premier of the Hungarian government, Kallai, was replaced. On March 24 the Germans began the occupation of Rumania. In this way Hitler was able, for a short time, to delay the breakdown of the bloc of fascist states.

The more complicated Germany's international position became, the more stubbornly its leaders clung to the idea of a possible schism in the anti-fascist coalition. In spite of the opening of the second front Hitler and his retainers still hoped that a conflict would arise between the Soviet Union on one side, and the USA and England on the other. The Nazis counted on increased disagreement between the countries of the antifascist coalition in connection with the Red Army's advance into Europe.

Thus Germany's internal political and international position in the spring and summer of 1944 continued to worsen. Nevertheless, it was a very strong enemy possessing broad territories, armed forces in the millions, great economic resources for production of arms and military equipment. Everything indicated that the final victory over this enemy would require great effort from the anti-fascist coalition, and above all from the Soviet Union and its armed forces.

Chapter Four

POSITION AND PLANS OF THE BELLIGERENTS BY THE SUMMER OF 1944

3. THE SITUATION ON THE SOVIET-GERMAN FRONT
THE PLANS OF THE BELLIGERENTS FOR THE SUMMER-FALL CAMPAIGN

The triumphant operations carried out by the Red Army in the winter and spring of 1944 changed the strategic situation. As has been shown, the Soviet forces inflicted heavy damage on the enemy and broke out into the eastern regions of the Baltic area, Belorussia, and western regions of the Ukraine and northeastern Rumania. To prepare fully for new advance operations, the headquarters of the Supreme High Command ordered the troops of the Red Army in the second half of April to halt and consolidate on the lines that had been gained. Upon its orders, on April 17 the 1st Belorussian and 1st Ukrainian fronts went over to the defensive, on April 18 the 2nd Baltic front, on April 19 the Leningrad, 3rd Baltic, 3rd and 2nd Belorussian fronts. On April 22 the order followed to reinforce the defense in the zone of the 1st Baltic front, and on May 6 the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts went over to the defensive.* A short pause occurred on the Soviet-German front. This was the quiet before the storm. Preparations went forward for the summer strategic offensive operations.

The line of the Soviet-German front from the Bering Sea to the Gulf of Finland remained the same as at the beginning of the year (map 4). Between

---

* IML. Documents and Materials of the Department of History of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. 9492, pp. 175-176, 178, 181-188, 195, 245-246. The 3rd Baltic front was formed from the armies of the left wing of the Leningrad front on April 29, 1944, and the newly created 2nd Belorussian front from the armies of the left wing of the former Western front.

the Gulf of Finland and the Black Sea the configuration of the front had changed significantly. On the northwest the line of the front ran along the eartern shore of the Narva River* and the eastern banks of Lakes Chudskoye and Pskov, to the east of Pskov and Idritsa to Lake Neshcherdo; on the west from Lake Neshcherdo east of Vitebsk, Orsha, Mogilev, Zhlobin, west of Mozyr, and further along the bank of the Pripyat' River to Kovel; on the southwest from Kovel, west of Lutsk, Tarnopol, Kolomya and Krasnoil'sk. To the southeast from Krasnoil'sk the front ran west of Suchava north of Iasi to Orgeyev and further along the Dnestr to the Black Sea.

The line of the front formed two wide salients: one north of the Pripyat' River in the territory of Belorussia, projecting toward the Soviet side, and the other to the south of the Pripyat' in the Ukraine, projecting toward the enemy. Holding back the Belorussian salient, the fascist command group covered the way to Berlin from the east and ensured a stronger position for its troops in the Baltic region and the Ukraine. The salient to the south of the Pripyat' adjoined the Carpathians, cutting the front of the German fascist troops, and complicated their maneuvers.

On the Soviet-German front, over a total length of more than 4,000 kilometers, the powerful forces of the Soviet Union and fascist Germany faced one another.

In the Barents Sea, our navy was active. The navy's ships and aircraft supportedfor the right flank of the ground forces, battled with the enemy's naval forces, which were based at the ports of northern Norway, and protected

*The Soviet forces had a small bridgehead on the west bank of the river.

sea communications channels connecting our country with England and the United States of America.

The front from the Barents Sea to the Gulf of Finland was occupied by troops of the Karelian and the right wing of the Leningrad fronts. They numbered seven combined arms and two airborne armies. They were opposed by the 20th German Alpine Army and all of the Finnish troops. The Red Army's breakthrough to Narva improved the situation of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet, which was given the opportunity to create bases of light ships and aircraft in direct proximity to the enemy's Hogland mine-artillery position and to proceed to demolish its southern flank. Favorable conditions were also created for the navy's operations in the central and western sectors of the Gulf of Finland. The Baltic Fleet prepared to support the coastal flanks of the Soviet forces actively in their advance on the Baltic and the Karelian isthmus.

In the sector from the Gulf of Finland to Lake Neshcherdo were positioned the armies of the center and left wing of the Leningrad front and troops of the 3rd and 2nd Baltic fronts -- ten combined-arms and two airborne armies in all. Against them fought army group "North" including the operational group "Narva," the 18th and 16th Armies. This group was supported by the 1st Air Force.

Mighty forces were concentrated in the sector from Lake Neshcherdo to Verba. On the Soviet side were the troops of the 1st Baltic and 3rd, 2nd and 1st Belorussian fronts, numbering 19 combined-arms, including the 1st Polish Army, and five airborne armies. Their opponents in this sector of the front were the enemy's right flank formations of the 16th Army from army group "North," army group "Centre" consisting of the 3rd Panzer, 4th,

9th and 2nd Armies and the left flank formations of the 4th Panzer Army from army group "Northern Ukraine." Army group "Centre" was supported by the 6th Air Force.

From Verba to Krasnoil'sk there were the troops of the 1st Ukrainian front -- six combined-arms, three tank and two airborne armies. They were opposed by army group "Northern Ukraine" comprised of the 4th and 1st German Panzer Armies and the 1st Hungarian Army.

Finally, on the front from Krasnoil'sk to the Black Sea were positioned troops of the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts, including 13 combined-arms, two Panzer and two airborne armies. Against them fought army group "South Ukraine" including the 8th German, 4th Rumanian, 6th German and 3rd Rumanian Armies. Army groups "North Ukraine" and "South Ukraine" were supported by the 4th Air Force.

The position of the Black Sea Fleet had changed radically. The liberation of the Crimea and Odessa allowed it to monitor the enemy's communications and paralyze his transport by sea. Based at Sevastopol' and Odessa, the navy could carry out combat operations directly at the enemy's shores and thereby render considerable aid to the coastal flank of the Soviet troops. In April 1944 the Danube military flotilla was recreated.

Two combined-arms and one tank army were kept as the Supreme High Command's reserves.

The forces were grouped variously in different sectors. Between the Pripyat' and the Black Sea were 39.2% of the Red Army's rifle divisions and 44.1% of the infantry formations of the German fascist army. Both sides had here 80-86% of their tank and mechanized forces. The concentration of such a large quantity

of troops at a sector of the front comprising approximately one-quarter of the entire Soviet-German front was due to the fact that great battles had occurred here in the winter and spring of 1944. Approximately one-third of the rifle formations, both Soviet and enemy, in the central sector of the front, between Lake Neshcherdo and Verba. A smaller part of the troops were located in the northwest theater of military operations. In the first weeks of June a massive regrouping of Soviet troops was completed, which essentially changed the ratio of forces in the sectors of the forthcoming strikes.

The following table gives a concept of the composition of the Soviet Armed Forces by June 1944.*

Personnel, formations, armament and military equipment	Active fronts and fleets	Reserves of the SHC Headquarters	Total
Ground forces in thousands of men	5,691	386	6,077
Air force (including long-distance aviation), in thousands of men	377	70	477
Navy, in thousands of men	357	- -	357
Paratroop forces, in thousands	- -	58	58
Total	6,425	514	6,939
Rifle, motor-rifle, cavalry and airborne divisions	453	23	476
Detached brigades (rifle, mortar rifle, mechanized, marine infantry)	17	- -	17
Fortified areas	19	- -	19
Tank and mechanized corps	22	15	37
Detached tank brigades	36	1	37**
Artillery and mortar divisions	72	11	83
Detached artillery and mortar brigades	82	11	93
Aviation divisions	132	21	153
Guns and mortars (without rocket launchers)	92,557	4,493	97,050
Tanks and attack guns	7,753	2,232	9,985
Operational aircraft	13,428	1,359	14,787

*IML. Documents and Materials of the Department of History of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. 17936, p. 663-664.

**Including two artillery-attack gun brigades.

The table indicates that in spite of the losses suffered by our armed forces in the large strategic operations of the winter campaign their numbers, arms and fighting equipment continued to increase. In five months in 1944, the personnel of the Soviet troops increased by over 200,000 men; the number of tanks andassaultguns by 4,357, that is by 77%; operational aircraft increased by 5,969, or 68%. Only the quantity of guns and mortars remained at its previous level. The might of the artillery increased during this time due to the production of new larger-caliber guns. The large admission of fighting equipment enabled Headquarters to increase its reserves of tanks eight-fold in comparison with the beginning of the winter campaign, and of aircraft over four-fold.

In addition, by June 1, 1944, Polish, Czech, Rumanian, Yugoslav and French units and formations numbering 104,000 men were on Soviet territory, with 1,220 guns, 163 tanks and 122 aircraft.*

As before, Fascist Germany held the greater part of its most battleworthy formations on the Soviet-German front. Here by June 1, 1944, were positioned 228 divisions and 23 brigades, including 23 tank and 7 motorized divisions. Forty-nine divisions and 18 brigades belonged to satellites and 17? divisions and 5 brigades to Germany. Thus 56% of all of the Wehrmacht's ground troops, then numbering 324 divisions,** were acting against the Red Army, 63% when one takes into account the satellite forces.

The total numbers of the enemy forces fighting on the Soviet-German front were 4 million men, including 3.2 million in the German fascist troops

*IML. Documents and Materials of the Department of History of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. 17936, p. 670.

**Ibid., p. 677.

and 800,000 in the Rumanian, Hungarian and Finnish forces. Their armament included powerful fighting equipment: 48,635 guns and mortars, 5,250 tanks and assault guns, 2,796 operational aircraft. The Hitlerite command group concentrated on the eastern front 71% of all guns and mortars, 57% of all tanks and assault guns, and 51% of all the operational aircraft that they had at their disposal at that time.*

During the winter campaign, in spite of the transfer of divisions from the west and a large degree of current reinforcement of men and equipment, the enemy's armed forces on the Soviet-German front had diminished greatly. The number of German soldiers and officers had decreased by 1 million. Hungary and particularly Rumania had also suffered huge losses and were forced to send almost all of their armed forces to the front. But this compensated for only 100,000 of the enemy's human losses. The total numbers of the enemy's troops positioned against the Red Army were less by 900,000 men by June 1 than on January 1, 1944.

Thus by the start of the summer campaign the Soviet armed forces exceeded the troops of the fascist bloc countries stationed against them in men by 1.7 times, in guns and mortars (without anti-aircraft artillery) by 1.8 times, in tanks and assault guns by 1.6 times, and in operational aircraft by 4.9 times.** The morale of the Soviet soldiers, due to the social nature of the Red Army, was always immeasurably higher than the morale of

---

*IML. Documents and Materials of the Department of History of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. 17936, p. 676-677.

**Without taking into consideration the reserves of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command and the reserves of the German High Command of ground forces. Soviet forces here include Polish, Czech, Rumanian, Yugoslav and French units and formations.

the enemy's soldiers and officers. The victories in the winter campaign raised the moral and political condition of the Soviet troops still more. The German fascist armies' fighting spirit, however, had decreased considerably.

The political goals of the advance of the USSR's armed forces in the summer-fall campaign of 1944, had been formulated in the May 1st order of the Supreme High Commander. They were "to purge all our land of the fascist aggressors and to re-establish the legal boundaries of the Soviet Union along the entire line, from the Black Sea to the Barents Sea....to free from German bondage our brothers the Poles and Czech and other peoples of Western Europe allied with us, who are under the heel of Hitler Germany."* The international, internal political and strategic situation enabled the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command to outline plans for the decisive advance by the Red Army.

But the available forces were far from sufficient to carry out a simultaneous advance in the summer and fall of 1944, along the entire Soviet-German front. The German fascist army was still a powerful adversary and occupied well-equipped defensive lines. In order to organize an advance under these conditions with major political and strategic goals, a high level of military art was required, as well as corresponding logistical support for the troops and increased political work by the political organs and party organizations.

The Soviet Supreme High Command decided to begin the advance in the summer not simultaneously along the entire front, but sequentially, inflicting strikes

*J. Stalin. On the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union. Ed. 5, Moscow, Gospolitizidat, 1953, p. 145, 146.

in different directions. A general idea of the Headquarters' concept is given by the following message from J.V. Stalin to F. Roosevelt and W. Churchill. On June 6, the head of the Soviet government wrote frankly: "The overall advance of the Soviet forces will spread in stages by committing the armies sequentially to advance operations."* In his message of June 9 it was stated: "Preparations for the summer advance of the Soviet forces are being completed. Tomorrow, June 10, the first round of our summer advance will open on the Leningrad front."** In a message of June 21 he informed the Allies: "In no more than a week the second round of the summer advance of the Soviet forces will begin."*** (The subject here was the Belorussian operation. - Ed.) Finally, in a message of June 27, that is after the start of the Belorussian operation, it was stated: "As regards our advance, it may be said that we will not allow the Germans respite, but will continue to broaden the front of our advance operations, increasing the power of our onslaught on the German armies."****

The plan for the summer-fall campaign of the Red Army was worked out during the completion of the winter campaign. On April 12 the State Defense Committee decided on the report of a commission which had investigated the situation on the western front. In this decision, which played an important role in the preparation of the plan for the summer-fall campaign, the SDC indicated that in view of the stagnation on the western front and the movement of the adjacent fronts, a line of the front in the sector of Smolensk/Minsk

---

*Correspondence of the Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers with the Presidents of the USA and the Prime Ministers of Great Britain during the Great Patriotic War 1941-1945. Vol. I, p. 226; Vol. II, p. 145.

**Ibid., Vol. I, p. 228.

***Ibid., p. 233; Vol. II, p. 146.

****Ibid., Vol. I, p. 235.

very unfavorable to the Soviet forces had been formed. In the triangle of Lepel'-Mogilev-Minsk the enemy maintained aircraft that could press the rear of the Baltic and Belorussian fronts on very short notice. On the western front side the enemy was closest to Moscow. The need to rout the enemy's major German fascist grouping in Belorussia was therefore presented as a task of primary importance.

On April 17-19, several days after the decision of the State Defense Committee, the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command, as was noted, issued directives on the transition to defense of all fronts except the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian (the latter received the same orders on May 6). The directives issued from 1-7 May advised all fronts to prepare for the summer advance. The Staff Headquarters demanded increased combat training of the troops, study of the enemy's defenses, and creation of a 25-kilometer combat zone in order to mask the preparatory operations, and so forth.* "The transition to defense", the Headquarters emphasized, "is a temporary measure to prepare the troops for the subsequent advance operations."**

Having determined the direction of the main strike, the Supreme High Command took steps to disorient the enemy and covertly regroup the forces, to create a decisive advantage in forces in the central sector of the Soviet-German front. Headquarters attempted to maintain in the enemy an impression that the Red Army was preparing for a major strike in the southern sector of the Soviet-German front. For this purpose, specifically, the commander of the 3rd Ukrainian front was ordered to demonstrate a false concentration of troops to the northeast of Kishinev.

---

*IML. Documents and Materials of the Department of History of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. 9492, pp. 217, 221-240.

**Ibid., p. 247.

The Soviet Supreme High Command devoted particular attention to preparing a plan of attack in the main sector, in Belorussia. The plan of this operation was developed on the basis of the above mentioned decision of the State Defense Committee, a deep analysis of the strategic situation, and the proposals of the front commanders.

By the end of May 1944 the plan of the Red Army's advance in the summer of 1944 had been completely formulated. It was graphically illustrated on the planning map of the General Staff on May 30, 1944.* The Soviet forces were to begin military operations in the area of the Karelian isthmus and Southern Karelia. Here the Leningrad was to inflict a blow on Vyborg and the Karelian front between Lakes Ladoga and Onegin and to the north of them. These fronts were assigned the task of destroying the opposing enemy forces and driving the enemy out of the Karelian isthmus and Southern Karelia. The major blow in the campaign was struck by the forces of the 1st Baltic, 3rd and 2nd Belorussian fronts and the right wing of the 1st Belorussian front. The goal of the advance was to destroy the "Center" group of armies and liberate Belorussia. Cooperating with each other, at the first stage the fronts were to break out to the Druya-Shvenchonis-Stolblsy-Zhitkovichi line. At the second stage the troops of the 2nd and 3rd Baltic fronts and the left wing of the 1st Belorussian front were also to switch to the advance. At the same time the advance was begun in the Rava-Russian and Lvov sectors by the troops of the 1st Ukrainian front, which was to rout the "Northern Ukraine" group of armies. /128

Thus the zone in which the main blow in the summer-fall campaign was inflicted originally stretched from Polotsk on the Western Dvina to Mozyr on the Pripyat. In the further advance by the troops of the 1st Ukrainian front the zone broadened toward the south before the Carpthians. By successively including fronts, after the middle of July the Red Army's advance should spread in a wide zone: from Pskov to the northern foothills of the Carpathians. As a result of the advance operations the troops of the 2nd and 1st Baltic and the 3rd, 2nd and 1st Belorussian fronts broke out to the line of Rezikie - Daugavpils - Grodno - Lublin, and the forces of the 1st Ukrainian front to the line of Zamostye - Yavorov - Dnestr River. The other fronts also prepared for the advance, but the question of actual assignments and the time of their transition to active combat operations was to be answered according to the course and results of the preceding operations.

---

* IML. Docs. and maters. of the Dept. of History of the Great Patriotic War. Inv. #17742.

The successful realization of this plan led to the liberation of the northern section of the Leningrad area and Southern Karèlia, Belorussia, the western regions of the Ukraine, parts of the Lithuanian and Latvian Republics. The USSR had the opportunity to assist its allies, Poland and Czechoslovakia. The further development of the advance on the Soviet-German front made it possible to set as goals the liberation of all Soviet territory in 1944, the removal of Germany's satellites Finland, Rumania, Hungary and Bulgaria from the war, and the aiding of the occupied countries of Southeastern Europe. Finally, the destruction of the "Center" and "Northern Ukraine" groups of armies made it possible, by carrying out sequential strategic operations on the northern and southern flanks of the Soviet-German front, to defeat the "Northern" and "Southern Ukraine" groups of armies. As a result very favorable conditions were created to organize final strategic operations in 1945 in the main sector of Warsaw & Berlin. Further, conditions were eased for the operations of the allied forces in Western Europe.

This was a well-thought out, flexible and logical military strategic plan. The advance in Belorussia, providing superior forces were covertly concentrated in that area, promised major success. The German fascist command group did not expect the main blow by the Soviet forces in Belorussia. Each sequentially-begun advance operation prepared for the success of the next. The performance of each subsequent operation was planned to take into consideration changes in the operative and strategic situation. The enemy was forced to transfer its forces from one sector of the front to another, to scatter its reserves in different directions. The realization of this complex but promising military strategic plan required a high degree of military art from the Soviet forces.

The State Defense Committee and Headquarters of the Supreme High Command took measures for logistical support of the operations planned for the summer-fall campaign. The fronts acting in the main sector were considerably reinforced from the first line of reserves. In May-June troop trains with men, arms and ammunition moved in a constant stream along the railroad lines. In these months the highest level of troop transport of 1944 was seen. The average daily volume of loads to supply the Belorussian operation in June was 3,600 cars, which comprised 25% of troop

/129

transports for the entire railroad network.* It is very noteworthy that on April 27, 1944 the State Defense Committee passed a resolution requiring the Peoples' Commissariat of Railways to carry out preparations to restore the Orsha-Mogilev, Mogilev-Zhlobin-Kalinkovichi, Vitebsk-Orsha, Lvov-Sambor, Stryy-Sambor railroad sectors and others, which at that time were still in occupied territory.** Headquarters were certain that the Red Army possessed all the necessary forces and means to successfully perform the assigned tasks.

The plans of the German command group for the summer and fall of 1944 were of a defensive nature as before. The enemy no longer hoped for a break in the course of the war in their favor. Describing the situation on the Soviet-German front on March 30, the General Staff of the Ground Forces acknowledged the superiority of the Red Army.*** In May, returning to the question of the ratio of forces, they again concluded that the "manpower and material reserves of the Soviet Union should be considered adequate for continuation of the operation."****

On what was the command group of the German fascist army counting in continuing the war? What goals lay at the basis of the military strategic plan? A quite complete concept of this is given by the responses given by the chief of staff of the Supreme High Command, General Field Marshal W. Keitel, during his interrogation by a group of Soviet officers on June 17, 1945.

"Question: When did it become clear to you, as the chief of staff of the Supreme High Command, that Germany had lost the war?

---

* MMC (Ministry of Railways) USSR. Archive division, 1952 Inv. 120, div. 74, Vol. II, p. 546.

** IML. Docs. and maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War. Inv. #17242, p. 2.

*** Ibid, Inv. #13625, p. 269.

**** Ibid, p. 287.

"Answer: Evaluating the situation in the crudest way, I can say that this fact had become clear to me by the summer of 1944. However, the understanding of this fact did not come at once, but after a number of phases corresponding to the development of the situation at the fronts. Further, I must add that for me personally this understanding was expressed in the formula that Germany could not win the war by military means. You understand that the Chief of Staff of the Supreme High Command of the country, which is continuing to carry on the war, cannot hold the opinion that the war will be lost. He can propose that the war cannot be won. From the summer of 1944 I understood that the military had already had their say and could no longer exert a decisive influence - the matter was up to politics...

"Beginning in the summer of 1944 Germany carried on the war to win time, in anticipation of events which should have occurred but did not occur. Great hopes were also placed on the advance in the Ardennes, which should have returned the Siegfried line to Germany and enable the stabilization of the western front.

"Question: On what actual military and political factors did Germany depend in carrying on the war to win time?

"Answer: This question is very difficult to answer, or rather, almost /13
impossible. In the war, in which on both sides many states, different armies, different fleets, different military leaders participated, at any time an entirely unexpected change could arise in the situation as a result of the combination of these various forces. These unexpected events are impossible to foresee, but they can exert a decisive influence on the entire military situation."*

So the Hitlerite command group counted on a clash within the anti-fascist coalition, a schism. It counted on a combination of forces with which the American and British forces could change from allies of the Soviet Union to its adversaries and continue the war jointly with the German army against the Soviet Union.

---

* Quoted from "Voyenno-istoricheskiy zhurnal," 1961, No. 9, p. 80.

The basic idea of the German plan for the second half of 1944 consisted of winning time. The fascist command group considered it necessary to maintain the greater part of its armies on the eastern front, to cover with strong groupings those sectors of the front at which the advance of the Soviet forces was expected. As before, a considerable role was assigned to the preparation of defensive lines.

A considerable effect on the distribution of enemy forces into groups of armies was exerted by the incorrect appraisal by the German military leaders of the intentions of the Soviet command group.

In May and the beginning of June the German Supreme High Command assumed that the Red Army would strike its main blow in the Southwestern theater of military operations between the Pripyat River and the Black Sea. As indicated by the commander of the 12th Army Corps, Lt. Gen. Muller, who was captured during the Belorussian operations, in May a meeting of the generals of the eastern front took place in Sonthofen, at which Keitel gave the following evaluation of the situation: "Concluding from the data on the regrouping of the enemy forces and the general military and political situation, it must be considered that the Russians will probably concentrate their forces in the southern sector of the front." * This erroneous evaluation of the Soviet plan for the summer of 1944 remained unchanged in the middle of June. At the meeting that took place at the General Staff of Ground Forces on June 14 between the chiefs of staff of the armies and groups of armies, the representatives of the "Center" group of armies attempted to prove that major Red Army forces were concentrating in Belorussia. However, "not Hitler, not the OKH permitted themselves to be drawn away from their earlier preconceived opinion that the main blow in the Russian summer advance would be struck in Galicia and that the advance against the 'Center' group of armies would be of a secondary nature and would mark only the beginning of the advance operation."** Keitel held this point of view at the meeting in

---

* IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War. Inv. #13946, p. 31.

** Entscheidungsschlachten des zweiten Weltkrieges. Frankfurt am Main, 1960, S. 454.

Zonthofen even on June 19, that is, several days before the start of the Belorussian operation. The chief of staff of the German High Command continued to believe that the advance of the Soviet troops was most likely in the Lvov and Bucharest sectors.*

The same evaluation of the plans of the Soviet High Command was given in official documents originating from the General Staff of the German ground forces. All of the events, all reconnaissance data, were regarded by the leading members of the General Staff and of the High Command headquarters, on the assumption that in the summer of 1944 the Soviet army would make its main strike in the southern sector of the Soviet-German front. On May 30 the German General Staff of ground forces concluded on the basis of reconnaissance data about major movements of Soviet troops that /131
they were being carried out in the interests of "a major below against the 'Southern Ukraine' and 'Northern Ukraine' groups of armies." Even after the Hiterlites learned of the regrouping of considerable Red Army forces in the central sector of the Soviet-German front, on June 13 the Headquarters judged the advance being prepared against the "Center" group of armies as auxiliary, intended "to confuse the German command forces about the direction of the main blow." The Headquarters believed that "the direction of the main blow of the operations in general remains as before between the Carpathians and the areas north of Kovel."**

This erroneous judgment of the strategic situation led to the enemy's maintenance in the southern sector of the front of denser forces than in the center and the north. In the sector between the Gulf of Finland and the Pripyat, 1700 kilometers in length, on June 1 they had 89 divisions and 2 brigades, while between the Pripyat and the Black Sea on a 1,000 kilometer front they had 111 divisions and 10 brigades.*** Consequently operative densities in the former of these sectors were 19 kilometers to one division, and in the latter 8 kilometers.

---

* IML. Docs. and maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War. Inv. #13946, p. 32.

** Ibid, Inv. #13625, p. 302, 310. Bulletin of evaluations (by the General Staff of German ground forces. - Ed.) of the situation on the Soviet-German front.

*** Collection of materials on the composition of fascist Germany's forces. 4th ed., pp. 88-98.

Meanwhile, by the start of the Belorussian operation the Soviet command force had concentrated against the "Center" group of armies 38% of its rifle and 40% of its tank and mechanized formations,* and 47% of the front aircraft of the Red Army.** The German High Command did not make any significant changes in the composition or groupings of its forces in this sector of the front, which placed the "Center" group of armies in difficult circumstances.

When the Red Army in Belorussia inflicted its crushing blow on the fascist armed forces, the German General Staff found itself and its predictions in a scandalous position. Attempting to emerge unscathed, on July 27 it announced that the first victories of the Soviet forces in Belorussia were completely unexpected, even for the Russians themselves, that "the Russian command force is faced with the problem of altering its decisions to make use of the success achieved against the 'Center' group of armies."*** The Hiterlite generals began to guess which "new" decisions would be made by the command group of the Red Army to develop the "unexpected success" seen in Belorussia.

Now the beaten German generals, and after them their American and English apologists, attempt in any way they can to justify the German General Staff, to place all of the blame for Germany's military defeat on Hitler. Naturally, Hitler bears a responsibility for the adventuristic strategy, for his unlucky generalship. But the German General Staff, which had plumed itself on its centuries-old traditions , must share the "laurels of the officers' art" with Hitler. Before the 1944 summer-fall campaign the Staff made serious errors evident even to people not sophisticated in the military art. The strategy of stretching out the war, of winning time, had revealed a crack.

---

* IML. Docs. and maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War. Inv. #9608, p. 222.

** Ibid, Inv. #12834, p. 1.

*** Ibid, Inv. #13625, p. 321.

Thus, the military strategic plan of the German fascist command group was unsound, fundamentally faulty. Counting on a break in the antifascist coalition was adventuristic and indicated the political limitations of Hitler and his general officers. The military concepts on which this plan was based were also groundless. The creation in the armies of operative reserves from tank forces to strike counter-blows on the Soviet troops that made the breach did not save the situation. The Red Army was fully equipped /13
to carry on a mobile war; it had at its disposal mighty reserves and striking power, and its officers and generals possessed the most advanced military skills. The Soviet troops breached the enemy's defenses, broke into their strategic area, and carried out their advance operations in highly maneuverable formations. Finally, the unsoundness of the strategy of the fascist command group was manifested in the crude miscalculations in judging the plans of the Red Army command group. The military art of the German General Staff was found to be helpless to oppose developing Soviet military art.

CHAPTER 5

THE ADVANCE OF SOVIET TROOPS IN THE KARELIAN ISTHMUS AND IN SOUTHERN KARELIA

1. The situation in Finland. Assignment of the Soviet forces.

The summer-fall campaign began with the advance of the Leningrad and Karelian fronts on the Karelian isthmus and in Southern Karelia. This was due to military strategic and political considerations. As has been shown, the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command believed that the advance against the Finns drew away the attention of the German fascist command group from the main blow being prepared in Belorussia. It was also important to even out the line of the Soviet-German front, destroy the northern salient threatening the Leningrad front and the 7th army, reestablish movement along the Kirov railroad and Belomorsk-Baltic Canal. Finally, a blow on the Finnish army could have major political results, since quite an acute internal political situation had developed in Finland. /13

The defeat of the "Northern" group of German armies in January-February 1944 had a strong effect on the situation in Finland. The ruling classes, which had drawn the country into the war against the Soviet Union, had long watched events on the Soviet-German front with alarm. Before them the

prospect of Germany's inevitable defeat, and consequently the ruin of the "Great Finnish" aggressive plans, were becoming ever more sharply drawn. But while the German fascist forces were located in direct proximity to the Finnish troops entrenched on the Karelian isthmus and near the Sviri River, as well as in the Medvezh'egorsk area, it was difficult for the Finnish reactionaries to refuse the invaded foreign territory. The storm developing above the "Northern" group of armies rolled over Finland with a resounding echo, causing there further worsening of the internal political situation.

Collaboration with Hitler's Germany had led Finland to an extremely serious economic crisis. An acute shortage of manpower was being experienced. Raw materials were insufficient. All branches of industry other than military fell into decay. The majority of enterprises of the textile, leather dressing and rubber industries had totally ceased operation. Agriculture had suffered /134 greatly from the war. The crisis in provisions had become more acute. Even by the end of the first year of the war the daily ration norm of bread per person averaged 200 grams, of fats 10 grams, and of meat about 10 grams.* At the same time hundreds of railroad trains were being sent to Germany with grain, meat and oil.

Carrying on unbridled antisoviet propaganda and playing on the nationalistic feelings of the more backward layers of the population, the ruling clique was able to draw some of the workers and peasants with them in the beginning of the war. However, after several defeats of the Hitlerite armies on the Soviet-German front it became clear to an ever greater number of Finnish workers that the Finnish rulers were leading the country to inevitable ruin. "Dissatisfaction with the war is a common occurrence among the masses in Finland...Among the most conscientious section of the workers a burning hatred is growing toward the rulers - those responsible for the war - and an urge to actively oppose fascism." ** Thus CC ACP(b) [TsK VKP(b)] (Central Committee, All-Union Communist Party bolsheviks) member O.V. Kuusinen described the mood of the people in Finland at the end of 1943. Opposition

---

* See O. Kuusinen. Finland without masks. Moscow, Gospolitizdat, 1943, p. 49.

** O.V. Kuusinen. Finland - vassal of Hitler's Germany. Stenogram of a public lecture. Moscow, 1944, p. 20.

to the war also arose among part of the upper ruling levels. The government of Finland took drastic measures to smother the progressive forces and force the people to obediently perform its will. Mass repression began. Strikes and demonstrations were forbidden. Labor union organizations were not permitted to hold meetings without police present and without prior approval of the agenda by the police. The death penalty was inflicted for sabotage and antigovernment acts.

And still Hitler and his clique, following the situation in Finland, considered these measures weak. At the end of 1943 General Jodl was sent to Finland with a letter from Hitler. The Fuhrer indicated to the Finnish government that it was not taking hard enough a stand with the opposition, whose voice was sounding louder and louder, and that this was creating an impression that Finland was weak and tired of the war.* Hitler demanded that his Finnish helpers establish a still stricter order in the country. Regardless of this, the political atmosphere in Finland was growing ever hotter in the spring of 1944. The people were tired of the war. The great losses suffered by the Finnish forces, hunger, destruction, the robbery of their country by Hitler's Germany, increased the population's dissatisfaction. Under the extremely difficult conditions of the fascist regime and political terror, the Finnish Communist Party did not for one day cease its selfless struggle, at the cost of many sacrifces, to end the criminal war. The voice of the working class, the peasant workers, the progressive intelligentsia, was growing louder, demanding a change in the external political course and and end to the senseless bloodshed. Acts of sabotage against government enactments increased. The majority of members of the Social Democratic Party, the Swedish People's Party in Finland and the agrarian party spoke out against the policy of continuing the war. State councilor Yu. Paasikivi, who later became the President of Finland, played an important role in the opposition.

The serious defeat of the German fascist "Northern" group of armies near Leningrad and Novgorod, and the worsened internal political situation

---

* See W. Erfurth. Der finnische Krieg 1941-1944, S. 217.

in the country forced the government of Finland to consider the possibility of a truce with the Soviet Union. In mid-February, Paasikivi was delegated by the leadership to establish contact with the government of the USSR, determine its position on the question of a truce, and learn on what conditions Finland could withdraw from the war. The government at that time was led by such antisoviet, pro-Hitler politicians as R. Ryti, K. Mannerheim, and V. Tanner. Their vacillations clearly showed the catastrophic situation in which Finland found itself.

On February 19 the government of the Soviet Union stated to Finland /135
the following preliminary conditions for a truce: to break off relations with Germany and intern or deport the German fascist troops located on Finnish territory, to restore the Soviet-Finnish pact of 1940, to draw Finnish troops back to the 1940 border and immediately return Soviet prisoners of war and citizens in concentration camps. Regarding such questions as the demobilization of the Finnish army, compensation for the damages inflicted by Finland on the USSR, and transfer of the Petsamo region, our government felt it was necessary to postpone these decisions until negotiations could be held in Moscow. It was announced to the representative of the Finnish government that if Finland agreed with the preliminary conditions, the Soviet Union was prepared to receive a delegation for truce negotiations.* Considering the losses inflicted by Finland on our country, these were extremely moderate demands. The Soviet government was not motivated by a feeling of blind revenge, but by a rational desire to quickly end the war, avoid new losses on both sides, disengage the Soviet troops operating against Finland and direct them against the German fascist army.

Almost a month the struggle of opinions went on among the Finnish ruling clique. Fascist Germany lent great support to the section of the leadership favoring the continuation of the war. On February 21 the German ambassador in Helsinki passed a note to the Finnish Minister of Foreign Affairs, H. Ramzai, in which it was stated that Finland's withdrawal from the war would be viewed as treachery toward Germany, with all the resultant consequences.** But the country's internal political situation was so acute

*See Foreign Policy of the Soviet Union in the period of the Great Patriotic War, Volume II, p. 90.

**See W. Erfurth. Der finnische Krieg 1941-44, p. 220.

that even this threatening note could not influence the opponents of continuation of the war. The government of Finland was forced again to request that the government of the USSR receive its representatives to further clarify the Soviet truce conditions.

In spite of the fact that the government of Finland had not agreed to the preliminary truce conditions, the Soviet government showed patience and received the Finnish delegation. Finland was given proposals in which such conditions of truce as demobilization of the Finnish army, compensation for losses inflicted on the Soviet Union, and the question of Petsamo were made more concrete. Further, the government of the USSR waived its tenant right to the Hanko peninsula.*

Acceptance of these humane conditions gave the Finnish people the opportunity to withdraw from the war into which the ruling clique had drawn them and permitted Finland to restore its national independence. However, for a time the reactionaries were able to keep the upper hand over that section of the leadership that judged the situation realistically. Pressure from fascist Germany was of great importance in this. Even in the official press of the Dept. of Military Historical Research of the Ministry of Defense of the German Republic, reduction of shipments of provisions to Finland was acknowledged to be "the most effective means of exerting pressure in German diplomacy."** Using Finland's economic dependence on Germany, the latter maintained the coalition. Thus on April 19, 1944 Hitler issued an order to limit several military shipments. Several days before that a decision had been made to cease shipments of provisions.*** As a result the Finnish government rejected the truce conditions and decided to continue the war against the Soviet Union. They justified this anti-national decision saying that the Soviet Union's demand for a breach with Germany and interning /136
or deporting German fascist troops from Finland threatened its national independence.

---

* See External Policy of the Soviet Union during the Great Patriotic War. Vol. II, p. 112-113.

** Operationsgebiet Östliche Ostsee und der finnisch-baltische Raum 1944. Stuttgart, 1961, S. 15.

*** See Ibid, p. 29-30, 62.

This hypocritical motive for rejecting the truce had nothing in common with the actual situation. In their response of April 22, 1944, the government of the Soviet Union exposed the false position of the Finnish government. "In Finland at the present there is no national independence," stated the note from the government of the USSR. "It lost it from the moment that German troops entered its territory. Now the problem is to restore Finland's lost independence by driving the German troops out of Finland and ceasing military operations."*

The Finnish reactionary ruling clique, having spurned the Soviet truce conditions, continued to hope that the German fascist forces would be able to stop the advance of the Red Army and stabilize the Soviet-German front, that at the moment of need Germany would give Finland the aid it required not only in arms, but in troops. It should also be taken into account that the Finnish reactionaries placed great hopes on the government of the USA, which, while a participant in the antifascist coalition, nevertheless continued to maintain normal diplomatic relations with Finland. It is no accident that the former fascist general K. Ditmar writes that in maintaining a connection to the USA the Finns saw "the only route to salvation if in the course of the war Germany's position did not improve."** From this perspective the Finnish government constructed its plans to further carry on the war. The command group of the Finnish army called for a maximum increase in defenses in the summer of 1944 on the Karelian isthmus and in Karelia in order to entrench behind reinforced lines and hold the Soviet territory that had been seized.

In the three years of the war the Finnish troops had created strong defenses based on natural boundaries that were difficult of access. These were especially strong on the Karelian isthmus (map 5). Here the Finns constructed three defensive zones and intermediate positions. The depth of

---

* External policy of the Soviet Union during the Great Patriotic War. Vol. II, p. 115.

** World War. 1939-1945. P. 143.

defense in the Beloostrov-Vyborg sector was over 100 kilometers. The strongest was the second zone, which ran along the line of Taypale - Kivennapa - western Terioki. Finnish historians testify that in this zone there was "a huge quantity of different defensive fortifications... and obstacles (granite blocks) stretching across the entire isthmus."* The Karelian isthmus was defended by the 3rd and 4th Finnish Army Corps** and detached formations of infantry and tanks under the direct command of the Finnish Army High Command. In all there were five infantry divisions, a tank division, an infantry brigade and two artillery regiments from the coastal defense on the isthmus.

A strong defense had also been built up in Southern Karelia. North of Lake Onegin the enemy had built two zones; in several of their sectors were armored cupolas. Further, they had created strong points. The 2nd Army Corps (two infantry divisions and an infantry brigade) and two detached infantry divisions at the disposal of the Finnish Supreme High Command fought here.

Between Lakes Onegin and Ladoga the Finnish defense ran along the Sviri River, which reached a width of 400 meters in the Lodeynoye Polye area and a depth of 4 to 7 meters. In the sector from Oshty to Svir'stroy the Finnish troops occupied a large beachhead on the southern bank of the river. A particularly strong defense had been created in the sector of Lodeynoye Polye - Olonets - Pitkyaranta, where ran the main communications lines of the /137 forces fighting between Lakes Onegin and Ladoga. Here there were three defensive zones, of which the second, in the Megrozero - Obzha sector, was the strongest.*** At depth strong field positions were located on the banks of the Bidlitsy and Tulemayoki Rivers, and on the Loymola - Pityaranta line.****

---

* Eero Kuussaari, Vilho Niitema. Finlands krig 1941-1945. Helsingfors, 1949, s. 125.

** These corps were united on June 15 into the "Karelian Isthmus" group.

*** Archive of the MD (Ministry of Defense) USSR, col. 340, inv. 5372 , div. 484, pp. 395-404.

**** See E. Kuussaari, V. Niitemaa. Finlands krig 1941-1945, p. 192.

On the Sviri the "Olonets" group (5th and 6th Army Corps) fought, including five infantry and four detached brigades.

In all, the Finns fighting north of Lake Onegin, in Southern Karelia and on the Karelian isthmus had 15 divisions, including 1 tank division and 6 infantry brigades. Their forces numbered approximately 268,000 soldiers and officers, 1,930 guns and mortars 76 mm caliber and greater, 110 tanks and 248 aircraft. The enemy's fighting equipment was inferior in quality to that of the Red Army.

In the eastern section of the Gulf of Finland the enemy had the use of 43 medium ships and 33 motor torpedo boats and mechanized barges. On Lakes Onegin and Ladoga they had 5 gunboats, 2 motor torpedo boats and 121 various launches.* The naval air force had 100 aircraft at its disposal.

The Finnish army was fully outfitted and had considerable experience in carrying on battles in woody, swampy and lakeland terrain. The majority of its soldiers fought stubbornly. The overwhelming majority of the officers supported the government's adventuristic policy and stood behind the military alliance with fascist Germany. However, antimilitary feelings did penetrate the military environment. An incident that occurred in the 7th regiment of the 2nd infantry division is indicative of this. Two hundred soldiers of the regiment, having learned of the Finnish government's rejection of the Soviet truce conditions, made a collective announcement of demobilization. Many soldiers expressed dissatisfaction with the war, the hard economic conditions in the cities and villages of Finland, and the German fascist dominance in the country. Some deserted from the army, going to Sweden or hiding in the forest. In spite of these indications of the troops' negative opinion of the war, the Finnish army was on the whole battleworthy.

The die-hard policy of the Finnish government, which had not wished to accept the moderate truce conditions, forced the Soviet Union to resort to

---

* IML. Docs. and maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War. Inv. #9608, p. 231-232.

military measures. At this time the Soviet command group could employ the necessary forces and means to break the Finnish troops that had taken shelter behind strong defensive fortifications. Headquarters decided to carry out a strategic operation on the Karelian isthmus and in Southern Karelia with the goal of defeating the Finnish army, liberating the northern areas of the Leningrad region and the larger part of the Karelo-Finnish republic and its capital Petrozavodsk, restoring the legal boundary with Finland and taking it out of the war. In accordance with this decision Headquarters assigned the task to the Leningrad and Karelian fronts.

The concept of the advance operation by the two fronts was to strike two successive blows on the Finnish army. The advance was begun by the troops of the right wing of the Leningrad front on the Karelian isthmus. The Red Flag Baltic Fleet and the Ladoga military flotilla supported their flanks. Somewhat later two armies of the left wing of the Karelian front transferred to the offensive in Southern Karelia: the 7th army with the support of the Onegin and Ladoga military flotillas in the area between Lakes Onegin and Ladoga, and the 32nd army with the support of units from the forces of the Onegin flotilla, north of Lake Onegin. Before the start of the advance long distance aircraft were to inflict massive blows on the most important military objects in Finland. Karelian partisans prepared 19 detachments for operations against the enemy's communications lines.*

The Headquarters of the Supreme High Command increased the forces in /138
the right wing of the Leningrad and the left wing of the Karelian front. By the start of the operation, in the right wing of the Leningrad front, in addition to the troops of the 23rd army located there, the 21st army (six rifle divisions), two rifle corps, an artillery breakthrough corps and two detached rifle divisions from the Headquarters reserves and the front were concentrated. The main forces of the 21st army deployed in the Oranienbaum area were transferred across the Gulf of Finland by the Red Banner Baltic

* Party archives of the Karelian obkom of the CPSU, col. 213, inv. 29, div. 4, pp. 13-14.

Fleet. This was one of very few operative transports of troops by water during the years of the war. Two further bomber and one airborne assault division were assigned to the 13th airborne army of the Leningrad front. The aircraft of the Baltic Fleet were drawn into the operation, as well as a part of the forces of the 2nd fighter aircraft Guards Corps of the Leningrad antiaircraft defense.

From the Headquarters reserves three rifle corps (nine divisions), an artillery breakthrough division and a number of special formations and units were transferred to the left wing of the Karelian front.

In all, the Leningrad and Karelian fronts in the Karelian isthmus and Southern Karelia had 41 rifle divisions, 5 brigades and 4 fortified areas.* The troops of these fronts numbered approximately 450,000 soldiers and officers, approximately 10,000 guns and mortars 76 mm caliber and greater, over 800 tanks and assault guns.** The 7th and 13th airborne armies included in the makeup of the front had 1,547 aircraft at their disposal.*** The Red Banner Baltic Fleet assigned 175 guns, 90 percent of which were 130 mm caliber and greater, to participate in putting down the enemy's defense. The fleet had the use of 64 medium ships (torpedo boats, gunboats, patrol vessels, mine sweepers), 47 motor torpedo boats and over 300 various launches. The Ladoga and Onegin military flotillas had 27 medium ships and 62 various launches. The naval air force numbered 530 aircraft.****

The Soviet forces exceeded the Finnish in manpower by 1.6 times, in guns and mortars by 3.3 times, in tanks and assault guns by 3.2 times, and in aircraft by almost 6 times. In the sector of the main strikes the superiority of our troops was still greater. In the Gulf of Finland, on Lakes Onegin and Ladoga, the Soviet naval forces exceeded the enemy in almost all classes of warships.

---

* Archives of MO USSR, col. 214, inv. 12174, div. 19, pp. 2-7; col. 340, inv. 13888, div. 7a, pp. 15-16.

** IML. Docs. and maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War. Inv. #17936, p. 690.

*** Ibid, Inv. #12834, p. 1.

**** Ibid, Inv. #9608, p. 232.

By the start of the advance the troops had up to 3 allotments of ammunition, from 3.5 to 5 issues of fuel and lubricants, over 12 to 20 days of rations and fodder.* In the organization of logistical support the Karelian front experienced considerable difficulties, due above all to the poor network of roads in the rear area and in the zone of the impending attack.

On May 1, 1944 the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command gave the fronts a special directive on combat training of the troops for the advance.** The front commanders carried out Headquarters' orders, taking into consideration the features of the planned operations in the given theater of military operations. The soldiers were required to learn to carry out attack operations under specific conditions of terrain and Finnish defense, to fully understand that routing the Finnish army was an important contribution to the rapid liberation of Soviet territory. In this period the command group /13 and staffs of the Leningrad and Karelian fronts and the Red Banner Baltic Fleet worked out plans for the Vyborg and Svirsk - Petrozavodsk advance operations, which were confirmed by the Supreme High Command.

Preparations for the advance went on for a long time at the fronts. Particular attention was given to organizing the troops' mutual support, to regrouping the troops of the fronts and concentrating their strike groupings. The first echelons of the strike groupings took their initial positions three days before the advance began in order to become thoroughly familiar with the very complex conditions of the terrain.

Great importance was attached during preparations for the operation to the troops' combat training. In the closest rear, in terrain similar to that where the advance would take place, fortifications were built like the Finnish defensive zones, with permanent strong points and various obstacles. By turns the troops assigned here learned to overcome these.

---

* Archives of MD USSR, col. 340, inv. 13888, div. 7g, p. 7; inv. 5399, div. 53, p. 1; col. 214, inv. 220201, div. 2, p. 109.

** IML. Docs. and maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War. Inv. #9492, p. 217.

The front headquarters took serious measures to keep the preparations secret and confuse the enemy. When transporting and moving troops, camouflage methods developed during the three years of the war were used. Newly arrived artillery and mortar units were forbidden to open fire before artillery training, radio stations were forbidden to make any transmissions, and telephone calls were kept to an absolute minimum. A specially organized traffic control service established a strict system of movement to the forward edge. On the Leningrad front preparations for an advance in the Narva sector were similated, and on the Karelian front in the Petsamo-Kirkenes sector.

The troops of the fronts had strong party and Komsomol organizations. The armies of the Leningrad front included about 66,500 communists*, and of the Karelian front about 64,000.** For example, in each division of the 30th Rifle Guards Corps of the 21st army there were 2,200-2,300 communists and 1,500-1,700 Komsomol members.*** The large number of communists enabled the military councils and political organs of the fronts to increase the party's influence in each sub-unit, particularly in those which stormed the fortifications.

All political work among the troops was connected with actual combat assignments. An important position in this work was occupied by the study of the Soviet government's statement of April 22 on Soviet-Finnish relations. It was explained to the troops that they were called upon with their successful advance, their mighty blow to the enemy, to hasten Finland's withdrawal from the war. Upon receiving the order to advance, infantrymen, artillerymen, tank crew members, sappers, all held meetings. At these meetings many stepped forward who had participated in breaching the Mannerheim line and storming Vyborg in the memorable days of 1940. They shared their experiences of overcoming the Finns' strong fortifications.

---

* Archives of MD USSR, col. 217, inv. 1217, div. 563, pp. 182, 198, 219, 247.
** Ibid, col. 214, inv. 347843, div. 1, p. 7, 145, 278.
*** Ibid, col. 217, inv. 1217, div. 598, p. 36.

2. The defeat of the Finnish forces on the Karelian isthmus

To rout the Finnish forces on the Karelian isthmus, as has been shown, the 21st and 23rd armies and the 13th airborne army were drawn from the composition of the Leningrad front commanded by General of the Army L.A. Govorov, Military Council member Lt. Gen. A.A. Zhdanov, Chief of Staff Col. Gen. M.M. Popov. Forces from the Red Banner Baltic Fleet, commanded by Admiral V.F. Tributs, Military Council member Vice Admiral N.K. Smirnov, Chief of Staff Rear Admiral A.N. Petrov, and from the Ladoga military flotilla, commanded by Rear Admiral V.S. Cherokov, were also to participate. /140

The basic idea of the operation was that, thoroughly containing the enemy in the Ladoga sector of the front, the main forces would break the defenses on the coast of the Gulf of Finland and rout the adversary. After

that the front reserves were to be brought into the battle, to increase the blow on Vyborg, and by a part of the forces on Keksholm, and to completely drive the invaders out of Soviet territory.

The main blow was struck by the 21st army under the command of Lt. Gen. D.N. Gusev, and having 9 rifle divisions reinforced with tanks and one fortified area. It was assigned the task, with the support of the 23rd army and the Red Banner Baltic Fleet, of inflicting a mighty blow in the center of its zone, to break any defenses and, developing the advance along the Vyborg road and the Primorskoye railroad, to take Vyborg on the 9th-10th day of the operation.

The 23rd army, commanded by Lt. Gen. A.I. Cherepanov, was from the start of the operation to contain the enemy in its zone and then to advance in the general line of Yuryapya. The army included 6 rifle divisions and two fortified areas.

Important assignments were given to the Red Banner Baltic Fleet and the Ladoga military flotilla. The ships and naval aircraft were to destroy the knots of defensive resistance and to put down and destroy the artillery in the coastal regions. The sailors were assigned to organize a diversionary assault landing on the flanks of the enemy's zones of defense and thereby force them to throw part of their forces to the defense of the coast. Finally the fleet and flotilla were required to carry on a battle against the enemy fleet, to prevent the fire of their shipboard guns on the coastal flanks of the advancing troops, to deprive the enemy of the opportunity to transfer reserves and materiel by sea.

The 13th airborne army, commanded by Air Force Lt. Gen. S.D. Rybal'chenko, and the naval airforce under the command of Air Force Lt. Gen. M.I. Samokhin, designated about 900 aircraft for the operation.*

---

* Archives of MD USSR, inv. 12121, div. 3, pp. 52-53; IML. Docs. and maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War. Inv. #12834, p. 1.

Particular attention was given to organizing the suppression of the enemy defenses. A fire strike was inflicted by the 21st and 23rd armies and front, including 5,500,000 guns and mortars 76 mm caliber and greater and 881 rocket launchers, and by the artillery of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet. For this purpose 563 bombers and ground attack aircraft were also assigned.

On June 9, 1944 240 large caliber guns and bombers, as called for by the plan of the operation, conducted preliminary destruction of the enemy's fortifications. As a result, as Finnish historians write, "many defensive fortifications and obstacles were demolished and mine fields were blown up."*

Early on the morning of June 10, after great artillery and airforce preparation lasting 2 hours 20 minutes, the 21st army moved into the offensive. Using concentrated fire and counterattacks, the Finns attempted to hold the first zone and prevent a breach in their defenses. The enemy command group brought an artillery division and a cavalry brigade from the reserves into the battle. On the first day of the operation, however, the troops of the 21st army, with airborne support, rushed the Sestra River, breached the enemy's defenses and penetrated them up to 14 kilometers.**

The Soviet warriors and commanders fought capably. Not far ostrovo a huge enemy pill-box was discovered. The artillerymen of the battery of the 18th Guard howitzer brigade pulled powerful 203 millimeter guns to a distance of 1200 meters from the pill-box and opened fire. The heavy shells penetrated and destroyed the two-meter iron and concrete wa Having fired 140 shells, the artillery demolished the pill-box along with the garrison. For the courage they displayed they were all decorated with orders and medals, and the commander of the battery, Capt. I.I. Vedmedenko, received the title of Hero of the Soviet Union. A grenadier of the 132nd

---

* E. Kuussaari, V. Niitemaa. Finlands krig 1941-1945, s. 12

** Archives of MD USSR, col. 217, inv. 203158, div. 25, pp. 1-

tank destroyer artillery regiment, Sgt. V. R. Nikolayev, destroyed 4 machine gun points and about 40 enemy soldiers and officers. Komsomol member Nikolayev, who was twice wounded, did not leave the battlefield, but continued to support the advancing soldiers of the 45th rifle division with his fire. He was also awarded the rank of Hero of the Soviet Union.*

On June 11 the Supreme High Command issued a statement in which the combat actions of the troops of the Leningrad front were highly commended. Thanks was expressed for their successful breach of the defenses. In honor of the soldiers the capital of our Motherland, Moscow, conducted a ceremonial salute.

The enemy command group, not expecting such a powerful onslaught by the Soviet forces, began hurriedly to transfer two infantry divisions and two infantry brigades to the Karelian isthmus from Southern Karelia and Northern Finland.** But this did not save the Finns. In spite of their furious resistance, the 21st army and the 23rd army, which had been transferred to the offensive on June 11, having received two rifle corps from the front reserves as reinforcements, continued their success in the following days. Supporting the ground forces during these days, the 13th airborne army completed 1169 aircraft takeoffs, inflicting great damage on the enemy.*** The Red Banner Baltic Fleet destroyed the enemy's defensive fortifications with its fire and inflicted powerful blows on their lines of communication in the rear. From the 6th to 13 the fleet's heavy caliber artillery poured over 11,000 shells on the enemy.**** The Ladoga military flotilla supported the advance of the 23rd army's troops with artillery fire.

On June 12 the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command stated in a special directive: "The advance of the troops of the Leningrad front on the Karelian isthmus is developing successfully. The enemy is in disarray, they have suffered heavy losses and resistance is weakened. The troops of the front have the advantage over the enemy... All of this is creating favorable

---

* Archives of MD USSR, col. 33, inv. 686043, div. 71, pp. 11, 23.

** See E. Kuussaari, V. Niitemaa. Finlands krig 1941-1945, s. 122, 127.

*** Archives of MD USSR, col. 217, inv. 269897, div. 3, pp. 59, 66, 73.

**** IML. Docs. and maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War. Inv. #16372, p. 80.

conditions for the further development of the advance."* Headquarters ordered that the retreating enemy be energetically pursued, that all measures be taken for heavy artillery to move rapidly after the infantry and for the constant logistical support of the troops, and that Vyborg be taken by June 18-20.

The troops successfully developed the advance, and on June 13 they broke through to the second defensive zone. Here the enemy concentrated the remainder of their forces which had retreated from the first zone, as well as almost all of the troops on the Karelian isthmus. They placed primary importance on the defense of the Kivennapy region where the Soviet troops had achieved their greatest success. But the enemy had miscalculated.

The front command group, as stated by the plan of the operation, concentrated its main forces not in the Kivennapy sector, but along the Primorskiy highway. Here units of the 3rd artillery breakthrough corps under the command of Maj. Gen. of the artillery N.N. Zhdanov were regrouped. The maneuver of the large mass of artillery was effected covertly and opportunely. Thanks to this at the time of the breach in the defenses up to 250 guns and mortars were in operation per one kilometer of the front in the sector of the main strike**.

One June 14, after great artillery and airforce preparation, the troops /142
of the front began to storm that zone. A strong fire strike, and the commitment of the second echelons of rifle corps to the battle, caused its rapid breach. In one day the troops of the front, with the active support of the airforce and navy, penetrated into the enemy's second defensive zone in a 12 kilometer sector.

In these battles the Soviet soldiers and officers also fought heroically, showing mastery and initiative. The entire front learned of the able deeds

---

* Archives of MD USSR, col 217, inv. 1227, div. 74, p. 175.

** Ibid, div. 95, p. 123.

of Sr. Sgt. N.A. Zaletov of the 188th Guards Rifle Regiment, 63rd Guards Rifle Division. When the company commander became a casualty, communist Zaletov replaced him and successfully led the battle to take a strongly fortified village. The battle ended in the complete victory of the Soviet forces. Sr. Sgt. Zaletov, who had shown himself to be a mature commander, received the Order of Glory 1st Degree, and an officer's rank was conferred upon him.*

As the result of two days of cruel battles the forces of the front in cooperation with the Red Banner Baltic Fleet and with the support of the airforce breached the second zone of defense, which had a large number of permanent strong points, antitank and antiinfantry obstacles. By the close of June 15 a breach was made in the sector from Kivennapy to the Gulf of Finland.** The courageous acts of soldiers from all arms of service were highly regarded by the command group. The Military Council of the Leningrad front called upon the soldiers and officers to perform a new task - "to seize in a very short time the city of Vyborg and return this large and militarily important city to our Motherland." ***

After the loss of the second zone of defense the Finnish command group, under the threat of the complete defeat of the "Karelian Isthmus" group, began to withdraw its troops to the third zone, to the area of Vyborg and beyond the Vuoksu River.**** From Southern Karelia the 5th Army Corps, consisting of two infantry divisions, was quickly transferred to the Karelian isthmus by railroad. This considerably weakened the enemy's grouping in Southern Karelia.

---

* See Bearers of the Order of Glory. Notes. Moscow, Voenizdat, 1960, p. 149.

** Archives of MD USSR, col. 217, inv. 269897, div. 3, pp. 79, 85.

*** Ibid, inv. 33413, div. 4, p. 155.

**** See E. Kuussaari, V. Niitemaa. Finlands krig 1941-1945, s. 138, 148.

On June 18 the question of the catastrophic situation at the front was discussed in a meeting of the government. The next day the Chief of the Finnish General Staff, Heinriks, asked the Hitlerite Headquarters to assign six divisions to support the Finnish troops. On the order of Hitler the answer was given that Germany would extend aid if the Finns would fight for the Vyborg-Vuoksa line.* On June 21 the High Commander of the Finnish army, Mannerheim, assured Hitler that the Finnish forces would resist the Red Army there.** After this on the direction of the German headquarters in Finland, instead of the six divisions requested only the 122nd infantry division from the "Northern" group, the 303rd brigade of assault guns and a squadron of aircraft from the 5th naval airforce arrived.***

The Soviet forces on the Karelian isthmus, reinforced by still another corps from the front reserves, unyieldingly pursued the retreating enemy. In cruel and stubborn battles three Finnish divisions were utterly routed.**** Giving the enemy no respite, the troops of the 21st army broke into the third zone of the Finnish defense and at 1900 hours on June 20 they took the ancient Russian city of Vyborg by storm. By this time thd 23rd army with the cooperation of the Ladoga military flotilla had broken the enemy's resistance and reached the Vuoksa water system on a wide front.*****

Thus the troops of the right wing of the Leningrad front, in cooperation /14 with the Red Banner Baltic Fleet and the Ladoga military flotilla, achieved a glorious victory. In 11 days of battle the Soviet soldiers had breached

---

* See W. Erfurth. Der finnische Krieg 1941-1945, S. 239.

** Ibid, p. 240.

*** See E. Kuussaari, V. Niitemaa. Finlands krig 1941-1945, s. 163; W. Erfurth. Der finnische Krieg 1941-1945, S. 239.

**** See E. Kuussaari, V. Niitemaa. Finlands krig 1941-1945, s. 141, 143-144.

***** Archives of MD USSR, col. 217, inv. 269897, div. 3, pp. 118, 119.

the enemy's mighty defenses. The enemy's hope that they would be able to sit out the battles behind their fortifications was dashed.

After the occupation of Vyborg military operations on the Karelian isthmus continued for another three weeks. The enemy brought in fresh troops, which had not taken part in the battle, and making use of the broken terrain they resisted stubbornly. In the first ten days of July the troops of the 21st army moved forward by 10-12 kilometers northwest of Vyborg, while at that time the 23rd army liberated the regions to the south and southwest of the Vuoksy River and seized a small beachhead on its northern bank.*

On 21-22 June part of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet, which had destroyed the Finnish garrisons, seized the largest islands of the Berks Archipelago, and by June 26-27 had entirely purged it of the enemy. As a result of these actions the rear of the front's sea sector was reliably supported and conditions were created to liberate the other islands of the Vyborg Gulf.** Our sailors blockaded all access to the Vyborg Gulf.

Under cover and with the support of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet, on July 4-6 the troops of the 59th army*** under the command of Lt. Gen. I.T. Korovnikov seized the main islands of Vyborg Gulf**** and began preparations for an attack landing in the enemy's rear.

On July 11,1944 on the order of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command the troops of the Leningrad front moved into the defense.***** The victory on the Karelian isthmus eased military operations for the Soviet forces in Southern Karelia.

---

*. IML. Docs. and maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War. Inv. #9608, p. 270.

** Ibid, inv. #16372, p. 84; Archives of IO VMF (Naval Institute), st. col., div. 5597, p. 83.

*** The direction of the 59th army arrived on the Karelian isthmus from the Narva sector in the last ten days of June 1944.

**** IML. Docs. and maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War. Inv. #16372, pp. 85-88.

***** Ibid, Inv. #9492, p. 350.

The Communist Party and the Soviet government regarded the military success of the troops of the Leningrad front very highly. Forty-eight formations and units received the honorary designations "Leningrad" and "Vyborg." Orders and medals were conferred on 69,205 soldiers.* Twenty-seven men who had been particularly outstanding in the battles on the Karelian isthmus were awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union.

449;

* Archive of the MD USSR, col. 33, inv. 43294, div. 82, pp. 443, div. 85, p. 25.

3. The advance of the Soviet forces in Southern Karelia. Their breakthrough to the border of Finland.

The advance in Southern Karelia began June 21. As has been noted, /143 the 7th and 32nd Armies and the 7th Airborne Army were taken from the units of the Karelian front, commanded by General of the Army K.A. Meretskov, Military Council member Lt. Gen. T.F. Shtykov, Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. B.A. Pigarevich, to conduct the Svir'-Petrozavodsk operation. The Onega and Ladoga military flotillas were also to participate.

The idea of the operation was to surround and destroy the Finnish "Olonets" /144 group with a mighty blow in the region between Lakes Onega and Ladoga and

an attack from the Medvezh'yegorsk direction. Front reserves were then to be brought into the battle to exploit the blow, emerge at the Soviet-Finnish border and clear the southern part of Soviet Karelia of the enemy.

The main strike in the direction of Lodeynoye Polye - Olonets - Pitkyaranta was made by troops of the 7th Army under the command of Lt. Gen. A.N. Krutikov. This army was to force the Svir' River, breach the enemy defenses and, developing the attack with its main forces on Olonets - Pitkyaranta - Sortavala, to break the grouping of the Finnish troops between Lakes Onega and Ladoga and emerge at the legal boundary in the areas of Vyartsil' and to the west of Sortavala. Further, with the forces of one rifle corps and one tank brigade the army was to attack simultaneously in the northern direction and, in cooperation with the troops of the 32nd Army and the Onega military flotilla, to rout the enemy on the western shore of Lake Onega, seize the capital of the Karelo-Finnish republic, Petrozavodsk, and liberate the Kirov railroad.

The army was composed of 12 rifle divisions, 3 naval artillery brigades, and 2 fortified areas. Air support was provided by 588 aircraft of the 7th Airborne Army, commanded by Air Force Lt. Gen. I.M. Sokolov. During the forcing of the Svir', on the orders of Headquarters the bomber aircraft of the Leningrad front's airborne army were to complete 150 takeoffs. Support to the troops on the lakeside flanks was provided by the Onega military flotilla under the command of Capt. 1st Rank N.V. Antonov and the main forces of the Ladoga military flotilla. In the breakthrough sector it was planned to build 2 bridges and 24 ferry crossings and force the Svir'.

The troops of the 7th Army were organized in 2 echelons. The first echelon included two rifle corps composed of 5 rifle divisions and one rifle brigade, and the second had two rifle corps and one tank brigade.

North of Lake Onega three divisions of the 32nd Army, commanded by Lt. Gen. F.D. Gorelenko, advanced. The task of this army was to rout the enemy's Medvezh'yegorsk grouping, to seize Petrozavodsk with the support of the troops of the 7th Army and emerge to the legal boundary in the area of Kuolisma.

In the event that the enemy should transfer forces from Central to Southern Karelia an attack by Soviet troops was planned in the areas of Kandalaksha and Kestenga.

A great deal of attention was devoted to preparations for the assault operations. The personnel of the assault detachments and ships of the flotilla trained steadily for rapid embarkation and landing on an unprepared shore, preparing for action in the rear of the ground troops.

Training the units and formations of the Karelian front for the advance was completed during the days when the troops of the Leningrad front were routing the enemy on the Karelian isthmus and liberating Vyborg. In meetings and assemblies the soldiers and officers of the Karelian front spoke out, assuring the command group that they would do everything to free Soviet Karelia from the German-Finnish invaders. Many soldiers asked their commanders and political workers to entrust to them the most responsible combat assignments. When it was learned that the 2nd battalion of the 99th Guards rifle division was to assign 12 soldiers to occupy a line on the right bank of the Svir' hundreds of soldiers appealed to the political unit's battalion second in command.

From among many volunteers the boldest and most courageous were chosen, most of them Komsomol members. The political organs of the Karelian front printed leaflets for the enemy troops. Leaflets entitled "The Red Army's advance on the Karelian isthmus," "End the lost war," and others were printed in editions of 250,000 copies.

The Finnish command group, having established that Soviet forces were /145
preparing for an attack in Southern Karelia, decided to pull their forces covertly from the beachhead in the Lake Onega-Svir'stroy sector across the Svir' River, and the units fighting in the Medvezh'yegorsk sector to the second zone of defense.

The enemy's retreat was discovered, and the commander of the Karelian front gave the order for the troops from the right flank of the 7th Army to engage in immediate pursuit. By evening on June 20 the formations of this

army reached the southern bank of the Svir'. On the night of June 21 the 32nd Army also began the advance on a front from Velikaya Guba to Povents.

On the morning of June 21 the main forces of the 7th Army carried out attack operations in the sector between Lodeynoye Polye and Lake Ladoga. Over 3,000 aircraft of the 7th Airborne Army struck a blow on the enemy strong points on the north bank of the Svir'. Major artillery preparation lasting 3 hours 32 minutes was carried out. The fire strike inflicted by 1,530 guns and mortars and 312 rocket lauchers ensured a successful forcing of the river.

In the performance of this difficult assignment the Soviet soldiers and officers displayed selflessness and keenness. During the artillery preparation specially chosen groups of guardsmen of the 98th and 99th Guards rifle divisions demonstrated a false ferry crossing with dummies set up on rafts and boats. In spite of the danger to their lives, brave Soviet Guards Sgt. Maj. I.D. Morozov, Sr. Sgts. V.P. Yelyutin and V.I. Nemchikov, Jr. Sgt. I.S. Zazhigin, Sgt. V.A. Malyshev, Privates B.N. Yunosov, M.I. Tikhonov, P.P. Pavlov and many others honorably fulfilled the assigned mission.* Drawing the enemy's fire to the rafts and boats with the dummies, they helped our artillery to expose and destroy the surviving enemy firing positions. For courage displayed in battle the brave warriors were awarded the rank of Hero of the Soviet Union. Their deed helped scouts and supply detachments, and later units of the first echelon on wheeled amphibians, assault boats and tenders, to cross successfully to the right bank and expand the battle beyond the beachhead. Sappers began laying crossings and bridges to transfer fighting equipment across the river. By 1300 hours on June 21 eleven crossings were active, and by evening there were 20.

During the first day of the advance the strike grouping of the 7th Army forced the Svir', breached the enemy's main zone of defense in a sector 12 kilometers wide and advanced up to 6 kilometers. The enemy resisted

---

* Archives of the MD USSR, col. 33, inv. 686043, div. 70, pp. 94, 103, 137, 142, 192, 206, 215, 221, 261, 275, 290.

stubbornly. Nevertheless, by the end of the second day of battle the beachhead on the right bank of the river had been increased to 50-60 kilometers along the front and 10-12 kilometers in depth. The Finnish command group, fearing a complete rout of the "Olonets" group, began hurriedly to withdraw its formations to the second defensive zone and to Petrozavodsk.*

On the morning of June 23 the Ladoga military flotilla supported by 287 aircraft landed the 70th naval rifle brigade in the depths of the enemy defense between the Tuloksa and Vidlitsa** Rivers, to prevent the enemy from entrenching in the second zone and cut off their lines of retreat. This was completely unexpected for the enemy. The sub-units that had landed, supported by the fire of the shipboard artillery and aircraft, attained the assigned objective with a rush. The roads from Olonets to Pitkyaranta were cut off. The enemy soon came to himself. Having decided to drive the attack force into the lake at all costs, he began to bring up infantry subunits, artillery and mortars to the landing area. Finnish aircraft were seen more and more often in the air. Bitter, stubborn battles were joined. The enemy's counter-attacks came one after another. However, the Soviet soldiers bravely and steadfastly repelled the enemy's blows.

During the assault landing and the battles to hold the seized beachhead /146 many soldiers and officers displayed examples of heroism. Gun detachment commander of a detached tank destroyer division Sr. Sgt. F.N. Khudanin was assigned the task of covering the boundary between battalions. In one of the enemy's counterattacks the entire personnel of the detachment became casualties. Left alone, thrice wounded, communist Khudanin did not abandon his weapon. He continued to fire on the counterattacking enemy. In a partially-prone position, drenched with blood, the courageous fighter repelled the onslaught of the enemy, not allowing them to penetrate our battle formations. For bravery, valor and manifest strength of will F.N. Khudanin was awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union.***

1

* See E. Kuussaari, V. Niitemaa. Finlands krig 1941-1945, s. 194.

** Archives of MD USSR, col. 340, inv. 5372, div. 424, p. 37.

*** Ibid, col. 33, inv. 686043, div. 70, p. 270.

With the active support of ships and aircraft, the assault subunits, reinforced on June 24 by the 3rd naval brigade, held the beachhead for four days until the arrival of the troops advancing from the front. The Finnish formations and units were forced to make a roundabout retreat over cart-tracks.

The military operations by the formations of the 7th Army to breach the second zone of defense dragged on. The Finns mined and destroyed roads, blew up bridges, strengthened obstacles before intermediate defensive positions and carried on fierce rearguard battles. The slow rate of advance by our troops was not only due to this, but also to major shortcomings in the handling of the troops, and delays in crossings of the Svir' River by fighting equipment and rear units. On June 23 the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command, which had been following the development of the operation closely, ordered the front to hasten the advance, and gave the troops the following assignments. In the Olonets direction the 7th Army was to develop a rapid advance, striking its main blow using up to three rifle corps in the general direction of Olonets-Pityaranta, to prevent, by another blow in the Kotkozero direction by a part of its forces, the enemy's retreat to the northwest, and to seize Petrozavodsk in cooperation with the 32nd Army. The troops of the 32nd Army were to seize Medvezh'yegorsk no later than June 23, attack Suvilakhti with its main forces and Petrozavodsk with a part of its forces, and to seize the latter in cooperation with the 7th Army.*

Having regrouped its forces and drawn up its artillery, on June 25 the 7th Army stormed the fortified centers of the second zone and the city of Olonets. On June 27 the troops of the army joined the assault force and began the attack on Pitkyaranta.** The advance in the direction of Petrozavodsk and to the north of Lake Onega also developed successfully. The 7th Army's right flank formations, supported by the Onega military flotilla and units of the 32nd Army, moved out from the north, rapidly neared Petrozavodsk. On June 28 the Kondopoga Station was occupied. On this day sailors of the Onega military flotilla staged an assault landing in the region of Petrozavodsk. On the morning of June 29 rifle units entered the city. Over

* IML. Docs. and maters. of the Dept. of History of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #9492, pp. 306-307.

** Archives MD USSR, col. 214, inv. 70441, div. 14, p. 156.

20,000 Soviet citizens were freed from Finnish concentration camps and prisons.* The Motherland ceremoniously saluted the troops of the Karelian front who had taken Petrozavodsk. A number of formations and units were given the honorary designation "Petrozavodsk."

In the liberated city large meetings and mass demonstrations took place. On June 30 on the central square a citywide meeting was held, dedicated to the liberation of the Karelo-Finnish republic by the Red Army. Thousands of workers listened with exceptional attention to the speeches by representatives of party and Soviet organs of the republic and military units about the historic victories of our Armed Forces at the fronts in the Great Patriotic War.

The Finnish army, having lost its defensive fortifications and a large /147
amount of officers, soldiers, and military equipment, continued nonetheless to resist the Soviet forces fiercely. Our troops were forced to advance through a trackless wilderness, through forests, swamps, and lakes, repelling the enemy's furious counterattacks.

To hasten the advance the commander of the front reinforced the 7th Army with the 127th light rifle corps** from the reserves. On July 10 the Soviet forces broke through to Loymola and occupied an important center of the enemy's defense of the city of Pitkyaranta. But the enemy was able to stop the further advance of the troops of the 7th Army. The front stabilized on the Loymola - Pitkyaranta line.***At this time the troops of the 32nd Army were continuing to pursue the enemy toward the Finnish border. From July 11 to 20, advancing under the difficult conditions of the forested, swampy, roadless terrain, they fought to seize the inhabited areas of Kudamaguba, Liusvara, Yaglyayarvi, Suoyarvi, Suvilakhti and many others.

1

* Archives of MD USSR, Inv. 14054, div. 7, p. 26.

** Ibid, col. 214, inv. 14054, div. 13, p. 40-42.

*** Ibid, col. 340, inv. 5372, div. 359, pp. 233-235, 237-239.

Karelian partisans provided great assistance to the troops. Acting in the deep rear along the most important lines of communication, along which the enemy was retreating, they boldly attacked his transport and detached garrisons, destroyed manpower and equipment, blew up bridges, and cut off communications lines. During the advance of the 32nd Army Karelian patriots liberated 11 inhabited areas and held them until the arrival of troops from the front.*

Continuing the pursuit on June 21, 1944 the units of the 32nd Army broke through to the Soviet-Finnish border in the region to the east of Lengonvara. The enemy, attempting to prevent the spread of military operations to his own territory, transferred reinforcements from within the country and from the northern sector of the front. Still fiercer battles developed. The Soviet forces were exhausted by the long marches; the front of the advance had greatly broadened, lines of communication were strained and the rear units had fallen behind. As a result the strike force of the troops was greatly weakened. By August 10 the line of the front had stabilized along the Kudamaguba - Kuolisma - Loymola- Pitkyaranta line. On August 29 the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command ordered the commander of the front to cease advance operations and go over to stiff defense.**

For the selfless actions of the troops in June and July of 1944, 23,900 soldiers of the Karelian front were decorated with orders and medals*** and 51 men were given the high title of Hero of the Soviet Union.

To sum up, in the advance the force of the Leningrad and Karelian fronts, in cooperation with the Red Banner Baltic Fleet and the Ladoga and Onega military flotillas, defeated the Finnish army, shattered the enemy's strongly fortified defenses, penetrated the Karelian isthmus to 110-130 kilometers and between Lakes Ladoga and Onega to 200-250 kilometers.

---

* Party archives of the Karelian obkom of the CPSU, col. 213, inv. 29, div. 4, pp. 13, 14.

** IML. Docs. and maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #9493, pp. 98-99.

*** Archives of MD USSR, col. 33, inv. 43294, div. 82, p. 443; div. 85, p. 25.

Having cleared the Karelian isthmus of the enemy and seized Vyborg, the Soviet troops completed the liberation of the Leningrad region and totally removed the threat to Leningrad from the northeast and north. A large part of the Karelo-Finnish republic and its capital of Petrozavodsk were liberated. The Kirov railroad and the Belomorsk-Baltic Canal were returned to the Motherland, important lines of communication connecting the Far North with the central regions of the country. Having pushed the enemy forces back to the state border, the Soviet Armed Forces created the prerequisites to hasten Finland's withdrawal from the war. /148

The defeat of the Finnish forces on the Karelian isthmus and in Southern Karelia significantly altered the situation in the northern sector of the Soviet-German front. Favorable conditions arose for continuation of the advance developed in July by the Soviet forces in the Baltic region and for expelling the enemy from the Soviet territory above the Arctic Circle. The Red Banner Baltic Fleet acquired freedom of action in the eastern section of the Gulf of Finland and the opportunity to base on the islands of Vyborg Gulf and the Berks (transliterated from Russian) Archipelago.

The advance of troops in the Vyborg and Svir'-Petrozavodsk operations was carried out under complex situations and was difficult. The large number of lakes and rivers and the ruggedness of the terrain made it possible to create a mighty defense echeloned in depth. To breach it required the employment of considerable forces, artful organization of fire strikes, and wide maneuvering of the second echelons and reserves. The nature of the terrain precluded the use of large tank formations, and this hindered the development of tactical into operative success.

The Vyborg operation was an example of the successive breaching of several strongly fortified defensive zones with a large number of permanent fortifications. The decisive factors in this operation were the selection of the correct direction for the main blow, concentration in the breach sectors of massed forces and equipment and their rational application, and secrecy of preparations for the advance. The defense was breached rapidly: in 24 hours the troops advanced 10-12 kilometers. Timely exploitation of gaps formed in the enemy's defenses to bring second echelons and reserves into the battle made it possible to fulfill the main objectives of the

operation in 11 days. It should be noted that in the war of 1939-1940 over three months were required to breach the Finnish defenses on the Karelian isthmus.

It was more difficult for the troops to achieve success on the Karelian front. The Svir'-Petrozavodsk operation lasted 50 days. The average daily rate of advance did not exceed 5-6 kilometers. But although the conditions of the terrain for the advance in Southern Karelia were very difficult and the enemy's resistance extremely stubborn, the slow speed of the operation was to a significant degree the consequence of major shortcomings in handling of the troops. This was noted in a special directive of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command.*

On the whole the operation by the Leningrad and Karelian fronts displayed the further improvement in cooperation between the branches of the Armed Forces and arms of service, the troops' high level of morale and combat qualities, and the power of arms created by the Soviet people.

---

* IML. Docs. and maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War. Inv. #9493, p. 87.

4. Finland's withdrawal from the war

The Red Army's advance on the Karelian isthmus and in Southern Karelia worsened the situation in Finland still more.

Fascist Germany, which had lost an ally in Italy in 1943, watched its remaining satellites vigilantly, attempting at all costs to hold them in check. Hitler's clique, fearing that the Finnish government, finding itself in a difficult position, might enter into a truce with the Soviet Union, quickly sent I. Ribbentrop to Helsinki. The fascist minister demanded firm guarantees from the Finnish leaders of their loyalty to the alliance with Germany.* /149

* See W. Erfurth. Der finnische Krieg 1941-1944, S. 241.

On June 27 the Prime Minister of Finland announced the continuation of the war on the side of Germany. At this time the militant ruling circles lost hope of support from the USA. On June 30 the United States State Department published a note on the breaking off of diplomatic relations with Finland. This demarche was taken by the American government very late, when Soviet troops were smashing the Finnish army, threatening to expand military operations onto Finnish territory, and when Finland's final defeat in the war was essentially a foregone conclusion. Objectively the break in American-Finnish diplomatic relations was a blow to Finland's ruling clique, undermining the position of the pro-fascist government within the country. However, on the wish of Hitlerite Germany the Finnish rulers still continued to carry out their criminal antinational policy.

The situation in Finland grew still worse. In the autumn of 1944 the country's industrial production only reached 40 percent of its pre-war level.* Agriculture was totally exhausted. The cost of living was growing, and speculation prospered. The state financial system was in complete disorder. Inflation had reached huge proportions. While on the eve of the war there had been 1.5-2 billion paper marks in circulation,** by September of 1944 there were 15 billion.*** The national debt had increased twenty-fold, from 3.5 billion to 70 billion marks.****

Finnish workers, peasants and soldiers, worn out by the three year war, insistently demanded that it end. The workers' desire for peace became so strong that even the reactionary leadership of the Central Association of Professional Unions of Finland (CAPUF)***** was forced to dissociate itself from the government's policy.******

---

* See "From the History of the Communist Party of Finland," Moscow, Gospolitizdat, 1960, p. 160.

** See O. Kuusinen. Finland Without Masks. p. 46.

*** See Linia Paasikivi. Articles and speeches of Juho Kusti Paasikivi 1944-1945. Moscow, Izd-vo. inostrannoy literaturoy, 1958, p. 39.

**** See "From the History of the Communist Party of Finland," p. 160.

***** CAPUF was the only national professional union center in the world the directorship of which supported the aggression of fascist Germany against the Soviet Union.

****** See Erkki Salomaa. "Short Outline of the History of the Labor Union Movement in Finland." Moscow, Profizdat, 1960, p. 73.

Under these conditions, in the ruling circles of Finland political trends, the representatives of which insisted on withdrawal from the war, became stronger. President Ryti, one of the most ardent supporters of Finno-German collaboration, found himself in a difficult position. To save the alliance with Germany he decided to retire, offering the presidential seat to another of Hitler's adherents, the commander in chief of the Finnish armed forces, Field Marshal Mannerheim. Ryti retired on August 1. Mannerheim became President. However, under his rule very little changed.

To lend support to the governing circles who were continuing the war against the Soviet Union, on August 17 Field Marshal Keitel arrived in Finland. "The purpose of my visit to Finland," he said, "was to negotiate with the chief of the General Staff of the Finnish army and at the same time with Mannerheim. During the private negotiations Mannerheim informed me that Finland's morale was low; the people wanted peace and desired to end the war as quickly as possible. He gave me to understand that the treaty with Ryti (signed not long before during Ribbentrop's visit to Finland. - Ed.) had not been ratified by Parliament, and that he, as President, had a responsibility to the people and was therefore not bound by the obligations accepted by Ryti...As a direct result of this visit we were forced to order the commander of the German forces in Finland... to immediately begin plans to leave the country." * To cover up the unfavorable results of the negotiations a ceremony was organized /150 at which Mannerheim and the chief of the Finnish General Staff, E. Heinriks, were decorated with German orders. But nothing could now save the Finno-German alliance. After powerful new blows inflicted by the Red Army on the German fascist forces, Finland's decision to withdraw from the war became final.

The victories of the Soviet forces in Belorussia, Lithuania and Eastern Poland and the August offensive in the Baltic region made an enormous impression on our friends and enemies in Finland. Under pressure from broad sectors of the population the Finnish rulers began to seek ways to restore

* Quoted from "Voyenno-istoricheskiy zhurnal," 1961, No. 9, p. 86-87.

negotiations with the Soviet Union on a truce and Finland's withdrawal from the war. The President was forced to announce: "Finland must not follow Germany in all things, she must separate her fate from the fate of Hitler's Reich*". Validating the new political course, the Finnish Prime Minister A. Hackzell said: "In view of the change in the military and political situation of our country and the great desire of our people for peace, the government considered it their duty to establish contact with the Soviet Union in the shortest possible time**".

On August 25, 1944 the Finnish Foreign Minister K. Enckell approached the Soviet government with a request to begin negotiations for a truce or peace treaty between Finland and the USSR. At this time he stated that President Mannerheim did not consider himself bound by the agreement that Pyti had made with Germany***. In its answer of August 29 the Soviet government indicated that it would be willing to begin negotiations only if the Finnish government broke with Germany and demanded the removal of German armed forces from Finland no later than September 15. On September 4 the Finnish government announced their break with fascist Germany. On the order of the government of the USSR the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command ordered the troops of the Leningrad and Karelian fronts to cease military operations against Finland on September 5 at 8:00 in the morning****.

Two weeks later, September 19, 1944, a truce agreement with Finland was signed in Moscow. In it Finland was obliged: to draw its troops back to the 1940 Soviet-Finnish frontier; to disarm any German armed forces located within its territory; to change its army over to a peace footing; to break off all relations with the satellite states of Germany; to compensate the losses it had inflicted on the Soviet Union; to return to it the Petsamo region, which had been voluntarily ceded to Finland by the Soviet Union in the peace treaties of 1920 and 1940; to immediately free all persons convicted of fighting against the fascist regime regardless of their citizenship or national affiliation; to repeal all

*Quoted from "World War 1939-1945," p. 144".
**Quoted from "External policy of the Soviet Union during the Great Patriotic War," Vol. II, p. 345.
***See Kriegstagebuch des Obekommandos der Wehrmacht. Bd. IV. Erster Halbband, p. 894.
****IML. Docs. and maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #9493, p. 137.

discriminatory legislation and all limitations stemming from it, and to dissolve all fascist police, military, and other organizations within the territory of Finland and forbid the further existence of such organizations.*

This agreement confirmed once again that in its policy toward Finland the Soviet Union was guided by the humane democratic principles on which the relations of the country of socialism with small countries were based. Suffice it to say that on its own initiative the USSR declined to move any troops onto Finnish soil, although it had every political and moral basis to do this. The /151 Soviet government agreed on the minimum of demands for reparation, which covered only a small part of the losses caused by Finland to our Motherland.

The truce agreement began a new period in the life of the Finnish people. It struck a strong blow at the semi-fascist reactionary regime that had ruled in that country for over a quarter of a century. The liquidation of fascist organizations and punishment of war criminals created realistic conditions for the democratic development of the country.

The truce agreement restored Finland's national sovereignty and independence. "As a result of the conditions of the Truce Agreement and later Peace Treaty which were favorable to Finland," wrote the General Secretary of the Communist Party of Finland Ville Pessi, "our country was given every opportunity for the independent and free development of its economy and culture." **

---

*See "External policy of the Soviet Union during the Great Patriotic War." Vol. II, p. 215-220.

**Ville Pessi. "The Meaning of the October Revolution for the Independence of Finland and the Growth of the Liberation Struggle of the Working Class." Moscow, Gospolitizdat, 1957, p. 37.

CHAPTER 6

THE ROUT OF THE GERMAN FASCIST ARMY GROUP "CENTRE." THE LIBERATION OF BELORUSSIA.

1. Belorussia on the eve of liberation. The situation in the central sector of the front.

For three years the German fascist invaders exercised their sway in /152
Soviet Belorussia. During this time they inflicted enormous damage on the state economy and the population of the republic. The occupiers barbarously destroyed the majority of industrial enterprises and all electrical plants, demolished 96 percent of all energy capacity and removed or made worthless 90 percent of industrial machines and other industrial equipment. In the villages the Hitlerites burned 1,200,000 buildings, including over 500,000 kolkhoz collective structures and 420,996 houses of kolkhoz members and individual peasants, completely liquidated collective livestock, wrecked

and tractor stations, plundered or destroyed large stores of goods and food products, and almost all raw materials and fuel.*

In large cities such as Minsk, Vitebsk and Gomel' all industrial buildings and 80 to 90 percent of collective buildings were destroyed. The fascists burned the buildings of the BSSR Academy of Sciences, college and universities, wrecked about 7,000 schools, turned almost all theaters, clubs, museums and libraries, where classics of Russian, Belorussian and Western literature were preserved, into ruins.** The total damage inflicted by the occupiers of the Belorussian SSR during the years of war was 75 billion rubles.***

The Belorussian people were subjected to unheard-of humiliation and violence. The entire territory of the republic was covered by a dense network of prisons and concentration camps. In three years the Hitlerites drove approximately 380,000 people, largely youths and young girls, to Germany as slave labor and brutally tortured over 2,200,000 local residents /153
and prisoners of war.**** Some villages and towns were totally destroyed by the fascists. For example, on January 22, 1944 a punitive expedition burst into the village of Bayki, Ryzhansk district, Brest region, and savagely massacred the population. The men were shot in groups of six or seven. The women were burned alive in barns. Dogs were set on the children, who were then also burned. In this monstrous attack 957 persons perished and 130 peasant farms were burned.*****

This regime of cruel terror established by the Hitlerites in Belorussia was a manifestation of the misanthropic policy of German imperialism in relation to the occupied eastern regions. As is well known, as early as 1940

---

* Party archives of Institute of the History of the Party of the CC CP of Belorussia, col. 4, inv. 29, div. 521, pp. 2-3.

** Ibid.

*** See "USSR in Figures. A Statistical Anthology," Moscow, Gosstatizdat, 1958, p. 20.

**** See Judicial procedure in the matter of the crimes committed by the German fascist invaders in the Belorussian SSR (15-29 Jan. 1946), Minsk, Gosizdat BSSR, 1947, p. 370.

***** Party archives of the Institute of the History of the Party, CC CP of Belorussia, col. 4, inv. 33a, div. 596, p. 7.

Himmler's department began to develop a broad plan to colonize the east - the so-called "Ost" plan.* A large place in it was given to Belorussia. The fascists planned to settle three-quarters of the Belorussians in Western Siberia and to Germanize the remainder, to transform them into docile slaves. But they did not succeed. During the three years of occupation the workers of the Belorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, taught by the Communist Party in the spirit of boundless love for the Motherland, carried on a holy war against the German fascist invaders.

The fight of the Belorussian people was led by the Communist Party of Belorussia. On the basis of directives from the CC BCP(b) Central Committee of the Belorussian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) it created a wide network of underground party and Komsomol organizations which covered all of the occupied areas of the republic. By the summer of 1944 in the enemy's rear 7 underground obkoms (regional committees), 4 inter-regional party committees, 125 raykoms and gorkoms (district and city committees) of the CP(b)B, 543 primary party organizations in partisan detachments and brigades, and 237 underground territorial party organizations were in operation. They numbered 11,402 communists in all.**

The Komsomol was a loyal helper to the party in the struggle against the invaders. Six obkoms, 2 plenipotentiary regional CC, 10 gorkoms, 147 raykoms of the LKYUB (Lenin Communist Youth Union of Belorussia) working in the enemy rear led 2,511 primary Komsomol organizations. These included over 31,000 Komsomol members.***

Antifascist organizations involving tens of thousands of fighters worked actively under the leadership of the party organs. These massive non-party organizations were created in the cities and villages on the initiative of communists, Komsomol members and non-party Soviet patriots.

---

* The "Ost" plan is discussed in more detail in the first volume of this edition, p. 359-361.

** Party archives of the Inst. of the History of the Party of the CC CP of Belorussia, col. 4, inv. 29, div. 27, p. 94. The Vitebsk obkom was in liberated territory.

*** Ibid, inv. 33a, div. 75, p. 9; col. 63, inv. 16, div. 2, pp. 12, 22; inv. 17, div. 5, p. 9.

The underground party organizations of Belorussia carried on great political work among the population. The scale of this work can be seen in the fact that in 1944, in the occupied territory all of the underground party committees published newspapers. In addition, many leaflets were published. The circulation of newspapers and leaflets among the population, Soviet radio broadcasts, meetings, assemblies and talks made it possible to keep the workers informed about political and military events, to rally them and bring them into the struggle against the enemy.

After the liberation of the eastern regions of Belorussia, by mid-June of 1944 150 partisan brigades and 49 detachments numbering over 143,000 persons in all were fighting in the occupied areas of the republic.* The partisans controlled a considerable territory.

According to the testimony of Gen. Tippelskirch, during the retreat /154
from the regions of Orsha and Mogilev across the Dnepr the 4th German Army, which he commanded, "found itself in a vast region of swampy forest stretching almost to Minsk." This region, Tippelskirch writes, "was controlled by large partisan detachments and not once during the three years had it been cleared of them, much less occupied by German troops." **

In spite of the fact that all major cities and railroad centers were in the hands of the occupiers, liberated and partisan-controlled regions occupied approximately 60 percent of the entire territory of the republic*** (map 19). For a long time the partisans held such large zones as the Polotsk-Lepel', Borisov-Begoml'sk, Klichevskaya, Senno-Orsha, Ivenetsk-Nalibokskaya, Rossonsko-Osveyskaya, Surazhskaya and others. In these zones Soviet power still existed, and the obkoms and raykoms of the Communist Party and the Communist Youth Union of Belorussia operated.

---

* Party archives of the Inst. of the History of the Party of the CC CP of Belorussia, col. 3500, inv. 12, div. 10, p. 84; inv. 5 - lists and reports of partisan detachments and brigades joined with units of the Red Army in June-July 1944.

** K. Tippelskirch. "History of the Second World War," p. 445.

*** See Sixth Session of the Supreme Council of the BSSR 21-24 March 1944. Stenographic report. Minsk, Gosizdat BSSR, 1946, p. 27.

The partisan zones had a strong influence on the development of the peoples' fight against the occupiers. Here new partisan detachments were formed, from here the orders to the active detachments were given. In these regions hundreds of thousands of Soviet citizens hid from the Hitlerites.

The German fascist command group decided to destroy the main partisan groupings and liquidate the partisan zones at all costs. With this purpose in the winter and spring of 1944 several punitive expeditions were carried out. In January, for example, the punitive force moved against the partisans in the Polotsk-Lepel' zone. In February they effective offensive operations against the partisan detachments and brigades in the Minsk, Mogilev, Pinsk, Polesak and Brest regions. Although the German fascist invaders had numerical superiority and better arms, they did not achieve decisive success.

In April the enemy forces renewed operations against the partisans of the Brest, Minsk and Polessk regions. Particularly heavy battles took place in the Polotsk-Lepel' partisan zone, the territory of which was 3,245 square kilometers. Approximately 80,000 inhabitants lived in 1,220 populated areas of this zone.* It was protected by 16 partisan brigades numbering up to 17,000 persons.** Their actions were directed by the operative group of the Belorussian headquarters of the Partisan movement lead by Hero of the Soviet Union V. Ye Lobanko. For 25 days the partisans courageously held back the onslaught of the enemy's 60,000-man grouping, which was equipped with tanks, artillery, and aircraft. However, the forces were unequal. The partisans were forced to leave the zone.

In May and June the fascist command group attempted to liquidate the Borisov-Begoml'sk and Senno-Orsha partisan zones. However, this was prevented by the start of the Red Army's offensive.

The partisans were forced to carry on intense defensive battles. Even in such circumstances, however, they were able to intensify their blows on

---

* Party archives of the Inst. of the History of the Party of the CC CP of Belorussia, col. 3500, inv. 4, div. 1, p. 165.

** Ibid, inv. 3, div. 77, pp. 40-41.

the enemy's communications lines and local garrisons. In the triangle of Borisov-Minsk-Osipovichi alone in the spring of 1944 the avengers of the people destroyed 26 garrisons,* that is over one-third of the garrisons located in that territory.

The successful operations of the Belorussian partisans was largely made possible by the assistance given by the Soviet Union. Constant communications were established with the partisans, which were maintained by radio and by air. Pilots accomplished flights into the enemy's deep rear, as a rule at night, often under complex meteorological conditions. They broke through /155
the curtain of the enemy's antiaircraft fire and made landings on small, unfamiliar, poorly equipped airfields.

The partisans were supported by the entire Belorussian people, who boycotted the administrative and economic measures of the enemy. In the spring of 1944 the occupiers decided to mobilize the Belorussian population into fascist-type military formations called the "Belorussian Regional Defense." In March an order by the fascist puppet government, the "Belorussian Central Rada," was published in newspapers and broadcast over the radio on the mobilization of men of sixteen ages. This was base provocation by the Hitlerites, directed toward the extermination of the Belorussian people.

The Central Committee of the Communist Party and the government of the BSSR issued a special call to the population and partisans in which the criminal plans of the occupiers were exposed, and Soviet citizens were called upon not to give in to provocation, to break up the mobilization by any means, not to report to the assembly points, and to join the ranks of peoples' avengers. Partisan men and women should help the population to avoid the mobilization, explain to it the fascists' insidious plan, destroy the enemy's parties driving people to the assembly points, wreck the Hitlerite headquarters and garrisons, and destroy their lines of communication.**

---

*Party archives of the Inst. of the History of the Party of the CC CP of Belorussia, p. 90.

**Ibid, col. 4, inv. 33a, div. 601, p. 119.

The underground organizations in the Baranovichi region sent their trusted people to the assembly points, where they explained to the citizens reporting there the truth of the fascist provocation. Many who had been "mobilized" went to their homes after this or left for the woods. The partisans disrupted the fascist round-up of the peaceful population, helped the people to hide from the punitive expeditions or accepted them into their ranks. Thanks to the selfless activity of the underground party organizations and partisans the invaders' bloody adventure was a failure.

An attempt by the occupiers to disrupt the spring sowing and destroy the winter crops also ended in failure. The Hitliterites, feeling that they would not be able to hold out in the seized territory, decided to condemn the Belorussian people to death by starvation. They forced the peasants to plow under the winter crops, forbade them to sow spring crops, seized seed and stock, drove off cattle, and cruelly punished those who went into the fields to work.

In April 1944 the CC of the Communist Party of Belorussia gave an order to the party organizations and partisan command group to carry out mass political work among the population and effect the sowing of all spring crops.

In many villages and towns meetings of peasants were held. They organized to help one another. The partisans gave the inhabitants seed and horses, guarded them during work in the fields, and themselves took part in field work.* The peasants, understanding that the new harvest would be gathered on liberated soil, labored stubbornly and almost completely sowed the fields of Belorussia.

In March 1944 in Gomel' the VIth Session of the Supreme Soviet of the Belorussian SSR was held at which questions of the further struggle against the occupiers and the restoration of the economy in the republic were discussed. The Session sent a greeting to the Belorussian people still under

---

* Party archives of the Inst. of the History of the Party of the CC CP of Belorussia, col 3514, inv. 1, div. 2, p. 53; col. 4, inv. 33a, div. 589, p. 459; col. 3500, inv. 4, div. 60, p. 573; col. 3729, inv. 1, div. 1, pp. 61, 63, 67.

the fascist yoke. The greeting read: "Our dear brothers and sisters! Our victory is near. Be courageous, and do not give in to any of the enemy's provocation...Fan the flame of the partisan movement of all peoples against the German oppressors. Be courageous and steadfast. The victory is near, we will gain it."* The session's resolution inspired the Belorussian people. The partisan struggle grew still hotter in the occupied territory.

After the end of the winter campaign the line of the front in Belorussia was a salient with its tip projecting far to the east (Map 6). /156
This salient was of great operative and strategic important for both sides. Holding Belorussia, the enemy covered the approaches to Eastern Prussia and Poland, ensured a strong position for its army group "North" in the Baltic region, threatened the troops of the 1st Ukrainian front and prevented their further advance to the west. The liberation of Belorussia opened for the Soviet forces the shortest route to Poland and Germany and threatened the enemy army groups "North" and "North Ukraine" with flank blows.

Taking into consideration the great strategic importance of the Belorussian salient, over a long period the German fascist high command created there a strong defense echeloned in depth, consisting of a number of defensive lines. It called the defensive line in Belorussia "Fatherland, stressing thereby that fighting here the German army was defending its homeland.

The enemy's tactical zone of defense included two lines. The first was the best prepared. It had two to three positions, and in each of these two or three continuous trenches connected with communication trenches. The depth of this zone reached 3.7 kilometers. The second zone, equipped according to conditions of the local terrain and the depth of the first zone, had two or three trenches. It was more weakly prepared. The enemy was most strongly fortified in the regions of Vitebsk and Bobruisk, that is on the

* Sixth session of the Supreme Soviet of the BSSR, p. 275-276.

flanks of its defense in Belorussia. There was also a strong defense in the Orsha sector of the front where the Moscow-Minsk main highway ran.

The enemy also built defense lines at operational depth, along the banks of the Dnepr, Berezina, and Shchara Rivers. There was no solid defense in the swampy, forested terrain; it was built in separate sectors and included strong points and centers of resistance.

The overall depth of engineer prepared defenses of the German forces was 250-270 kilometers. The weak side of the defense was the fact that the construction of zones at depth was not complete. Its strong side was its great depth and many zones, as well as the able combination of the region's natural features - rivers, lakes, swamps and forests - with man-made defensive fortifications. The Hitlerites transformed major cities into centers of defense. As early as March 1944 all officers and functionaries of the Vitebsk, Orsha, Mogilev, Bobruisk, Borisov and Minsk garrisons were read an order from Hitler in which these cities were declared "fortified areas." The Führer demanded that they be defended at all costs.

Attempting to hold Belorussia, the German command group employed the strong army group "Centre" commanded by Field Marshal E. Busch.* It consisted of the 3rd Panzer and 4th, 9th and 2nd Armies. In the zone of the impending advance of our forces a part of the right flank divisions of the 16th German Army included in army group "North" and the left flank divisions of the 4th Panzer Army from army group "North Ukraine" also operated.

On the Sirotino-Bogushevsk line fought the 3rd Panzer Army, the main forces of which were positioned in the Vitebsk region opposite the 1st Baltic and the 3rd Belorussian fronts. This army covered the direction toward Vilnius. The 4th Army occupied the defense in the regions of Orsha and Mogilev against the left wing of the 3rd and 2nd Belorussian fronts and covered the direction toward Minsk. In the Bobruisk sector against the

* On June 28, 1944 Field Marshal W. Model took command of army group "Centre."

troops of the right wing of the 1st Belorussian front fought the 9th Army blocking the roads to Bobruisk; the 2nd Army occupied the defense on a wide front (approximately 400 kilometers) in Poles'ya against the forces of the center and left wing of the Belorussian front. /157

In all by June 23 army group "Centre" at the front from Sirotino to Kovel' consisted of 50 divisions and 3 brigades.* Taking into account the units from the forces of the 16th and 4th Panzer armies, against the 1st Baltic and the three Belorussian fronts 63 divisions were in operation, including 3 Panzer and 2 motorized divisions, and 3 brigades, ** This grouping had over 9,500 guns and mortars and 900 tanks and assault guns. The 6th Air Force with 1,342 aircraft supported army group "Centre."

The following figures give an idea of the operative density of the enemy's defending forces: on the average on a 1,100 kilometer front there was one division to 16 kilometers; in the zone of the 3rd Panzer Army this density was slightly over 10 kilometers to one division, in the zone of the 4th and 9th Armies it reached 20-21 kilometers, and in the zone of the 2nd Army it was up to 30 kilometers.

All of the armies had a single-echelon operative structure. The reserves of army group "Centre" and its armies had 11 divisions. The majority of these were tied down by the battle with the partisans. Further, there were three divisions in the reserves of the high command of ground forces (two Panzer divisions in the region of Kovel' and one motorized in the region of Mogilev). If one considers the width of the defensive zone of army group "Centre" such a reserve must be acknowledged to be insufficient.

---

* Collection of materials on the composition of the forces of fascist Germany, fourth edition, p. 92-93.

** In the light of these data, taken from German documents on captured equipment, it becomes completely obvious just how groundless are the statements of West German military historians, for example K. Tippelskirch, that army group "Centre" had only 38 divisions (see his book "History of the Second World War," p. 442).

Because of the progress of the Ukrainian fronts in the winter of 1943-1944 the Hitlerite command group anticipated that the Soviet forces would strike their main blow in the summer of 1944 in the southwestern sector of the front between the Pripyat and the Black Sea. They believed that the Red Army could not attack along the entire front simultaneously. Therefore in Belorussia, according to the calculations of the German fascist command group, the Soviet forces could strike only auxiliary blows. This erroneous judgment of the current situation by the enemy showed the high level of military art of the Soviet command group which was able, unnoticed, to concentrate a massive grouping of troops in Belorussia, transferring many of them from the south. Even after June 10-14 when, according to Tippelskirch, the command group of army group "Centre" learned of the concentration of considerable Red Army forces in Belorussia, in the General Staff "the point of view assuming that the Russians would strike their main blow against the front of army group 'North Ukraine' remained dominant... Everyone was certain that in that particular place the 'blow could be met with a blow.'" Reporting on this, Tippelskirch complains: "In response to a request by army group 'Centre' to assign it at least greater reserves it was stated that the overall situation on the eastern front would not allow for any other grouping of forces."*

Against the German grouping in Belorussia on a 1,100-kilometer front from Lake Neshcherdo to Verba four Soviet fronts were deployed: the 1st Baltic and 3rd, 2nd and 1st Belorussian.

The 1st Baltic front occupied a 160-kilometer line from Lake Neshcherdo to Vitebsk. The 3rd Belorussian front was positioned in a sector 130 kilometers in length from Vitebsk to Bayevo. From Bayevo to Selets-Kholopeyev in a 160-kilometer sector the 2nd Belorussian front held the defense. From Selets-Kholopeyev to Mozyr' the troops of the right wing of the 1st Belorussian front were on the defense and from Mozyr' to Verba the troops of the center and left wing of that front. Thus the 1st Belorussian front was acting in a zone stretching along the front for over 650 kilometers. However, /15

* K. Tippelskirch. "History of the Second World War," p. 441.

its main forces were located on the right and left wings, in the Bobruisk and Kovel'-Lyublin sectors. Between these groupings on a 350-kilometer front from the mouth of the Ptich' River to Ratno in rugged Poles'ya, along the southern bank of the Pripyat River, only the 61st Army was on the defense. Given this positioning it was difficult to arrange close cooperation by the forces concentrated in the Bobruisk and Kovel' sectors. The command group considered that cooperation might be most successfully achieved after the breakthrough by the troops of the right wing of the front to the west from Baranovichi. This was taken into consideration in developing the plan of the Belorussian operation.

Thus the destruction of the enemy groupings in the Right Bank Ukraine, near Leningrad and Novgorod, the widespread partisan struggle in the enemy's rear, and the erroneous appraisal by the German General Staff of the intentions of the Soviet Supreme High Command created favorable conditions for the advance in Belorussia. The flanking position of the Soviet forces in relation to army group "Centre" made it possible to carry out encirclement operations.

THE ROUT OF THE GERMAN FASCIST ARMY GROUP "CENTRE." THE LIBERATION OF BELORUSSIA

2. Preparing the advance

The Headquarters of the Supreme High Command and the front headquarters began preparations for the Belorussian offensive in the spring of 1944. Its goal was to rout the German fascist army group "Centre" and to liberate the entire republic from the occupiers. /158

As a result of study and analysis of the ideas of the front commanders, in the first half of May a preliminary plan was worked out at Headquarters for the advance operation by the group of fronts in Belorussia, which was formulated on May 20 in the form of a report by the deputy Chief of the General Staff of the Red Army Gen. A.N. Antonov. The plan was given the conditional designation "Bagration." According to the plan the Soviet forces were to "liquidate the enemy salient in the region of Vitebsk-Bobruisk-

Minsk and move out to the front of Disna, Molodechno, Stolbsty, Starobin." *

The concept of the operation was to strike blows against the flank of the enemy forces occupying the defense in the Belorussian salient: from the north, from the regions to the north of Sirotino and Liosno, in the general direction of Senno-Borisov-Minsk, and from the south, from the region of Novyy Bykhov and Ozarichi in the general direction of Bobruisk-Minsk.

To execute this plan the creation of two groups of fronts was called for: group "A" (1st Baltic and 3rd Belorussian fronts) and group "B" (2nd Baltic and 1st Belorussian fronts). These groups should consist of 77 rifle divisions and 3 tank, mechanized and cavalry corps. For each front specific objectives for each stage of the operation were determined. The total depth called for by the plan was 200-250 kilometers and duration 40-50 days.**

The plan of the Belorussian operation was examined and refined on May 22-23 at a meeting at Headquarters where the Supreme High Commander, his deputies, commanders and members of the military councils of the fronts drawn on for the advance were present. The idea of the "Bagration" plan - to inflict coordinated blows in the general direction of Minsk - was retained. To effect it the number of troops was to be increased and the composition of the strike groupings of the fronts strengthened. The directions of the /159
blows by these groupings were further specified, and in particular the objectives of the 1st Baltic front were significantly changed. Instead of a deep strike on Molodechno the troops of the front were to advance along the Western Dvina, cut off the enemy army group "North" and thereby prevent it from coming to the assistance of army group "Centre." In this way the operations of the Belorussian forces to encircle the enemy's massive forces east of Minsk would be strategically secured.

The 1st Baltic, 3rd and 1st Belorussian fronts were first to surround and destroy the enemy's flank groupings, the Vitebsk and Bobruisk groupings,

---

* IML. Docs. and mater. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #9492, pp. 263-266.

** Ibid.

and the 3rd and 2nd Belorussian fronts to strike a blow in the center, toward Orsha and Mogilev. After surrounding and destroying the enemy's flank groupings the three Belorussian fronts, by coordinated blows in the general direction of Minsk, were to surround and destroy the large enemy groupings east of the city - the main forces of the 4th and a part of the forces of the 9th Armies.

The advance was planned to begin in a 700-kilometer sector from Polotsk to Mozyr'. Our forces were to breach the enemy's defenses in six sectors widely separated from one another and advance in the Vitebsk, Orsha, Mogilev and Bobruisk directions. The simultaneous breach of the enemy front in six sectors should dismember the enemy defense, break up the enemy's forces, force the Hitlerite command group to scatter its reserves and prevent it from using them compactly to repel our strikes.

Surrounding and destroying the Vitebsk and Bobruisk enemy groupings would create favorable conditions for pursuit of the German fascist forces along parallel roads by forces of the 3rd and 1st Belorussian fronts and frontally by forces of the 2nd Belorussian front. This pursuit led to the surrounding of the main grouping of the German troops east of Minsk at operative depth of the enemy defense.

To effect the Belorussian operation Belorussian partisans, long range aircraft and the Dnepr military flotilla, in addition to the forces of the four fronts, were drawn upon.*

The operation's concept found expression in the directives from the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command of May 31 in which the specific objectives of the fronts were assigned.

The troops of the 1st Baltic front, who were to advance in the Beshenkovichi-Shvenchonis sector, received the assignment of routing, in cooperation with the forces of the 3rd Belorussian front, the enemy's Vitebsk -Lepel' grouping, force the Western Dvina and break through to the area of Lepel'-

* The Dnepr military flotilla was reconstituted in the autumn of 1943 at the base of the formations of the Volga military flotilla.

Chashniki. For this the two armies were to breach the enemy's defense to the southwest of Gorodok and seize the area of Beshenkovichi. A part of the forces of the front was to rout the enemy's Vitebsk grouping jointly with the right flank army of the 3rd Belorussian front and seize the city of Vitebsk. After that the front, having secured itself from enemy strikes from the Polotsk region, was to advance on Lepel'.*

The troops of the 3rd Belorussian front were presented with the task, in cooperation with the 1st Baltic and 2nd Belorussian fronts, of destroying the enemy's Vitebsk - Orsha grouping and breaking through to the Berezina River. The front was ordered to strike two blows: the first by two armies from the area west of Liozno on Senno, while part of the forces of this grouping advanced in a northwesterly direction in order to surround the enemy's Vitebsk grouping in cooperation with the 1st Baltic front, and seize Vitebsk; the second by two armies along the Minsk main highway on Borisov. Having seized the cities of Senno and Orsha, the troops of the front, having considerable mobile forces in their composition, were to destroy the enemy's Borisov group and break through to the western bank of the Berezina in the area of Borisov.** In this way the main forces of the front should be concentrated in the Orsha - Borisov sector. /160

The troops of the 2nd Belorussian front were assigned the mission, in cooperation with the forces of the 3rd and 1st Belorussian fronts, of destroying the enemy's Mogilev grouping and breaking through to the Berezina River. The strike on Mogilev was to be inflicted by one strengthened army. After seizing the city the troops of the front were to advance along the Mogilev - Minsk highway to Berezina.***

The troops of the 1st Belorussian front were ordered to destroy the enemy grouping in the area of Bobruisk and emerge in the Osipovichi - Pukhovichi - Slutsk region. For this two blows must be inflicted (both by

---

* IML. Docs. and maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #9492, pp. 286-287.

** Ibid, pp. 288-289.

*** Ibid, pp. 282-283.

two armies): one from the area of Rogachev on Bobruisk - Osipovichi, the other from the area of Ozarichi in the general direction of Slutsk. The front's assignment was to surround and destroy the enemy's Bobruisk grouping and seize the region of Bobruisk - Glusha - Glussk, and then to advance on Osipovichi - Pukhovichi and on Slutsk,* that is, in the Bobruisk - Minsk and Bobruisk - Baranovichi directions. The troops of the center and left wing of the front were to hold the occupied lines and be in readiness to advance after the troops of the right wing broke through west of the Slonima meridian.

The long range aircraft under the command of Air Force Marshal A.Ye. Golovanov, numbering over 1000 airplanes, were assigned the task of neutralizing the enemy's air force at the airfields of Orsha, Minsk, Bobruisk, Baranovichi, Luninets, Brest and Belostok, and to cut off the enemy's railroad shipments. On the night before the advance the long range aircraft were to strike heavy blows on the main centers of enemy defense in the breakthrough sectors.

The Belorussian partisans received their assignments at the same time. On the basis of directives from the CC BCP(b), by the end of May 1944 the Central Committee of the CP(b)B and the Belorussian headquarters of the partisan movement had developed a plan of action for partisan brigades and detachments during the advance of the Soviet forces in Belorussia. The partisans were to intensify their blows on enemy communication lines, seize and hold advantageous lines, crossings and beachheads on rivers until the arrival of Red Army units, actively aid the Soviet forces in liberating cities and railroad stations, and to carry on intensive reconnaissance of the enemy. In addition, the partisans were to take decisive measures to save Soviet citizens from extermination or being driven into German slavery, to organize armed defense of inhabitad areas and protection of public and private property.**

Headquarters had replenished the fronts considerably. Their strengthening began as early as April. The 1st tank corps was transferred to the 1st

---

* IML. Docs. and maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #9492, pp. 284-285.

** Party Archives of the Inst. of History of the Party of CC CP of Belorussia, col. 3500, inv. 3, div. 111, pp. 67-68.

Baltic front. The 11th Guards Army and the 2nd Guards tank corps were added to the composition of the 3rd Belorussian front, and the 2nd Belorussian front was strengthened by the 81st rifle corps. To the right wing of the 1st Belorussian front were sent the 28th Army, the 9th and 1st Guards tank corps, the 1st mechanized and the 4th Guards cavalry corps; to the left wing were sent the 8th Guards, 2nd tank army, and 2nd Guards cavalry corps. The 5th Guards tank army from the reserves of Headquarters was transferred to the zone of the 3rd Belorussian front.

In addition, tank and attack gun regiments and brigades, artillery, mortar, engineering formations and units were sent to the fronts. Eleven air force corps and five air force divisions supplemented the airborne armies of the fronts. The 3rd and 1st Belorussian fronts received the greatest /161 amount of troops and equipment.

Headquarters of the Supreme High Command began to move its reserves into Belorussia - the 2nd Guards and 51st Armies, which had completed operations in the Crimean peninsula.

Headquarters designated its representatives to coordinate the operations of the fronts: for the 1st Baltic and 3rd Belorussian, Marshal of the Soviet Union A.M. Vasilevskiy, and for the 2nd and 1st Belorussian, Marshal of the Soviet Union G.K. Zhukov. Headquarters' representatives in the Air Force were Chief Marshal of the Air Force A.A. Novikov and Marshal of the Air Force F. Ya. Falaleyev.

In accordance with the directives of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command the front commanders made the following decisions. The commander of the 1st Baltic front, Gen. I.Kh. Bagramyan - Military Council member Lt. Gen. D.S. Leonov, Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. V.V. Kurasov - decided to breach the enemy's defense southwest of Gorodok in a 25-kilometer sector. For this they drew on the forces of two combined armies: the 6th Guards under the command of Lt. Gen. I.M. Chistyakov and the 43rd, which was commanded by Lt. Gen. A.P. Beloborodov. After breaching the enemy defenses the armies were to attack Beshenkovichi and force the Western Dvina; part of the forces of the 43rd Army, in cooperation with the 39th Army of the 3rd

Belorussian front was to destroy the enemy's Vitebsk grouping and seize Vitebsk. Further, the troops of the front were to make an attack on Lepel', securing the main grouping from the Polotsk direction. The 1st tank corps received the order to enter the breach, after the rifle formations seized the line of the Polotsk - Vitebsk railroad, force the Western Dvina and attack Beshenkovichi.*

The advance by the troops of the front was to be supported by the 3rd Airborne Army, which was commanded by Lt. Gen. of the Air Force N.F. Papivin. Upon the start of the advance its assault division was to inflict successive massive blows on the enemy, neutralizing the enemy's artillery and mortar fire. The fighter planes were given the assignment of covering the strike grouping of the front forces from the air.**

Commander of the 3rd Belorussian front, Col.-Gen. I.D. Chernyakhovskiy - Military Council member Lt. Gen. V. Ye. Makarov, Chief of Staff Lt. Gen A.P. Pokrovskiy - decided to form two strike groups: a northern group consisting of the 39th and 5th Armies and a mounted-mechanized group to advance in the Bogushevsk direction, and a southern group consisting of the 11th Guards and 31st Armies to operate in the Orsha sector.

The northern strike group was given the objective of breaching the enemy's defenses in an 18-kilometer sector southeast of Vitebsk. Having effected the breach its right flank 39th Army under the command of Lt. Gen. I.I. Lyudnikov was to advance on Gnezdilovichi and, in cooperation with the 43rd Army of the 1st Baltic front, to surround the enemy's Vitebsk grouping, destroy it and seize Vitebsk.*** The 5th Army commanded by Lt. Gen. N.I. Krylov, having breached the enemy's defenses, was to advance on Bogushevsk - Senno, destroy the enemy's Bogushevsk - Orsha grouping in cooperation with the 11th Guards Army, and then emerge at the Berezina. After seizing the line of the Luchesa River the army was required to ensure the entry into the breach of

---

* Archives of MO USSR, col. 235, inv. 2074, div. 846, p. 10.

** Ibid, p. 11.

*** Ibid, col. 241, inv. 2593, div. 330, p. 48.

the mounted-mechanized group of Lt. Gen. N.S. Oslikovskiy, which was to exploit the success and seize the crossings on the Berezina River northwest of Borisov.*

The southern strike group - the 11th Guards Army commanded by Lt. Gen. K.N. Galitskiy and the 31st Army under the command of Lt. Gen. V.V. Glagolev - was ordered to breach the enemy's defenses in a 15-kilometer sector, rout the opposing enemy forces, seize Orsha, and then advance along the Minsk main highway toward Borisov. The mobile group of the 11th Guards Army, the 2nd Guards tank corp under the command of Maj. Gen. A.S. Burdeyniy, was given the assignment to exploit the army's success, cut off the communications lines of the enemy's Orsha grouping and break out to the Berezina in the area of Chernyavka.** /16

Depending on the course of the advance two alternatives had been considered for bringing the 5th Guards tank army commanded by Marshal of armored forces P.A. Rotmistrov into the battle. According to the first alternative it would enter the battle in the zone of advance of the 11th Guards Army (after the mobile group of the army entered the breach) and advance along the Minsk main highway to Borisov; according to the second it would enter in the zone of the 5th Army to develop the advance in the direction of Bogushevsk - Tolochin - Borisov.

The operations of the troops of the 3rd Belorussian front were supported by the 1st Airborne Army under the command of Col.-Gen. of the Air Force T.T. Khryukin. Before them were the following tasks: to support the breach by ground forces of the enemy's defense and the destruction of the surrounded Vitebsk grouping, and to support the military operations of the mobile group in the depths of the enemy defenses. Two air force groups were created. A large part of the air force formations were to be used to support the troops advancing in the Orsha direction.

---

* Archives of MO USSR, col. 241, inv. 2593, div. 330, p. 50-51. The mounted-mechanized group included the 3rd cavalry and the 3rd mechanized Guard corps.

** Ibid, pp. 53-54, 56-57.

Thus according to the decision of the front commander the enemy defenses were to be breached in two sectors. In this only one army (the 39th) was designated to surround and destroy the enemy's Vitebsk grouping in cooperation with the troops of the 1st Baltic front; the three remaining armies and mobile groups of the front were to advance on the Berezina River. Their breakthrough to that line would create favorable conditions for the further advance in the Minsk and Vilnius directions.

The decision of the commander of the 1st Belorussian front, Gen. K.K. Rokossovskiy - Military Council member Lt. Gen. N.A. Bulganin, Chief of Staff Col.-Gen. M.S. Malinin - was to breach the enemy's defenses in the area north of Rogachev in a 17-kilometer sector and to the south of the inhabited area of Parichi in a 15-kilometer sector with two strike groups, a northern and a southern group, and by coordinated blows by these groups to surround and destroy the enemy's Bobruisk grouping, liberate the city of Bobruisk and then advance toward Pukhovichi and Slutsk.

The northern (Rogachev) group consisted of the 3rd Army under the command of Lt. Gen. A.V. Gorbatov and the 48th Army commanded by Lt. Gen. P.L. Romanenko. The mobile group of the 3rd Army, the 9th tank corps under the command of Maj. Gen. of tank forces B.S. Bakharov, after entering the breach, was to move rapidly out into the Bobruisk area and cut off the enemy's lines of communication.

The southern strike group included the 65th Army under the command of Lt. Gen. P.I. Batov, the 28th Army commanded by Lt. Gen. A.A. Luchinskiy, and the mounted-mechanized group of Lt. Gen. I.A. Pliyev.* The mobile group of the 65th Army, the 1st Guards tank corps, commanded by Maj. Gen. of tank forces M.F. Panov, after entering the breach, was to cut off the enemy's lines of communication to the west of Bobruisk and prevent him from retreating to the west.

The mobile group of the front, the mounted-mechanized group, prepared /163
to enter the breach at the boundary of the 65th and 28th Armies, and to advance on Slutsk, Osipovichi or Bobruisk according to the circumstances.**

* The mounted-mechanized group included the 4th Guards cavalry and 1st mechanized corps.

** Archives of MO USSR, col. 223, inv. 2356 div. 256, pp. 223-229.

The Dnepr military flotilla under the command of Captain 1st Rank V.V. Grigor'yev, which was operatively subordinate to the front, received the assignment of supporting the attack by the forces of the southern group of the 1st Belorussian front with artillery fire and an assault landing, of transporting troops of the 48th army to the west bank of the Berezina, and being prepared to paralyze crossings by the German fascist forces.*

The 16th Airborne Army, commanded by Col.-Gen. of the Air Force S.I. Rudenko, was assigned the task of supporting the advance by the front groups, primarily the northern. The air force was accordingly divided into two groups. The strongest in composition was the northern air group. The control of the 6th Airborne Army, which united several air formations and units, was transferred from Headquarters reserves to the 1st Belorussian front. The night before the advance two night bomber divisions and long distance aircraft were to strike the main centers of resistance in the main zone of enemy defense.

The forces of the left wing of the 1st Belorussian front, by active operations, were to contain the opposing enemy units, to prevent them from being transferred into the Minsk sector and simultaneously to prepare to advance in the Kovel' - Lyublin direction.

According to the decision of the commander of the 2nd Belorussian front, Col.-Gen. G.F. Zakharov - Military Council member Lt. Gen. L.Z. Mekhlis, Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. A.N. Bogolyubov - the Mogilev sector was to be struck by the 49th Army under the command of Lt. Gen. I.T. Grishin. After liberating Mogilev the army was to advance on Berezino. Two armies - the 33rd under the command of Lt. Gen. V.O. Kryuchenkina and the 50th commanded by Lt. Gen. I.V. Boldin - were assigned to hold the occupied lines and prepare for the advance. The commander of the 50th Army was ordered to keep one rifle corps in reserve in order, exploiting the success of the 49th Army, to advance on Chausy (or on Blagovichi).**

---

*Archives of MO USSR, col. 233, inv. 2356, div. 256, pp. 233.

** Ibid, col. 237, inv. 2394, div. 236, pp. 2-7.

The 4th Airborne Army under the command of Col.-Gen. of the Air Force K.A. Vershinin operated in the front. Military operations by this army were planned only for the first day of the operation. The night before the advance one night bomber division and two bomber corps of long distance aircraft were to carry out preliminary air preparations, striking along the forward edge of the enemy defense. The advance of the strike grouping of ground forces should be supported by two assault and one fighter air division.

By June 20 the fronts possessed considerable forces: 166 divisions (6 of them cavalry), 9 rifle brigades and fortified field areas. In armaments the forces had over 31,000 guns and mortars 76 mm caliber and greater, over 5,200 tanks and assault guns and over 6,000 airplanes.* Because the troops of the center and left wing of the 1st Belorussian front were not participating in the first stage of the operation, 124 divisions (including 6 cavalry), 9 rifle brigades and fortified field areas were actually advancing. They included 1,211,000 men, without taking into account the army and front rear services. The forces possessed 24,400 guns and mortars 76 mm caliber and greater, over 4,000 tanks and assault guns, and over 5,300 airplanes, not including long distance aircraft.** /164

In the number of rifle and cavalry divisions the Soviet forces exceeded those of the enemy by three times,*** but by only 2 times in numbers of men. This was due to the great difference in the numerical strength of German and Soviet divisions. In artillery and mortars our forces exceeded the enemy's by 2.9 times, in tanks and assault guns by 4.3 times, and in aircraft by 4.5 times.[4] The creation of such a superiority was one of the most important prerequisites for the success of the operation. The Soviet command group was able to achieve this by regrouping its forces, particularly from the southwestern theater of military operations.

---

* IML. Docs. and maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #17970, p. 42.

** Ibid.

*** Enemy divisions occupying the defense opposite the center and left wing of the 1st Belorussian front are not included in this count; the enemy had 43 divisions in the sector from Lake Neshcherdo to Mozyr'.

[4] IML. Docs. and maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #17970, p. 43-44.

In accordance with the concept of the operation the 3rd and 1st Belorussian fronts had the greatest amount of forces and equipment at their disposal. These included (not including the front and army rear services, air force personnel, or the troops of the left wing and center of the 1st Belorussian front) 65 percent of the men, 63 percent of guns and mortars, 76 percent of tanks and assault guns and 73 percent of the aircraft of all four fronts.

The tactical battle order of the fronts was single echelon. The 3rd and 1st Belorussian fronts possessed strong mobile groups in accordance with the idea of surrounding the enemy in the area east of Minsk. Of the combined-arms armies only the 6th Guards, 3rd and 65th, which had been given deep objectives, were ordered in two echelons. The other combined-arms armies included in the strike groupings were ordered in one echelon, which was called for not only by the depth of their objectives, but also by the number of blows to be struck by the mobile forces. The deployment of the rifle corps was deep on the whole. This would make it possible to intensify the blow when breaching the enemy's tactical zone of defense.

Bearing in mind that the forces were to breach well-prepared enemy defenses, the front commanders devoted a great deal of attention to massing forces and equipment in the sectors of the main strikes. Thus, in the breakthrough sectors of the 1st Baltic, 3rd and 1st Belorussian fronts were concentrated 71 to 80 percent of the guns and mortars and over 50 percent in the 2nd Belorussian front, where the advance would be begun by only one army. This made it possible to create high artillery densities, from 151 to 204 guns and mortars 76 mm caliber and greater to one kilometer of the breakthrough sector.* The massing principle was also generally observed with tanks and assault guns.

Massing of forces and equipment in the breakthrough sectors provided in these areas an overwhelming advantage over the enemy. For example, the assault grouping of the 1st Baltic front exceeded the enemy by 3 times in

---

* IML. Docs. and maters. of Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #17970, p. 296.

men, and 3-6 times in artillery, tanks and aircraft;* in both breakthrough sectors the 3rd Belorussian front had a 2.2-fold advantage in men, 2.3 times more artillery, 10 times more tanks and assault guns, and 7.7 times more aircraft.** The 2nd Belorussian front had a smaller advantage than the two fronts mentioned, but in the southern group's assault sector the 1st Belorussian front's advantage was still greater.

The front headquarters meticulously planned the strategical use of artillery. The duration of artillery preparation for the attack in all fronts was approximately the same, from 120 to 140 minutes. Artillery support of the attack by infantry and tanks should be effected by a single moving barrage combined with a rolling barrage. However, for the first time in the Great Patriotic War, the use of a double moving barrage on a strategic scale was planned for the 1st and 2nd Belorussian fronts.*** The expenditure of ammunition for the first day was expected to be 1.25 to 2.5 ammunition loads, and from 3.5 to 5 ammunition loads for the entire front operation. /165

In planning the battle operations of the air force great importance was placed on concentrating its efforts on the sectors of the main blows by the ground troops. The air force was to cover the assault groupings of the fronts before the advance, to support them during the advance, to ensure the entrance into the breach by mobile forces and their operations at the depth of the enemy defense, to prevent an organized retreat by the enemy or the approach of his reserves, and also to conduct constant reconnaissance.

---

* IML. Docs. and maters. of Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #17970, p. 74.

** Ibid, p. 86.

*** A double moving barrage was effected by two groups of artillery at a depth of 1.5-2 kilometers. The first group conducted an ordinary (single) moving barrage on the main and intermediate lines. The second group fired only on the main lines, beginning with the second. When the fire of the first group reached the second main line, the second group of artillery transferred its fire to the third main line, and thus it continued until the final line.

As a result of well-organized reconnaissance the enemy's grouping, the nature of his defense, his fire plan, and the deployment of army group "Centre's" reserves had been quite accurately revealed, the terrain had been studied, and the location of crossings on the numerous rivers in the zone of attack had been identified. However, it had not been possible to fully reveal the enemy defense plan in the sector of the 3rd Army of the 1st Belorussian front.

In the spring the front forces received major reinforcements. It was necessary to train them in a short time to breach a strongly fortified defense under the conditions of a forested swampland. Under conditions as close as possible to actual conditions intense combat training was carried out. In an area equipped like German defenses units trained in forcing rivers and overcoming defensive lines. The officers and generals participated in systematic sessions in which such questions were discussed as bringing the troops into initial position for the advance, organizing the joint operation of units and formations and constantly controlling them in battle.

The headquarters of formations and units worked out plans for the coming operations, organized the handling of the troops, and supervised the course of preparations for the advance.

Great attention was devoted to the engineering support of the operation. The engineer units reconnoitered the enemy defenses and the terrain where the battle operations were to unfold, supported the regrouping of the forces and their move into the starting areas, carried out operative camouflage and prepared paths through enemy minefields.

The echelons of the operative and administrative areas were faced with enormous tasks. In accordance with the resolution of the State Defense Committee, in mid-June the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command ordered that the forces possess: 5 ammunition allotments, 10-20 refills of aircraft or automobile gasoline, diesel fuel and oil, and provisions for 30 days. The creatior of such reserves required intensive work by all forms of transport. Suffice it to say that approximately 13,500 cars were required to transport only one ammunition load of projectiles and mines to the ground units.*

* IML. Docs. and Maters. of Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #17560, p. 2.

During the preparations for the operation particular attention was devoted to restoring destroyed railroads and automobile roads and to building new ones, and increasing their traffic capacity, particularly in the zone of the 1st Baltic front where the network of roads was less developed. Road, bridge and sapper units of the armies and fronts carried out a great deal of work in construction and completion of dirt roads, particularly in the regions where there were many rivers, lakes and swamps. Thanks to the enormous efforts of workers of the rear services transportation was generally sufficient for the tasks placed on it. The four fronts established in the /166
operation daily received 90-100 trains.* Many loads were transported by automobile drivers. The almost 12,000 automobiles at the fronts could carry over 25,000 tons in on trip, or a fifth of an ammunition load, one-fourth of a load of fuel and lubricants, or one day of provisions.** Medical establishments and units were well prepared for the operation. They had 294,000 hospital cots available. The transportation serving these establishments was on the whole motorized and could evacuate wounded quickly.

During preparations for the Belorussian operation massive blows were inflicted by long range aircraft on airfields and large railroad centers. The most effective blows were inflicted on the airfields and railroad stations of Minsk, Baranovichi, Osipovichi, Polotsk, and Molodechno.*** The flights were carried out from airfields in the Ukraine.

In addition to cooperating with the operation in preparation, the air strikes served at the same time to confuse the German fascist command group. The enemy believed that the main Soviet air forces were concentrated at the Ukrainian airfields because the Soviet command group planned to strike its main blow in the summer of 1944 on the southern flank of the Soviet-German front.

---

*IML. Docs. and maters. of Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #17368, p. 11.

** Ibid, p. 12.

***Archives of MO USSR, col. ADD, inv. 74283, div. 1, p. 120.

In planning the Belorussian operation the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command attached great importance to the suddenness of the blow. During the planning period for the advance measures were taken to camouflage our forces and misinform the enemy, thanks to which it was possible to hide the regrouping of Soviet troops from the enemy and concentrate considerable forces and equipment against the German army group "Centre." One of these very effective measures was to reconnoiter in force the front from Pskov to the Carpathians immediately before the beginning of the operation. With this goal on June 16 Headquarters ordered the commanders of the 2nd and 3rd Baltic and the 1st Ukrainian fronts to reconnoiter in force in certain sectors of the fronts with strengthened companies and battalions on June 20-23.* At the same time the forces of the 1st Baltic and the three Belorussian fronts were to carry out reconnaissance in force. As became clear later, to a considerable degree these directives enabled our forces to achieve success in the advance.

While preparing the troops for the Belorussian operation the commanders, political workers and party organizers mobilized their personnel to perform combat assignments. The political organs devoted their main attention to the ideological and organizational strenghtening of party organizations and correct distribution of communists and Komsomol members in the batteries, tank crews and other battle teams. By the end of 1944 there were 245,862 communists in the party organizations of the 1st Belorussian fronts, 84,961 in the 2nd Belorussian, 162,324 in the 3rd Belorussian, and 139,487 in the 1st Baltic front.**

In connection with the altered structure of party and Komsomol organizations and the abolition of the institution of political unit company second in command, the responsibility of sub-unit commanders for the education of personnel increased considerably. The political organs extended serious assistance to the commanders, particularly at the level of platoon,

---

* IML. Docs. and maters. of Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #9492, p. 298.

** Archives MO USSR, col. 32, inv. 41694, div. 1, p. 293; col. 237, inv. 2414, div. 77, p. 268; col. 241, inv. 2656, div. 35, p. 441; col. 235, inv. 2086, div. 132, p. 4.

company and battalion in conducting political-educational work. This strengthened the commanders' authority and enhanced their role.

In the majority of companies before the start of the operation /167
party organizations consisting of 6 to 10 communists and Komsomol organizations numbering 12 to 20 Komsomol members were recreated. In many party organizations there were two deputy party organizers. A reserve of company Komsomol organizers was prepared. The strengthening of party and Komsomol organizations made it possible to organize constant party political work among the personnel both during preparations for and during the advance, strengthened party influence in the sub-units, and increased the troops' combat readiness.

The political and party organizations displayed their constant concern for the ideological and political training of the young communists who made up a considerable stratum of the unit party organizations. The basis of the educational work was the study of the history of our glorious party, its selfless battle for the freedom and independence of the Motherland. Actively participating in party life, young communists acquired skills in working with non-party soldiers.

Much attention was devoted to the new reinforcements. Among them were many young soldiers called from recently liberated regions who had come to the front for the first time. The commanders and political workers taught them in the spirit of Soviet patriotism, hatred for the enemy, and loyalty to the military oath. In friendly, relaxed talks the political workers told the soldiers about the life and struggle of the heroic Soviet Union. Seasoned soldiers and sergeants imparted to the new arrivals their combat experience and knowledge.

Visual propaganda was widely used. In shelter trenches, dugouts and communication trenches were hung newspapers with the May-day slogans of the CC BCP(b), stands and cases with communiques from the Soviet Information Bureau and material on the heinous deeds of the Hitlerites in occupied territory.

On the eve of the advance the troops were given their orders and the instructions of the military councils. The entire personnel was made acquainted with the contents of these documents. Party and Komsomol meetings were held in many sub-units, or where the circumstances forbade them communists and Komsomol members had conferences or talks. The communists and Komsomol members were assigned to rise to the attack first and draw the other soldiers after them, and to pass news along the line about outstanding fighters. Before the attack the commanders and political workers passed through the trenches and talked to the soldiers, reminding them once again of their battle objectives.

Preparations for the advance of the forces were completed on the third anniversary of the start of the Great Patriotic War. On the night of June 22 a document of enormous political importance was broadcast over the radio, and in the morning it was printed in central and front newspapers; this was "Three Years of the Patriotic War of the Soviet Union," * in which were set forth the military and political results of the three years of heroic struggle by the Soviet people and their Armed Forces against the fascist aggressors. Commanders, political workers, and the most active members of the party organizations began to explain this historic document to the soldiers. As a result of the combat training and political-educational work that had been carried out the troops were well prepared for the advance, and burned with the desire to liberate the Belorussian Soviet Socialist Republic from the enemy at once.

The Belorussian partisans were also in battle readiness. The plan of their operations, which was worked out by the Belorussian headquarters of the partisan movement at the end of May 1944, had been affirmed by the command group of the fronts advancing on Belorussia. Many partisan brigades and detachments were given their specific assignments.

The partisan formations of the Vitebsk, Bileysk, the northern part of the Minsk and the Baronovichi regions were to strike the enemy's most important lines of communication and thereby support the advance of the 1st Baltic

---

* See "Pravda," June 22, 1944.

and the 3rd Belorussian fronts, and to hold the beachhead occupied on the Berezina River until the approach of Red Army units. The partisan formations of the Mogilev region and brigades from the eastern zone of the Minsk region were to support the troops of the 2nd Belorussian front, with their blows on enemy lines of communication, in forcing the Dnepr, and to enable their advance on the Berezina. The Polessk, South Minsk, Pinsk and Belostok partisan formations were given the assignment of inflicting constant blows on the enemy's lines of communication and create favorable conditions to develop the advance of the troops of the 1st Belorussian front.* /168

On June 8 the CC CP(b)B sent a radiogram to all underground party obkoms and raykoms and the commanders of commissars of partisan formations, brigades and detachments, in which they were reminded that the enemy, making use of the lull on the Soviet-German front, was increasing shipments of manpower and equipment by railroad. The partisans were advised to cause "the first demolition of tracks on the night of June 20. After that strike constantly, to achieve complete disruption of enemy shipments."**

In accordance with this directive, from June 20 through 23 the partisans caused mass destruction of railroads. Overcoming mine fields in the approaches to the railroad beds, destroying the fascist guards in battles, on the night of June 20 alone they blew up over 40,000 rails. As a result of this operation the most important railroad lines were made completely inoperable, and enemy transports were partially paralyzed on many railroads in Belorussia, including the Polotsk-Molodechno, Glubokoye-Vilnius, Minsk-Orsha, Minsk-Brest and Pinsk-Brest.*** By disrupting the normal operation of the administrative area of army group "Centre" in a few days, the avengers of the people greatly aided the Soviet forces.

Thus meticulous and many-sided preparation of headquarters and troops, timely regrouping of units, formations and large strategic formations, the creation of an overwhelming advantage over the enemy in forces and equipment in the breakthrough sectors, and strikes by the partisans in the enemy's rear, created the prerequisites for successful completion of the Belorussian operation.

---

* Party archives of Inst. of Hist. of the Party of CC CP of Belorussia, col. 3500, inv. 3, div. 77, p. 122.

** Ibid, div. 82, p. 45.

*** Ibid, div. 77, pp. 108, 109.

THE ROUT OF THE GERMAN FASCIST ARMY GROUP "CENTRE." THE LIBERATION OF BELORUSSIA.

3. Encirclement and liquidation of the enemy groupings near Vitebsk and Bobruisk.

On the eve of the general advance, reconnaissance in force was carried out at the fronts by forward battalions,* with the purpose of acquiring more precise information about the state of the enemy defenses and the grouping of enemy forces. Reconnaissance in force was carried out on a wide front, from Lake Neshcherdo to the Pripyat River. As a result of the /168

* In some fronts they were called reconnaissance detachments or reconnaissance battalions.

successful operations by the forward battalions the tactical position of units and formations in some sectors was improved. In certain sectors the operations of these battalions grew into full attacks.

In the 1st Baltic front reconnaissance in force began on the morning of June 22. The greatest success was achieved by the reconnaissance detachments of the 6th Guards and 43rd Armies, particularly the 22nd Guards rifle corps of the 6th Guards Army, commanded by Maj.-Gen. A.I. Ruchkin. After 24-minute artillery preparations the detachments burst in a rush into the enemy /169 trenches and began to move forward. Two rifle battalions from each of the corps's three divisions were brought into the battle. By the end of the day the forward units of the corps had breached the main zone of the enemy defense southeast of Sirotino and advanced to a depth of 6-8 kilometers.

On June 23 after artillery and air preparation the main forces of these armies went over to the offensive. By the end of the day the breach had reached 16 kilometers in depth and 50 kilometers on the front. The enemy units fighting in the region of Shumilino put up the most stubborn resistance, but by the end of the day they too were forced to begin a retreat to the left bank of the Western Dvina.

To exploit the success of the rifle troops the front commander brought the 1st tank corps into the battle. However, due to the rain, which washed out roads, and insufficiently precise organisation of their entrance into the breach, the units of the corps advanced slowly and by the end of the day had only reached the Shumilino area.

During June 24 the troops of the front expanded the breach to 30 kilometers in depth and 90 kilometers along the front,* broke out to a 50-kilometer sector on the right bank of the Western Dvina and seized five small beachheads on the opposite bank. On the same day the 60th rifle corps of the 43rd Army broke out to the inhabited area of Gnezdilovichi in the rear of the enemy's Vitebsk grouping, and found itself 3-5 kilometers from the approaching forces

*Archives of MD USSR, col. 235, inv. 2074, div. 846, p. 10.

of the 5th Guards rifle corps of the 39th Army of the 3rd Belorussian front. Over the enemy's Vitebsk grouping hung the threat of encirclement. The German fascist command group, having exhausted all of its corps reserves, began rapidly to transfer fresh forces to that area. They wished at all costs to hold our advance back at the line of the Western Dvina.

On the third day of the operation fierce battles developed to broaden the beachhead on the left bank of the Western Dvina and to complete the encirclement of the enemy's Vitebsk grouping. It was necessary to force the river using materials at hand, because pontoon ferry crossings were set up in certain sectors only toward evening, and they were largely used for crossings by artillery and tanks. On this day the forces of the 1st Baltic front liberated the city of Beshenkovichi and joined the troops of the 3rd Belorussian front west of Vitebsk.

Having forced the Western Dvina the 6th Guards Army continued to advance on Ushachi, and the 43rd Army, leaving part of its forces to liquidate the encircled Vitebsk grouping, developed the advance on Lepel' with its main forces. Overcoming stubborn resistance by the enemy who, having brought two new divisions into the battle, often turned to counterattacks, by the end of June 28 the troops of the front broke through to the Ushachi - Lepel' line and cleared the city of Lepel' of the enemy on the same day.

The military operations of the ground forces were supported by the 3rd Airborne Army. The air force bombed and assaulted the enemy's strong points and centers of resistance, provided support in repelling enemy counterattacks, and helped to seize and hold the beachheads on the left bank of the Western Dvina. After the encirclement of the enemy's Vitebsk grouping the front air force actively participated in destroying it.

The successful breakthrough by the troops of the 1st Baltic front was achieved as a result of meticulous, covert preparation for the operation and rational measures for its total support. This success was a consequence of a correct appraisal of the situation, specifically the accounting of the features of the swampy, forested terrain, and the most expedient decisions by the front commander - to breach the enemy's defense and attack not on a

narrow, but on a comparatively wide front. The coordinated use of the artillery and air force that inflicted the fire strike was of decisive importance. This led to breaching the enemy's defense and gave the rifle formations the opportunity, with the support of engineering troops, to develop the advance. The tightly organized cooperation of all arms of service and air force as a /17(whole reliably ensured successful performance of the operation. The enormous work done by headquarters and troops to prepare to force a large water obstacle, the Western Dvina, created the conditions to quickly overcome it. The attack by the forces of the 1st Baltic front was unexpected for the enemy. K. Tippelskirch testifies to this. "The attack northwest of Vitebsk," he writes, "was particularly unpleasant, because unlike the blows on the rest of the front it was totally unexpected and stunned an especially weakly defended sector of the front in a strategically decisive direction." *

Thus in the six days of their attack the troops of the 1st Baltic front fulfilled their assigned objectives: they breached the enemy's defense, forced the Western Dvina, and encircled the Vitebsk grouping with the support of the troops of the 3rd Belorussian front. For successfully breaching the enemy's defense and forcing the Western Dvina 145 soldiers of the 1st Baltic front were conferred the title of Hero of the Soviet Union, among them: scout of the 213th Guards rifle regiment of the 71st Guards rifle division A.Ye.Tolmachev, company party organizer of the 801st rifle regiment, 235th rifle division Sgt. V.N. Fokin, machine gun company commander of the 199th Guards rifle regiment, 67th Guards rifle division Sr. Lt. V.D. Solonchenko, battalion commander of the 210th Guards rifle regiment, 71st Guards rifle division Maj. A.K. Fedyunin, commander of the 496th tank-destroyer artillery regiment Maj. M.M. Makarychev, commander of the 935th rifle regiment, 306th rifle division Lt. Col. A.I. Bespyatov, commander of the 67th Guards rifle division Maj.-Gen. A.I. Baksov, and political department head of the same division Col. M.M. Bronnikov.**

On June 23 after powerful artillery and air preparation the troops of the 3rd Belorussian front also went over to the offensive. The greatest

---

* K. Tippelskirch. "History of the Second World War," p. 443.

** See "Pravda," 23 and 24 July 1944.

success was achieved by the 39th and 5th Armies, which on the first day breached the enemy's defense to a depth of 10-11 kilometers on a 50-kilometer front.

The offensive developed more slowly in the zone of operations of the front's southern assault group in the Orsha sector, which met stiff enemy resistance. During the day the 11th Guards Army moved only 2-3 kilometers and the 31st Army had no success. The enemy brought in two divisions from the army reserves to meet our forces. The movement of the Soviet forces along the Minsk main highway was drawn out largely because the enemy defense created here, which was stronger than that in other sectors, had not been reliably destroyed during artillery and air preparation. This was due to insufficient reconnaissance of the enemy's fire plan, deficiencies in the organization of fire committed by the commanders of both armies, and violation of camouflage discipline by some units and formations of the 5th artillery breakthrough corps. Reconnaissance by the 78th German assault infantry division had revealed the concentration of a large mass of artillery in the zone of the 11th Guards Army and detected the firing positions of 700 of our guns.* The element of surprise was lost for the fire strike.

On June 24 in the zone of advance of the 5th Army the Soviet troops seized the city of Bogushevsk. That day the mounted-mechanized group of Lt. Gen. N.S. Oslikovskiy was brought into the battle, and by evening its forward detachments reached the area west of Bogushevsk.

In view of the fact that in the Bogushevsk sector the troops of the 5th army had already come out into strategic scope and in the Orsha sector the /171
advance was developing much more slowly, on the order of the representative of Headquarters of the Supreme High Command, Marshal of the Soviet Union A.M. Vasilevskiy, it was decided to bring the 5th Guards tank army into the battle in the Bogushevsk sector. By the morning of June 25 the 5th Guards tank army had concentrated west of Liozno. They were to be supported by the main forces of the 1st Airborne Army consisting of four air corps and two air divisions. These formations were led by commander of the 1st Guards bomber air corps, Lt. Gen. V.A. Ushakov.

---

* IML. Docs. and maters. of Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #17555, p. 432.

On June 25 the units of the 5th Guards rifle corps of the 39th Army of the 3rd Belorussian front joined the units of the 60th rifle corps of the 43rd Army of the 1st Baltic front, which had completed the encirclement of the enemy's Vitebsk grouping in the inhabited area of Gnezdilovichi. On the same day other formations of the 39th Army burst into Vitebsk. Stiff street fighting broke out. It was very important to seize the as-yet undestroyed bridge across the Western Dvina. This assignment was given to the sapper platoon of the 875th rifle regiment of the 158th rifle division. That night, under the command of Sgt. F.T. Blokhin, the sappers destroyed the guard on the bridge. The fascists were nonetheless able to light the Bickford fuse, but Blokhin, risking his life, rushed forward, pulled out the fuses and disarmed the TNT charge. The bridge remained whole. On the morning of June 26 the Soviet tanks and artillery crossed over it further to the west. F.T. Blokhin was awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union. On a commemorative plaque set up on the bridge after the war were engraved the words: "On June 26, 1944 in a fierce encounter with the fascist occupiers this bridge was saved from demolition by a group of soldiers led by Hero of the Soviet Union F.T. Blokhin."

While the battles for Vitebsk were being waged the 11th Guards army breached the tactical zone of defense and created conditions to bring the mobile forces into the breach. In this army's zone of advance the 2nd Guards tank corps was brought into the battle, which had been assigned the objective of cutting the Orsha - Lepel' railroad, seizing the Minsk main highway and breaking through to the area west of Orsha.

In three days of the advance the troops of the 3rd Belorussian front broke the enemy defense in a 100-kilometer zone between the Western Dvina and the Dnepr and moved forward 30-50 kilometers. During these days the air force carried out 5800 airplane flights,* lending the forces of the front serious support.

---

* Archives of MO USSR, col. 290, inv. 142208, div. 304, pp. 59-70.

The enemy, attempting to hold the Minsk main highway and support the left flank of its 4th Army, transferred two fresh divisions to the Orsha area. However, by now nothing could save the situation. The enemy began to withdraw the 3rd tank and 4th Armies beyond the Berezina River.

On June 25 and 26 the 39th Army and part of the forces of the 43rd Army of the 1st Baltic front carried on battles to liquidate the encircled Vitebsk group. The enemy resisted stubbornly, and counterattacked constantly, attempting to break out of the "pocket." Great enemy losses were sustained. Only a group numbering 8,000 men was able to break through. But it was again surrounded and soon destroyed. On the morning of June 27 the remainder of the enemy divisions accepted the ultimatum of the Soviet command group to capitulate, and surrendered. The enemy suffered 20,000 dead and over 10,000 taken prisoner near Vitebsk. The commander of the 53rd army corps, General of infantry Golwitzer (translated from Russian) and the chief of staff of that corps, Col. Schmidt, were taken prisoner.

The rout of the enemy's Vitebsk group was of great importance for the further course of the Belorussian operation. The key position on the left flank of the defense of army group "Centre" was overwhelmed.

At this time on the external front of encirclement the advance of the other armies of the 3rd Belorussian front was also developing successfully. The mobile formations of the front with the support of the air force moved rapidly westward.

The air force formations inflicted blows on the retreating enemy. The /173
pilots of the 1st Guards assault air division under the command of Col. S.D. Prutkov acted especially effectively. They almost completely paralyzed the movement of the German fascist forces along the railroads and highways in the Orsha - Borisov sector.

On June 26 the mounted mechanized group of Gen. Oslikovskiy moved rapidly toward Senno. On the same day the 5th Guards tank army broke out to the Minsk highway, where the enemy displayed the greatest resistance, attempting to preserve an important communications link and prevent the breakthrough of

Commemorative plaque set up in Vitebsk on the bridge across the Western Dvina. /172

our troops to Borisov. The battles in this sector were extremely intense. Closely supported by assault and bomber air force, by the end of the day the forces of the 5th Guards Tank Army seized the regional center of Tolchin cutting off the retreat of the Orsha group of Germans 50 kilometers west of Orsha. The opportunity now arose to move quickly toward the Berezina. But the enemy attempted to hold back the attack of the tank army at all costs and met it with combat-ready units. On this day the 2nd Guards tank corps also broke through to the Minsk highway 15 kilometers west of Orsha. On June 27 Orsha was taken by the troops of the 11th Guards and 31st Armies.

During the offensive the Soviet fighters showed genuine heroism. Private of the 77th Guards rifle regiment of the 26th Guards rifle division Yuri Smirnov was an example of perseverance and valorous fulfillment of his military duty. On June 24 during the breaching of the enemy defense north of Orsha he volunteered to participate in a tank assault detail assigned to cut off the Moscow-Minsk highway in the enemy's rear. In the area of the village of Shalashino Smirnov was seriously wounded, fell off the tank and was taken prisoner. The Hitlerites placed him in the staff shelter trench of the 78th assault infantry division. The fascists tortured the Komsomol member in an attempt to gain essential information from him. But, loyal to his military oath, Smirnov refused to answer their questions. Then the Hitlerite butchers crucified the beaten and heavily wounded soldier on the wall of the shelter. The monsters beat nails into his forehead, palms and feet. Guards Private Yu.V.Smirnov died a hero's death, having revealed no military secret.

Soon the advancing Soviet troops found the body of the brutally tortured soldier. The stunning news of this new Hitlerite atrocity flew through all of the regiments and divisions of the 3rd Belorussian front. The fighters swore a sacred vow to avenge the death of their comrade in arms, not to lay down their weapons until their native soil was purged of the fascist oppressors. Yu. V. Smirnov was posthumously awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union.

After the rout of the enemy's Orsha grouping the troops of the front rushed westward to the Berezina River. The mounted-mechanized group, which

Юрий Васильевич Смирнов

„Я горжусь моим сыном"

Письмо матери на фронт

Letter from the mother of Yu. V. Smirnov published in the front newspaper.

Statement of the monstrosities committed by the Hitlerites on soldier and Komsomol member Yuri Smirnov

in five days had moved over nearly impassable terrain to a depth of 180 kilometers, broke through on June 28 to the Berezina north of Borisov, and its forward detachments forced the river. Behind them the rifle units also successfully moved forward. Fierce fighting broke out in the Borisov sector. The enemy, bringing the 5th tank division, which had been transferred from the Kovel' region, into the battle, attempted to hold back our units and cover the retreat of their Mogilev grouping. The 5th Guards tank army advancing along the Minsk highway destroyed this tank division, and on June 29 its forward detachments came out to the Berezina.

The blows of Gen. Oslikovskiy's mounted-mechanized group north of the Moscow-Minsk highway, of the 5th Guards Tank Army along it and the 2nd Guards tank corps to the south of it ensured that the enemy's 3rd Tank Army was rapidly cut off from their 4th Army. This was a major tactical achievement by the troops of the 3rd Belorussian front in the Borisov - Minsk sector. In the first 6 days of the offensive the troops of the front had on the whole performed their assigned objectives. With the support of the 1st /175
Baltic front they routed the enemy's Vitebsk and Orsha groupings, advanced by 150 kilometers, and their right wing had broken out to the Berezina and deeply outflanked the 4th German Army operating in the Mogilev - Minsk sector. The enemy suffered heavy losses. Beside the five divisions that were totally wiped out near Vitebsk, another six had been routed.

The important successes achieved by the troops of the 3rd Belorussian front in the six days of the offensive were due above all to the considerably increased military art of the generals and officers in command of the forces and the greater combat skill of the soldiers and sergeants. As in the 1st Baltic front, the meticulous, covert preparations for and surprise of the attack and the constant effective cooperation of all branches of service and of all of the Armed Services were of enormous importance. All of this made it possible to breach the enemy defense in a short time to a great depth and achieve success in the Vitebsk - Orsha operation.

The advance of the 1st Belorussian front, as was noted before, began on June 24. The night before the advance in both breakthrough sectors long range bombers and the 16th Airborne Army inflicted blows. However, when the troops moved into the attack poor meteorological conditions limited

the air force operations. Whenever the weather improved somewhat the air force carried out flights in large groups. During the day the bombers struck two massive blows. On the first day the bombers, assault aircraft and fighters completed 3191 flights.* On the first day of the offensive the northern assault group of the front achieved negligible results. The units of the first echelon of rifle corps of the 3rd and 48th Armies seized only the enemy's first and second trenches. Reasons for this were insufficient reconnaissance of the enemy's positions, poor weather, the decreased effectiveness of artillery and air force operations, and the open swampy terrain near the forward edge of the enemy's defenses.

The advance of the southern assault group developed more favorably. The 18th rifle corps of the 65th Army with air support advanced by 5-6 kilometers, which made it possible for the 1st Guards tank corps to enter the breach in the latter part of the day. The formations of the 28th Army also operated successfully. As a result of the first day of battles both armies breached the enemy's defenses on a front up to 30 kilometers and at a depth of from 5 to 10 kilometers. The 1st Guards tank corps, breaking out to the Knyshevichi area, deepened the breach to 20 kilometers. Conditions were created to bring the mounted-mechanized group of Lt. Gen. I.A. Pliyev into the battle.

The following day this group was brought to the boundary between the 65th and 28th Armies. Meeting no serious resistance, the mobile forces began to move rapidly to the northwest; on June 26 they came out to the Ptich' River in the region of Glussk and forced it in places. At this time the formations of the very successful 1st Guards tank corps were located 8-10 kilometers southwest of Bobruisk. Behind the mobile forces advanced the rifle formations of the 65th and 28th Armies. The enemy began to fall back to the north and northwest, conducting rearguard battles.

By evening of the third day the advance of the troops of the 65th Army reached the Berezina River to the south of Bobruisk, while the troops of the 28th Army came out to the Ptich' River and, forcing it, seized the small

---

* Archives of MO USSR, col. 368, inv. 142206, div. 28, p. 20; div. 39, p. 18.

town of Glussk. The enemy defense was broken to a depth of 40 kilometers. The troops of the front's southern group came out to strategic scope.

The advance of the front's northern assault group continued to develop slowly. In spite of the fact that part of the forces of the 3rd Army's mobile group were brought into the battle, by the evening of June 25 the forces of the 48th and 3rd Armies had advanced only 10 kilometers, and had not breached the enemy's tactical defense zone.

Under these circumstances the front commander ordered the forces of the /176
3rd and 48th Armies to bring all of their reserves into the battle, and to surround the enemy's Bobruisk grouping on June 28. On June 26 from the line that had been gained all of the forces of the 9th tank corps were brought into the breach. Considering the situation that had developed southwest of Bobruisk, on the night of June 26 the enemy began to pull his forces back beyond the Berezina. The 16th Airborne Army poured its blows onto the enemy's retreating columns, completing approximately 3,000 airplane flights during that day.*

The 9th tank corps breached the enemy defense; by evening they broke out to the eastern bank of the Berezina near Titovka, and by the morning of June 27 they had seized almost all highways and crossings northeast of Bobruisk. Behind the tank crews rapidly advanced the rifle units of the 3rd and 48th armies, surrounding the German Bobruisk grouping from the northeast. By this time the 1st Guards tank corps had broken out to the area northwest of Bobruisk and cut off the paths of retreat to the west for the units of the five 9th Army divisions. They were surrounded in two areas - in the city of Bobruisk and southeast of the city. The 48th Army was to liquidate the enemy grouping southeast of Bobruisk, and the 65th Army the grouping in Bobruisk. The main forces of the front continued to advance toward Osipovichi - Pukhovichi and on Slutsk.

The internal front encircling the enemy southeast of Bobruisk was not equally dense at all points. The battle formation of our forces was found

* Archives of MO USSR, col. 368, inv. 142206, div. 49, p. 35.

to be least dense in the northern sector where the tank corps were deployed. Exploiting this situation, the enemy attempted to break out of the ring and drive to the north to join the 4th Army. On June 27, concentrating up to 150 tanks and assault guns, the Hitlerites prepared to break through in the north and northwest directions. Our reconnaissance discovered the enemy's preparations in time.

Little time remained to frustrate the enemy's plan - he could break through during the night of June 28. Under these circumstances the front commander decided to make concentrated air strikes on the encircled grouping. On his order 526 airplanes (including 400 bombers) from the 16th Airvorne Army took to the air.*

In an hour and a half the aircraft dropped over 11,300 bombs, released 572 rocket missiles and 41,000 shells and cartridges.** Fires broke out in areas where enemy equipment was massed. The actions of our air force were very effective. The enemy grouping preparing to break out of encirclement was scattered. The German soldiers and officers began to rush about in panic. Many threw themselves into the Berezina in an attempt to swim across, but they were overtaken by fire from the rifle troops. A special commission established that as a result of the air strike at Bobruisk our aircraft destroyed approximately 1,000 enemy soldiers and officers, up to 150 tanks and assault guns, about 1,000 guns of various caliber, up to 6,000 vehicles and tractors, up to 3,000 wagons and 1,500 horses.***

In spite of stubborn enemy resistance, on June 28 the troops of the 48th Army completed the liquidation of the grouping encircled southeast of Bobruisk.

The battles for Bobruisk lasted from June 27 to 29 and were desperate. On the night of June 29 the Germans attempted to break out of the city. After a strong artillery and mortar attack the enemy units began their offensive, but it was repelled. Only a 5,000-man group succeeded in breaking

---

* Archives of MO USSR, col. 233, inv. 2356, div. 256, p. 166.

** Ibid, col. 368, inv. 142206, div. 50, p. 56-58.

*** Ibid, col. 233, inv. 2356, div. 256, p. 167.

through in the direction of Osipovichi. The Soviet troops operating northwest of Bobruisk soon destroyed it. On June 29 the forces of the 1st Belorussian front liberated Bobruisk.

The Dnepr military flotilla participated in encircling and destroying the Bobruisk enemy grouping. On the first day of the offensive the ships of the 1st brigade moved upstream behind the line of the front. On June 26 they broke through to the bridge at the inhabited area of Parich' and destroyed the enemy's crossing, and on June 27 they came out at the approach to Bobruisk and assisted our forces in destroying the encircled grouping. /177 In three days during the operation the sailors of the 1st brigade of the river flotilla ferried 66,000 men, 1,550 guns and mortars, 500 vehicles and approximately 7,000 horses of the 48th Army from the left to the right bank of the Berezina.*

In five days of battles the troops of the 1st Belorussian front breached the enemy's defense on a 200-kilometer front, surrounded and destroyed the Bobruisk grouping and advanced to a depth of 110 kilometers. The enemy's very strong defenses on the south flank of the Belorussian salient were smashed, as a result of which a favorable situation was created for the advance on Minsk and on Baranovichi. Success in the Bobruisk operation was achieved, above all, due to the bold and rapid action of the front's southern group of forces (65th and 28th Armies), and all of the tank, mechanized and cavalry corps, the skillfully organized cooperation of all arms of service and the air force, and the well-thought out and flexible guidance of the forces by the front commanders.

The 2nd Belorussian front went over to the offensive on June 23. By evening the 49th Army, having struck a blow at Mogilev, breached the enemy defenses to a depth of 5-8 kilometers along a front of up to 12 kilometers. On June 26 the forward detachments forced the Dnepr and seized beachheads on its right bank north of Mogilev. The pilots of the 230th and 233rd air assault divisions of the 4th Airborne Army provided a great deal of support to the rifle units in forcing the river.

---

* Archives of Marine IO, div. 11274, p. 68.

At mid-day the enemy began to move tanks and assault guns toward the area of the beachheads, intending to drive our forward divisions into the Dnepr. It was essential to quickly set up bridges for artillery, tanks and assault guns to cross to the beachheads. This assignment was successfully performed by the 92nd detached pontoon-bridge battalion. In 130 vehicles the battalion cut across the Orsha - Mogilev highway, broke through to the Dnepr and, by mid-day of June 27, under enemy fire, set up two 30- and 16-ton capacity bridges in the Zashchita area (north of Mogilev). These bridges played an important part in holding and expanding the beachheads. For valor in completion of an assignment the battalion recevied the designation "Upper Dnepr." The commander of the battalion, Maj. A.I. Kanarchik, was awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union, and 120 soldiers and officers were decorated with government awards.*

The successful operations of the 49th Army also created conditions for the forces of the 33rd and 50th Armies to go over to the offensive. Swiftly pursuing the enemy in the Shklovsk, Mogilev and Bykhov directions, overcoming the resistance of protective detachments, the troops of the 2nd Belorussian front came out to the Dnepr across the entire zone, and on the night of June 27 they widened the forcing zone to 30 kilometers. Performing a flanking maneuver from the north and southeast, on June 28 the troops of the 50th and 49th Armies stormed and liberated Mogilev.** In the battle for the city the units of the 121st rifle corps of the 50th Army under the command of Maj. Gen. D.I. Smirnov and the 69th rifle corps of the 49th Army commanded by Maj. Gen. N.N. Mul'tan particularly distinguished themselves. The remanants of the 12th German infantry division with their commander and the commandant of the city surrendered. By evening of June 29 the troops of the 2nd Belorussian front, overcoming six water obstacles, had advanced to a depth of 90 kilometers and broken through in the area between the Druta and Dnepr Rivers.

---

* Archives of MO USSR, col. 237, inv. 2394, div. 791, p. 173.

** Ibid, div. 438, pp. 149-153.

Thus, during the period from June 23 to June 28 the forces of the four fronts advancing in Belorussia breached the enemy's defenses in six widely separated sectors, surrounded and destroyed the German Vitebsk and Bobruisk groupings, and also defeated the enemy in the area of Orsha and Mogilev.

Having suffered a serious defeat the enemy began to fall back rapidly along the entire front from the Western Dvina to the Pripyat. The German fascist command group attempted to form a solid defensive front along the Berezina. For this the reserves were thrown into the front: the 14th and /178
95th infantry divisions in the Vitebsk, the 60th motorized division in the Mogilev, and the 20th tank division in the Bobruisk sectors. A transfer of divisions from other sectors of the Soviet-German front began. In the six days of the advance six divisions in all were transferred.* However, these forces could not stop the advance of the Soviet troops.

Party-political work played an important part in the successful completion of their assignments by the troops of the front. During the advance newspapers arrived in all units carrying the communique of the Soviet Information Bureau "Three Years of the Patriotic War of the Soviet Union."

Widespread discussions took place of this document, which precisely defined the tasks of the Soviet soldiers at the final stage of the war in Europe. Where conditions permitted party and Komsomol meetings were held devoted to discussions of the military and political results of three years of war. Soldiers, sergeants and officers expressed their passionate desire to smash the enemy as soon as possible and free the Belorussian people and the peoples of Europe from the German fascist yoke.

In every city, in every inhabited area left by the occupiers, the soldiers saw innumerable signs of their crimes: razed and ruined buildings, corpses of people who had been shot or hung. On the grounds of the bread factory in the city of Zhlobin approximately 2,500 Soviet citizens who had been tortured and shot were found in an anti-tank ditch.** In the village of

---

* Collected materials on the composition of the forces of fascist Germany, fourth edition, p. 90-93.

** Archives of MO USSR, col. 233, inv. 2374, div. 39, p. 335.

Goduny the soldiers saw a child with a label on his neck: "Goduny 121." When they attempted to remove the tag he cried out fearfully: "Uncle, don't take it off, the German will shoot me."* At meetings and assemblies the soldiers swore to beat the enemy unmercifully, to save Soviet people from violence and annihilation.

The deep understanding of the soldiers, sergeants and officers of their duty to the Motherland engendered heroism. The command group recommended the most outstanding fighters for government decoration. In the rifle units and formations alone of the 48th, 28th and 65th Armies of the 1st Belorussian front from June 24 to 30, 1,284 men were decorated with orders and medals on the field of battle.** The heroes' feats were widely popularized in oral and printed propaganda.

Many soldiers and officers who had displayed courage and valor in battle were accepted by the party organizations into the ranks of the BCP(b). In June 1944, 17,632 people in the 1st Belorussian front entered the party, 4,074 in the 2nd Belorussian, 10,015 in the 3rd Belorussian, and 8,979 in the 1st Baltic front.*** This was one of the clear indications of the unbreakable bond between the soldiers of the Red Army and the Communist Party, an acknowledgement of its guiding role in organizing the rout of the enemy.

---

* Archives of MO USSR, col. 233, inv. 2374, div. 53, p. 477.

** Ibid, col. 32, inv. 22152, div. 12, pp. 164-165.

*** Ibid, inv. 41194, div. 1, p. 293; col. 237, inv. 2414, div. 77, p. 268; col. 241, inv. 10437, div. 1, p. 441; col. 235, inv. 2086, div. 132, p. 5.

THE ROUT OF THE GERMAN FASCIST ARMY GROUP "CENTRE." THE LIBERATION OF BELORUSSIA.

4. The encirclement and liquidation of the 4th German Army. The liberation of Minsk.

The destruction of the enemy's Vitebsk - Orsha, Mogilev and Bobruisk /178
groupings created favorable conditions for the fulfillment by the forces of the four Soviet fronts of new, still more complex structures.

After our troops broke through to the Berezina north of Minsk, in the area between the Dnepr and the Druta, west of Mogilev, and in the Osipovichi area, the line of the front formed a gigantic 320-kilometer bow curved out- /179
ward from Borisov to the Ptich' River. The enemy was deeply flanked by Soviet forces. The mobile formations were located 100 kilometers northeast and southeast of Minsk, and the enemy's main forces, retreating toward Minsk, were 130-150 kilometers east of the city and unable to break away from the

advancing forces of the 2nd Belorussian front. The Soviet forces had the opportunity to quickly surround the enemy divisions, seize Minsk and break out to the line projected by the "Bagration" plan, that is the Minsk meridian.

Taking into consideration the situation that had been created, the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command assigned to the fronts the following objectives in their directives of June 28. The troops of the 1st Baltic front were to advance in the direction of Polotsk and Shvenchonis and liberate the cities of Polotsk and Glubokoye. The 3rd Belorussian front was to rush the Berezina and, with the support of the 2nd Belorussian front, to seize Minsk no later than July 7-8, while its right wing seized Molodechno.* Before the troops of the 1st Belorussian front was the task of advancing on Minsk with a part of their forces and on Slutsk - Baranovichi with their main forces, in order to cut off the enemy's line of retreat to the southwest. The forces of the 2nd Belorussian front were to force the Berezina by June 30- July 1 and, advancing rapidly on Minsk, to seize Minsk no later than July 7-8 in cooperation with the forces of the 3rd and 1st Belorussian fronts and break through to the western bank of the Svislovichi River.**

Headquarters' plan was thus to pursue the enemy forces retreating from the tip of the salient by outflanking on two sides from the areas of Borisov and Osipovichi to Minsk, that is in directions generally paralleling those taken by the retreating forces of the 4th German Army. Simultaneously the enemy was to be pursued in the Mogilev-Minsk direction. The 1st Baltic front advancing in the Shvenchonis direction was to give support from the north for the actions of the Belorussian fronts advancing toward Minsk. Fulfillment of their objectives by the forces of the four fronts should lead to the liberation of Minsk and the encirclement of the 4th German Army.

---

* IML. Docs. and maters. of Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #9492, p. 313.

** Ibid, p. 312.

Headquarters also planned that all of the armies of the 1st Baltic front, the troops of the right wing of the 3rd Belorussian and the left wing of the 1st Belorussian fronts should rapidly move westward and destroy the approaching enemy reserves, not allowing them the opportunity to stabilize the front.

The fronts immediately turned to fulfillment of their assigned objectives.

The 1st Baltic front, using the forces of the 4th assault and part of the forces of the 6th Guards Armies, advanced on Polotsk. Seizure of this important center of enemy defense allowed the Soviet forces to move along the Western Dvina toward Daugavpils. Attempting to hold Polotsk, the German command group hurriedly brought up fresh units and formations. Overcoming the enemy's stubborn resistance, the Soviet forces circled Polotsk from the north and south and on June 30 battles broke out in the approaches to the city. By morning of July 4 Polotsk was liberated.

In the battles for the city the units of the 51st Guards rifle division of the 6th Guards Army under the command of Maj. Gen. S.V. Chernikov distinguished themselves. Exploiting the negligence of the enemy, who had not had time to demolish the wooden bridge across the Western Dvina, they rapidly crossed to the river's north bank and seized a beachhead there. At the same time the left flank formations of the 6th Guards and formations of the 43rd Armies, advancing on Shvenchonis, liberated Glubokoye and continued to move westward. In six days of combat operations they had come 110 kilometers. Moving along the Western Dvina the troops of the front not only supported /180
operations of our forces in the Minsk sector, but they began to threaten the right wing of the enemy army group "North" with encirclement.

On June 28 the forces of the right wing of the 3rd Belorussian front reached the Berezina. The mounted-mechanized group of Gen. Oslikovskiy, forcing the river north of Lake Palik, overcame the resistance of a German infantry division and began to advance rapidly to the west, exploiting the situation. On July 2 the 3rd Guards mechanized corps of this group seized the cities of Vileyka and Krasnoye and intercepted the Minsk - Vilnius railroad, cutting off the German retreat to the southwest. If one considers

that on that day the mounted-mechanized group of the 1st Belorussian front occupied Stolbtsy and Gorodeya and cut off the Minsk - Baranovichi railroad, having blocked the withdrawal of the Germans to the southwest, and that directly west of Minsk all roads were controlled by the partisans, the critical position in which the 4th German Army and detached divisions of the 3rd Tank and 9th Armies found themselves can be well understood. Over the great enemy grouping hung the threat of encirclement.

The rapid movement of Gen. Oslikovskiy's mounted-mechanized group westward created favorable conditions for the advance of the other forces of the 3rd Belorussian front. On the night of July 1 the formations of the 11th Guards Army, with the support of units from the 5th Guards Tank Army and the 31st Army, burst into Borisov, and at dawn they freed the city from the facists.

In the battle for the city the crew of the 2nd tank battalion of the 3rd Guards tank brigade, 3rd Guards tank corps, headed by company party organizer Lt. P. N. Rak, accomplished a heroic feat. On the evening of June 29 his tank broke across the Berezina into Borisov on a mined bridge. For 16 hours the crew fought in the city streets with no reinforcements, because the enemy had blown up the bridge across the Berezina. The fearless tank crew destroyed the fascist commandant's office and the headquarters of one of the German units, causing panic among the enemy garrison. The Hitlerites sent several of their tanks against the Soviet fighting vehicle. In the unequal battle the brave fighters perished. For this feat Lt. P. N. Rak and the members of his crew, Guards Komsomol Sgts. A. A. Petryayev and A. I. Danilov, were awarded the title Hero of the Soviet Union. In the fall of 1960 a monument to the tank crew heroes was erected in Borisov.

After the liberation of Borisov, the troops began to advance along the main highway toward Minsk. The front commander ordered the 5th Guards Tank Army to seize Minsk by the end of July 2*. In the area of Minsk at that time the remnants of the 78th, 250th, 260th infantry and 5th tank division were located, as well as the 24th, 25th, and 26th SS police regiments transferred from Poland. Developing the advance,

*Archives of MO USSR, co. 241, inv. 2593, div. 504, p. 115.

on July 2, the main forces of the 5th Guards tank army moved over 60 kilometers, and came out at the area of Ostroshitskiy Gorodok, and its forward detachments engaged in battle for the northern and northeastern outskirts of Minsk. By the end of the following day the army, its main forces passing around Minsk from the north, broke out to the area northwest of Minsk and cut off the retreat toward Molodechno. On that day the 2nd Guards tank corps under the command of Maj. Gen. of tank forces A.S. Burdeyniy burst into Minsk from the east. At the same time the forward detachments of the 11th Guards and 31st Armies reached the city.

Meanwhile the troops of the 1st Belorussian front continued their advance operations, pursuing the enemy in the directions of Minsk and Baranovichi. Toward Minsk advanced the 3rd Army, 1st Guards and 9th tank corps, and toward Baranovichi the 65th and 28th Armies and the mounted-mechanized group of Gen. Pliyev. With the active help of partisans and air force, on June 30 the mounted-mechanized group liberated Slutsk, and two days later Stolbtsy, Gorodeya, and Nesvizh, and as has been noted, cut off the enemy's line of retreat from the Minsk area toward Baranovichi and Brest.

The 1st Guards tank corps, advancing along the highway toward Pukhovichi, /18 engaged in battle toward evening of June 29 with two infantry and one tank division transferred there from the Baltic area. Aircraft were sent to assist the corps, and subjected the German forces to heavy bombing. On July 2 the 1st Guards tank corps succeeded in overcoming the enemy defenses and began to move toward Minsk. The following day, four hours after the forces of the 3rd Belorussian front, this corps, under the command of Maj. Gen. of tank forces M.F. Panov, entered the southeast outskirts of the city. Later units of the 3rd Army arrived. With the breakthrough of the forces of the 3rd and 1st Belorussian fronts into the Minsk area the encirclement of the 4th German Army east of the city was completed.

Simultaneously with the forces of the 3rd and 1st Belorussian fronts the forces of the 2nd Belorussian front also advanced in the direction of Minsk. They contained, smashed and destroyed the enemy units, giving them

no opportunity to break away and fall back rapidly westward. By such operations the forces of the 2nd Belorussian front ensured the German grouping's encirclement west of Minsk.

The forested swampy terrain allowed retreat only by roads which were under the constant control of the partisans. This made the retreat of the defeated fascist troops still more difficult. They moved in disorder along back roads and the Mogilev - Minsk highway. The bridges had been blown up, and congestion formed at many points. The assault group of the 4th Airborne and bombers of the 16th Airborne Armies inflicted constant blows on the columns of enemy troops. On the Mogilev-Minsk road alone our air force destroyed not less than 3,000 vehicles with troops and fighting equipment.* By evening of July 4 the forward detachments of the 50th Army of the 2nd Belorussian front reached the eastern and southeastern outskirts of Minsk.

By the end of July 3 the capital of Soviet Belorussia had been completely cleared of the German fascist occupiers. The Central Committee of the Communist Party and the government of the Belorussian SSR immediately moved from Gomel' to Minsk. The city lay in ruins. The Hitlerites had demolished its central section and the railroad depot area down to the foundations. No more than 10 large buildings remained standing in Sovetskaya Street. Of 332 government and cooperative enterprises only 19 were still whole. The fascists had turned into ruins the University Village, almost all institutions of higher education, 78 schools and technical schools, the State Philharmonic, 8 cinemas, 25 clubs; they had plundered libraries, the State art gallery, and the Minsk opera and ballet theater, destroyed health clinics, hospitals, kindergartens and nurseries.** Some still-sound buildings had been mined by the Nazis in preparation for demolition. They were saved only thanks to the rapid advance of the Red Army and special measures taken by the front command group.

For example, in the 1st Belorussian front several mine-clearing brigades were formed which, advancing in the battle order of the 3rd Army and 1st Guards tank corps, burst into Minsk and immediately cleared the Government

---

* Archives of MO USSR col. 319, inv. 4798, div. 152, p. 141.

** See "History of Minsk," Minsk, Izd-vo. Acad. of Science BSSR, 1957, p. 425.

House, the CC CP(b)B building and the regional Officer's House of mines. In all, after the city's liberation sappers disarmed approximately 3,000 aerial bombs, removed over 300 land mines and over 1,000 various types of mines and "booby traps."

The population of Belorussia's capital, which had borne terrible torments during the Hitlerite occupation, greeted the Red Army with rapture. With tears of joy the city's residents greeted their liberation. And although all around them were ruins, the inhabitants of Minsk know that soon their city would become even more beautiful, the factories and plants would come to life again, blocks of residential houses would rise, gardens and parks would bloom, and happy, resounding songs would begin to pour out. In the liberated cities and towns of the republic meetings were held at which the workers thanked the Red Army, Liberation Army. The Belorussian peoples' feelings of joy and their gratitude to the heroic army were clearly expressed by the writer Jakub Kolas. He wrote: "Minsk... That word sounds today in the heart of Belorussia like a magnificent hum , like a song of Glory to the victorious weapons of the Red Army..."* /182

Moscow saluted the soldiers of the 3rd and 1st Belorussian fronts who had liberated the capital of Belorussia from the German invaders. In its editorial of July 5 "Pravda" wrote: "The liberation of Minsk, heralding the rapid liberation of all of Belorussia, is a great, bright day of celebration for the Belorussian people...The liberation of Minsk is a joyous day of celebration for all peoples of our country... The liberation of Minsk is a joyful event for all progressive humanity, because the walls of yet another bastion built by the Germans to defend their villainous fortress have fallen." Over 50 formations and units of the 1st and 3rd Belorussian fronts which had distinguished themselves in the battle for the capital of Soviet Belorussia received the honorary designation "Minsk."

The partisans had actively participated in the liberation of the Belorussian SSR. Even at the end of June 1944 the CC CP(b)B and the government

* "Pravda," July 6, 1944.

of Belorussia sent the partisans a radiogram in which the move of the Soviet forces into the offensive was announced. "Now when decisive battles for the complete rout of the enemy are developing," the radiogram said, "more than ever all partisans, men and women, must intensify their combat activities, in order that, with coordinated blows by the Red Army from the front and partisans from the rear, the German invaders shall be beaten and the day of our total victory shall draw nearer."* The Central Committee of the Party and the government of Belorussia called upon the partisans: "Strike the enemy hard ! Beat the retreating Germans in every way, destroy the paths of retreat of the German troops, annihilate the incendiary teams, save the population from annihilation and the villages and cities from destruction. As the Red Army units approach establish contact with them, actively help them, cooperate in the seizure of inhabited areas... Help to restore bridges, crossings and road equipment for the advancing Red Army."**

Carrying out these orders, the partisans intensified their strikes on the enemy. From June 26 to 29 alone they derailed 147 enemy echelons. Close cooperation was established with the advancing Red Army units. In every front there was a strategic group from the Belorussian headquarters of the partisan movement, who coordinated the operations of partisan brigades and detachments with the operations of the Soviet troops. The partisans disrupted the enemy's orderly retreat, arranged ambushes along the line of retreat, seized river crossings, smashed separate enemy units and headquarters, prevented the Hitlerite robbers from plundering and removing to Germany the peoples' property, destroying and burning inhabited areas, and killing Soviet people or driving them into fascist slavery. They provided our command group with valuable intelligence, important trophy documents, and captive soldiers and officers.

The partisans of the Begoml'sk brigade "Zheleznyak," having seized the crossings on the Berezina above Lake Palik, rapidly set up two bridges for

---

* Party archives of Inst. of the Hist. of the Party of CC CP of Belorussia, col. 3500, inv. 23, div. 150, p. 84.

** Ibid.

the approach of units of the 35th tank brigade, on which it crossed to the opposite shore. The 1st partisan detachment participated in a tank assault group in the liberation of the inhabited area of Dokshitsa and the Paraf'yanova railroad station. The Slutsk partisan brigade seized an important crossing on the Sluchi River in the area of Pogost and held it for several days until the arrival of the Soviet forces. The peoples' avengers operating in the southern sector of the Minsk region won from the enemy and held crossings on the Ptich' River. From July 1 to 3 the /183
"Spartak" partisan brigade on the Glubokoye - Shvenchonis railroad in the Postava area destroyed 8 tanks, 3 armored cars and 37 trucks with enemy manpower. Operating in the Kruglyanskaya area, Mogilev region, on June 28 the "Chekist" partisan brigade engaged in stubborn battle with units of the 14th infantry and 78th assault German divisions and delayed their retreat. On the morning of the following day a tank corps caught up with these units and, with the support of the partisans, totally destroyed them. The V.I. Lenin partisan brigade operating in the Brest region, engaging the retreating German fascist troops in the area southwest of Malorita, helped the units of the 76th rifle division of the 1st Belorussian front to defeat them. Belorussian partisans aided Soviet troops in liquidating the encircled enemy groupings in the regions of Vitebsk, Bobruisk and east of Minsk.*

The district centers of Ostrovets, Lyubcha, Korelichi, Uzda, Kopyl', Starobin and Svir' were completely cleared of fascists by partisans. Together with the forces of the Red Army they liberated the cities of Vileyka, Cherven', Slutsk and Luninets.

One example of the decisive actions of the peoples' avengers is the operation by the partisan brigade named for the CC CP(b)B to save the population of the small town of Ostrovets. Retreating rapidly, the Hitlerites left 90 soldiers there with orders to burn the town and shoot the residents or drive them away to Germany. Learning of this units of the brigade burst into the town and destroyed all of the fascists.

---

* Party archives of the Inst. of Hist. of the Party of CC CP of Belorussia, col. 3500, inv. 4, div. 135, p. 254; inv. 3, div. 77, p. 115; div. 135, p. 65; inv. 4, div. 38, p. 517; div. 321, p. 50; inv. 3, div. 111, p. 103.

The advancing Red Army units received the essential help of the Belorussian people. The local residents caught saboteurs, pointed out enemy ambushes and mine fields, built river crossings, helped the troops to cross rivers and lakes, to build airfields, bridges, roads. For example, in the village of Prussa, Starodorozhskiy district, on their own initiative the residents rebuilt a demolished crossing and participated in the repair of roads. In the village of Chabusa in the same region, old men and women arrested the village elder and police who had failed in leaving with the Germans, and turned them over to military authorities.*

On July 19 a resident of the village of Podzheche, Chairman of the Ostrovok village soviet I.M. Kovch, performed an heroic deed. Knowing the area well, I.M. Kovch willingly agreed to act as guide for the 1297th rifle regiment of the 160th rifle division, 70th Army. He led the soldiers by little known paths and pointed out fords and convenient places to construct river crossings. In fighting that arose Kovch was fatally wounded. Dying, the Soviet patriot thanked the commander of the regiment for his trust in him and asked only that he see to his family's care**.

The workers of Belorussia felt warmly toward wounded soldiers, war invalids, and families of servicemen and partisans, and gathered the materials needed for the Red Army's supplies and to aid hospitals. The people of Belorussia rejoiced, seeing the approach of victory over the hated enemy, and did all they could to hasten it. The Soviet troops sensed the constant support of the population and aided them in turn.

The political organs and party organizations of the units and formations carried on a great deal of work with the inhabitants of the liberated regions. They organized meetings and assemblies at which political workers, commanders, and soldiers who had distinguished themselves in the battle for the given

---

* Archives of MO USSR, col. 233, inv. 2374, div. 41, p. 53.

** Ibid, div. 38, p. 196.

inhabited area spoke. Assistance was given to local party and Soviet organs for the workers' cultural services. For this purpose they used agitational vehicles, concert groups from army Red Army Houses, division clubs, and radio stations. The political directorate of the 3rd Belorussian front issued a special directive on intensifying work among the local populations of regions that had been liberated from the Nazi occupiers.* /18

In the course of the military operations, in Belorussia a close unity of the Soviet people and its army was once again demonstrated.

In 11 days of intense combat operations the troops of our fronts achieved great success. Advancing at an average rate of 20-25 kilometers a day, they moved up to 280 kilometers in that time, destroyed the main forces of army group "Centre," and liberated Minsk. East of Minsk a major German fascist grouping numbering over 100,000 men was encircled. It should be noted that while at Bobruisk the enemy was surrounded predominantly by tank corps of one front, and at Vitebsk by rifle corps from the combined armies of two fronts, at Minsk they were encircled by the forces of three fronts, and a decisive part here was played by the tank formations of the 3rd and 1st Belorussian fronts. In the first two cases the encirclement was effected 20-60 kilometers from the forward edge, and in the latter at 250 kilometers. Encirclement of the area became possible thanks to the precise cooperation of the three Belorussian fronts, which pursued the retreating enemy both along parallel routes and in a front. Encirclement of a massive enemy grouping as a result of pursuit and at such great depth was a new phenomenon in the course of the war and testified to the high level of Soviet military art.

The liquidation of the German fascist grouping east of Minsk was effected from July 5 to July 11. By July 5 a large number of units, retreating in disorder from the 12th and 27th Armies and the 39th tank corps of the 4th Army, the 35th Army and 41st tank corps of the enemy's 9th Army, had built up in the area of encirclement. These troops were not in contact with the headquarters of the 4th Army, which had succeeded in evacuating

---

* Archives of MO USSR, col. 241, inv. 108658, div. 2, pp. 127-129

in time to the area west of Minsk. Only on July 5 was the order given to the troops by radio to break through to the southwest.

The larger part of the encircled forces found themselves in two groups. One of these, including the remnants of the beaten 27th army corps, was concentrated southwest of Volma. It was commanded by the commander of the 78th infantry division, Gen. Traut. The other, composed of the remnants of the 12th Army and the 39th tank corps, was concentrated east of Volma. This group was commanded by the commander of the 12th army corps, Gen. Müller.

Both groups began to move in force toward the west, southwest and south, attempting to break through in the area of Baranovichi, but everywhere they encountered the stubborn resistance of our troops. For the liquidation of the surrounded grouping the 33rd Army of the Belorussian front and part of the forces of the 50th and 49th Armies of the 2nd Belorussian fronts were drawn upon. The 33rd Army, advancing south of the Moscow - Minsk highway, cut off the enemy's line of retreat to the northwest, and part of the center and left flank forced the enemy back to the south, in the direction of Volma. The armies of the 2nd Belorussian front continued their westward advance, simultaneously preventing the Hitlerites from retreating to the southwest and south.

On July 6 Traut's group attempted to break through to Dzerzhinsk, but it was destroyed by the troops of the 49th Army of the 2nd Belorussian front. Another blow was struck at Müller's group. A part of that group squeezed through to the Ptich' River south of Minsk. The fascists attempted to seize our airfield at the village of Ozertso (12 kilometers southwest of Minsk) but did not succeed.

On the night of July 8 Muller's group made an attempt to break through across the Ptich' River in the region of Samokhvalovichi. However, the 121st rifle corps of the 50th Army defeated it decisively. Müller himself surrendered. Upon his interrogation he indicated: "Our position had become intolerable. We found ourselves isolated. We had borne enormous losses. Thousands of soldiers had been wounded. They were left without attention of any kind, since there was no possibility of helping them. Everyone was starving."*

* "The Rout of the Enemy" (50th Army newspaper), July 10, 1944.

Müller was offered conditions of capitulation of the remaining troops of the 4th German Army. Having accepted them, on July 8 he issued the following order:

"To the soldiers of the 4th Army located east of the Ptich' River!

"After a week of heavy fighting and marches our position has become hopeless... Our fighting ability has fallen to the minimum, and there is no hope of supplies. The Russians, according to information from the High Command, are at the city of Baranovichi. The last paths ... have been cut off to us. There is no hope of breaking out of here with our forces and equipment. Our formations are scattered in disorder. A colossal number of wounded have been abandoned without any aid." Having given further information about the terms of capitulation proposed by the Soviet command group, Gen. Muller gave the order to "cease fighting immediately."*

This order was conveyed by the Soviet political organs to the surrounded German soldiers. Mass surrender began.

At the same time the enemy was being destroyed south and east of Minsk the Soviet forces were liquidating enemy groups attempting to break through north of Minsk. In the liquidation of the encircled grouping Soviet air force played an important role. The pilots followed the enemy from the air and by using pre-arranged signals or dropping message bags informed the command group of the ground forces of the position of separate enemy groups.

After the total rout of the main enemy groups there still remained many small detachments which disrupted the work of our headquarters and communications lines. On July 9 the commander of the 2nd Belorussian front assigned the 49th Army the mission of conclusively liquidating the remnants of the encircled forces. This mission was fulfilled. The 38th rifle corps,

---

* IML. Docs. and maters. of Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #17560, p. 26.

detached divisions and troops of the NKVD rear guard, together with the partisans combed the forests east of the Ptich' River and cleared this territory of Belorussia of occupiers. Many enemy soldiers, understanding the hopelessness of their position, surrendered, while those who resisted were destroyed.

Thus in a short time the encircled forces were totally liquidated.

On July 17, 1944 under the escort of Soviet soldiers 57,600 prisoners taken in Belorussia passed through the central streets of Moscow. Before the gigantic columns, hanging their heads, walked the German generals and officers. Looking about them thievishly, the "conquerors" walked through the streets of the capital of the Soviet Union. They had marched victoriously through many capitals of Europe - Warsaw and Paris, Prague and Belgrade, Athens and Amsterdam, Brussels and Copenhagen. Their dream had been to pass that way through Moscow also. And now they walked there, but not as victors, as the defeated. The majority of the Hitlerites were from the Minsk "pocket." For approximately 3 hours, twenty men to a rank, the prisoners moved past the silent, wrathful Muscovites standing in dense tows on the sidewalks. The feelings and thoughts of millions of Soviet people were well expressed by the Hero of the Soviet Union St. Lt. Vlasenko, who watched the procession. Raising his son Zhenya above his head, he said: "Look, son, look and don't forget. Only in such a way can enemies enter our capital."*

The German fascist army had suffered a catastrophic defeat in Belorussia. The rout of the enemy in the regions of Vitebsk, Bobruisk and Minsk meant the formation of a gigantic 400-kilometer gap in the center of the German front, which the Hitlerite command group was unable to fill in a short time. /186

In a considerably changed, extremely favorable strategic situation the Soviet forces were faced with the completion of new missions - to totally clear the Belorussian republic, and to begin the liberation of the Lithuanian

* "Pravda," July 19, 1944.

SSR and Poland. As early as July 4, before the enemy forces encircled east of Minsk were liquidated, the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command, anxious to maximally exploit the profitable situation, gave the fronts assignments for the further development of the advance.

The 1st Baltic front was to strike the main blow in the general direction of Shvenchonis, to come out to the line of Daugavpils - Shvenchonelyai - Podbrodze, and continue the advance on Kaunas. A part of the front's forces were to operate in the direction toward Panevezhis - Shyaulyay, strongly securing itself from the north.* The 3rd Belorussian front was ordered to strike its main blow at Vilnius, to liberate Vilnius and Lida no later than July 10-12, and then to break through to the Neman and seize a beachhead on its western bank.** The 2nd Belorussian front was assigned the mission of reaching the rivers Neman and Molchad' after having struck its main blow in the direction of the city of Novogrudok, then seizing Volkovysk and advancing in the direction of Belostok.*** The troops of the right wing of the 1st Belorussian front, after striking their main blow on Baranovichi - Brest, were to seize the cities of Baranovichi and Luninets and no later than July 10-12 to come out to the Slonim - Pinsk line. Further, these troops were to liberate Brest, come out to the Western Bug River and seize a beachhead on its western bank.****

The troops set about performing these missions.

---

* IML. Docs. and maters. of Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #9492, p. 323.

** Ibid, p. 319.

*** Ibid, p. 324.

**** Ibid, p. 320.

THE ROUT OF THE GERMAN FASCIST ARMY GROUP "CENTRE." THE LIBERATION OF BELORUSSIA.

/186

5. The liberation of parts of the Lithuanian SSR. The Soviet forces break through to the borders of East Prussia and to the Vistula.

For three years the Hitlerites had tormented Soviet Lithuania. This was a hard period for the Lithuanian people. Executing the cannibalistic "Ost" plan, the occupiers attempted to transform Lithuania, like all of the Baltic area, into their colony, to Germanize the local population. The districts bordering on East Prussia were most intensely colonized. For example, by the middle of 1943 a mass of German colonists rushed into Taurage district. To this at least testifies the fact that 29 primary schools and gymnasia were created for their children. The colonists were free from taxation and enjoyed special privileges. The German butchers exterminated the Lithuanians systematically and ruthlessly. During the

years of occupation the Hitlerites shot, burned and tortured approximately /187
700,000 people.* Before the war 3 million people lived in Lithuania. Consequently the fascists destroyed over one quarter of the population of the republic. Everywhere in Lithuania German fascism left its bloody tracks. In the small town of Paneryay near Vilnius the occupiers exterminated 100,000 people. In the ninth fort of the fortress of Kaunas 80,000 people were killed. The fascist monsters burned the village of Pirchyupis, destroying its inhabitants, including nursing infants.**

During the occupation approximately 80 percent of industrial enterprises and almost all electrical plants were ruined, approximately one-half of the livestock was destroyed, and agriculture was completely undermined.*** Over 75,000 agricultural workers, landless and land-hungry peasants who had received land after the establishment of Soviet power were deprived of it. The German fascists gave this land to former landholding kulaks and German colonists.****

Under the guidance of the Communists remaining in the underground the Lithuanian people rose to the struggle against the occupiers in the first days of the war. The progressive section of the population joined partisan detachments. In 1944 in Lithuania 67 partisan detachments and groups fought, of which 46 were connected with the Lithuanian headquarters of the partisan movement.***** The fame of the battle deeds of the partisans rang through all Lithuania and far beyond its borders. For example, the "Vilnius"

---

* See "Sovyetskaya Litva," May 31, 1959.

** See "Pravda," Dec, 24, 1960.

*** See "Questions of the History of the Communist Party of Lithuania (Collection of Articles)" Vilnius, Gospolitizdat of Lithuanian SSR, 1961, p. 147.

**** Ibid, p. 143.

***** Party archives of the Institute of History of the Party of CCCP of Lithania, col. 1, inv. 1, div. 135, pp. 1-2.

detachment, which operated in 1943-1944, in only one week derailed four enemy trains and burned several supply depots, killing 42 Hitlerite guards. Another detachment, "Zhal'giris," which fought during the same years, one day attacked a German subunit of 300 men; in this battle the fascists lost approximately 100 soldiers killed and wounded. In Kaunas in broad daylight the peoples' avengers attacked by fire a column of enemy troops. In their letters the Hitlerites admitted that fighting the partisans was more terrifying to them than the front. In the summer of 1944 the Lithuanian people intensified their struggle for liberation, aiding the troops of the 1st Baltic and 3rd Belorussian fronts advancing in the territory of the Lithuanian SSR in any way possible.

The 1st Baltic front pursued the enemy in the directions of Daugavpils and Kaunas. The advance of the units of the 6th Guards Army on Daugavpils moved slowly. Understanding that the loss of this important junction of roads would increase the threat of encirclement of army group "North," the German command group created a powerful defense in the approaches to the city and transferred up to five divisions there. The intense fighting near Daugavpils dragged on. The troops of the 43rd and 39th Armies operated more successfully in the Kaunas direction. As early as July they broke through to the Daugavpils - Vilnius railroad and cut off the Daugavpils - Kaunas highway.* Here the Soviet forces were forced to halt the advance for a short time and, repelling bitter enemy counterattacks, to carry out regrouping.

From July 5 to 14 the troops of the 1st Baltic front moved in to a depth of from 40 to 140 kilometers. However, the directive of Headquarters was not totally fulfilled: the troops of the right wing did not break through to the line indicated to them.

During the first half of July the forces of the 3rd Belorussian front developed the rapid advance, meeting no serious enemy resistance. The

---

* Archives of MO USSR, col. 235, inv. 2074, div. 848, p. 27.

enemy did not have a solid defensive front and offered resistance only with separate units which had been brought up or the remnants of the broken units. However, the battles for the liberation of Vilnius were long and stubborn.

Attaching great value to this important center of defense, which covered the approaches to East Prussia, the German command group concentrated a large grouping in Vilnius. Here they gathered up the retreating units /188
and formations of the 3rd Panzer Army. The city's garrison numbered 15,000 soldiers and officers. In addition, several divisions were brought up to the area of Vilnius.

On July 7-8 the forces of the 5th Guards Tank Army and the 3rd Guards mechanized corps* broke through to the city fortifications, breached them, and circling Vilnius from the north and south surrounded the enemy garrisons in cooperation with the formations of the 5th Army on July 9. Fierce fighting developed to liquidate the German fascist forces.

The enemy, attempting to raise the blockade on the encircled grouping, concentrated up to 150 tanks and assault guns and a regiment of motorized infantry, and undertook several counterattacks from the regions of Mayshyegola [transliterated from Russian] and west of Yev'ye (Vievis). Simultaneously the garrison of Vilnius, strengthened by a paratroop landing of 600 men, also attempted to break out of the encirclement. However, all of these attempts were found to be unsuccessful. In the course of five days of intense fighting the forces of the Red Army destroyed the enemy grouping and liberated Vilnius on July 13. The formations and units of the 3rd Belorussian front which had distinguished themselves during the seizure of the capital of the Lithuanian SSR were awarded the designation "Vilenskiy" [Vilnius].

---

* After breaking through to the area of Molodechno the mounted-mechanized group of Gen. Oslikovskiy was disbanded. After this the corps included in it functioned as independent corps.

The day after the liberation of the city "Pravda" wrote: "Vilnius, the ancient capital of Lithuania, the cradle of the state and culture of the Lithuanian people, has been returned by the Red Army to the Lithuanian people, returned to the great Soviet family of peoples... The liberation of Vilnius will make a strong impression on all peoples of the world... The news of this will inspire the populations of Riga and Tallin." * The fascists had wrecked and plundered Vilnius, and destroyed valuable monuments of the national culture. Museums of local lore, the Pushkin Museum and many libraries had been destroyed. The occupiers had closed Vilnius University as early as 1943.

The residents of Vilnius greeted their liberators joyfully. They observed with gratitude that for the third time (1920, 1939, and 1944) the Red Army was returning Vilnius to the Lithuanian people. The government of the Lithuanian SSR and CC CP(b) of Lithuania immediately moved into the liberated city and went to work. Communists emerging from the underground and Lithuanian partisans returning to peaceful work began with the support of the workers to bring life in the city back to normal.

During the battle for Vilnius the troops of the 11th Guards and 31 Armies moved successfully to the Niemen. On the day of the liberation of the Lithuanian capital the forward formations broke through to the river and began to force it with a rush under enemy fire. The troops acted boldly and decisively. By evening of July 15 they had already seized several beachheads on the left bank. The overall forcing frontage of the Niemen in the area of Alitus and to the south of it was 70 kilometers, and the depth of the beachheads seized reached 7-10 kilometers.** Attempting to prevent expansion of the beachheads, the enemy threw reserves into the area. The battles became drawn out.

By July 15 the troops of the 3rd Belorussian front had covered in force 180-200 kilometers, taken Vilnius, forced the Niemen and seized beachheads on its left bank.

---

* "Pravda," July 14, 1944.

** Archives of MO USSR col. 241, inv. 2593, div. 504, p. 148.

The troops of the 2nd Belorussian front also advanced successfully. In 10 days they had moved in force ~~to~~ 230 kilometers, forced the rivers Molchad', Shchara and Niemen (south of Grodno), liberated Novogrudok and Volkovysk and broken through to the line of Grodno and the city of Svisloch' (west) where they were forced to halt the advance for a time due to greatly increased enemy resistance.

In the forcing of the Niemen on July 14 in the region of Lunna the fighters of the 2nd rifle battalion of the 433rd rifle regiment, 64th rifle division, 49th Army, displayed exceptional fortitude and courage. Seven /189 warriors from this battalion - communists S.Z. Sukhin, S. N. Kalinin, I. I. Osinnyy, Komsomol members I.G. Sheremet and A.P. Nichepurenko, and non-party members M.S. Maydan and T.I. Solopenko - under heavy hostile fire, using materials at hand, were the first to cross to the west bank of the river and consolidated there. In the course of 24 hours the Soviet fighters repelled 12 furious counterattacks by the Hitlerites and did not retreat from the position they had occupied. Compelling the enemy's attention to themselves in that sector they thereby helped the main forces of the 433rd rifle regiment to complete a flanking maneuver, force the river in another place, enter the enemy's rear and attack him. The battle objective was fulfilled.*

The troops of the 1st Belorussian front advanced in the Baranovichi-Brest and Pinsk directions. Our troops met stubborn enemy resistance when liberating the city of Baranovichi. Considering the value of this center of defense, which covered the Brest direction, the German fascist command group allotted three new divisions to hold it in addition to the remnants of four divisions which had retreated there.

On July 6 and 7 the troops of the 48th, 65th and 28th Armies carried on a stubborn battle. The operations of the ground forces on July 8 were supported by approximately 500 bombers. On July 8 the city of Baranovichi was liberated. Rapidly pursuing the retreating enemy, the troops of these

* Archives MO USSR. col. 237, inv. 2414, div. 15, pp. 231-233.

armies forced the Shchara River with the active support of the air force, and on July 16 they broke through to the line of the city of Svisloch' (west) - Pruzhana, having progressed 150-170 kilometers in 12 days.

The rout of the enemy in the region of Baranovichi and on the line of the Shchara River created a threat to the enemy Pinsk grouping. The fascist forces began to fall back from the region of Pinsk, which hastened the advance of the 61st Army under the command of Lt. Gen. P.A. Belov along the north bank of the Pripyat River. This army operated on a wide front under the exceptionally difficult conditions of Poles'ye. Here the enemy grouping had numerical strength up to 50,000 men. The Dnepr military flotilla rendered essential assistance to the 61st Army. It transferred the forces of the army for concentration in the departure areas and made assault landings at various points along the Pripyat River which supported the advancing units. Two days before the liberation of Pinsk, on the night of July 12, the 1st brigade of river ships of the flotilla, having taken aboard one of the rifle regiments of the 415th rifle division, broke through 16 kilometers behind the front line and landed the assault group in the eastern outskirts of the city. At dawn the enemy drew up considerable forces with tanks and artillery and attempted to prevent the supply of reinforcements to the beachhead that had been seized, and then to destroy the entire assault group. With artillery support from the ships the assault teams repelled all of the enemy's attacks.

Pinsk was liberated on July 14 by the troops of the 61st Army and units of the 55th Guards rifle division of the 28th Army, which had crossed Poles'ye from the northeast to the southwest. The ships of the Dnepr military flotilla supported the ground forces. In taking Pinsk 185 various vessels were seized which the enemy had planned to destroy.

The fronts advancing in Belorussia had, on the whole, achieved the objectives assigned to them by Headquarters of the Supreme High Command in the July 4 directive. The enemy grouping east of Minsk had been liquidated. The Soviet forces had returned the cities of Vilnius, Grodno, Baranovichi, and Pinsk to the Motherland, forced the Niemen and seized a beachhead on its

left bank. As a result of the powerful blows of the Red Army in Belorussia from June 23 to July 15 three German armies of army group "Centre" had been totally defeated (the 3rd Tank, 4th and 9th) and great damage had been inflicted on the 16th Army of army group "North." The enemy's strategic front had been overwhelmed. Our forces, pursuing the retreating enemy, had liberated almost all of Belorussia and a considerable part of Lithuania, progressing 500 kilometers to the west.

This was a grand victory of the Red Army in the main direction in the summer-fall campaign. /190

Such rapid progress of the Soviet forces demanded intense work by the echelons of the operation and administrative areas. The restoration of railroad lines took on great importance, especially in the zones of advance of the 1st Baltic, 2nd and 1st Belorussian fronts, where the enemy had destroyed large sectors of the railroads. In the zone of the 1st Belorussian front it was necessary during the operation to restore major railroad bridges across the Dnepr at Zhlobin and across the Berezina at Bobruisk. To put the 65-kilometer Zhlobin-Bobruisk railroad sector into operation required 20 days. In that time the advancing forces moved 350 kilometers. Because the rate of road restoration lagged behind the rate of advance, supplying the forces was made very difficult. In those sectors of the front where tactical measures were taken to preserve railroad bridges the lag was somewhat less. For example, in the zone of the 3rd Belorussian front the rate of restoration of the Orsha-Minsk railroad sector was 21.2 kilometers per day, and of the Minsk-Vilnius sector 19.3 kilometers.* In that sector the restorers lagged behind the troops by only 80 kilometers.

Front and army road and bridge units carried out a great deal of work in completing military-automobile roads in the zones of advance of the fronts. For 100-200 kilometers along the roads points of technical service, automobile fuel, food and medical aid were set up, and baths and barbershops were opened. All of this ensured increased daily run of automobiles. Many

* IML. Docs. and maters. of Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #17368, p. 14.

soldier-drivers traveled 520-670 kilometers in 24 hours.* In certain cases part of the loads were delivered to the troops by automobile brigades of the reserves of Headquarters of the Supreme High Command.

The medical establishments worked well. The main attention was given to timely removal of wounded from the field of battle, their rapid evacuation and administration of competent medical aid in hospitals. The wounded were generally evacuated in medical motor transports, and medical aircraft were also used. For example, in the 3rd Belorussian front 1,800 wounded were evacuated in airplanes.**

Thus the workers of the operational and administrative services generally managed to deal with the tasks before them and supported the rapid advance of the troops. However, by the middle of July the routes for delivery and evacuation were very strained.

The enemy made every effort to stop the advance of the Soviet forces. He rapidly threw in reserves from other sectors of the Soviet-German front and from the occupied countries of Europe. From June 25 to July 16, 15 new divisions and 2 brigades arrived in Belorussia.***

The flow of enemy reserves, the losses in the forces of the advancing fronts and the lagging behind of rear services forced the Soviet command group to halt the advance temporarily on the Daugavpils line and on the Niemen. To continue it was necessary to bring up the rear services and regroup the forces in order to create a favorable ratio of forces and equipment.

---

* IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #17368, p. 15.

** Ibid, p. 16.

*** Collected materials on the composition of the forces of fascist Germany, 4th Ed., pp. 91-93, 107-109.

The decisive rout of the fascist army group "Centre" and the rapid advance of the Red Army in Belorussia created favorable conditions for going over to the offensive in other sectors of the Soviet-German front. On July 10 the troops of the 2nd Baltic front began advance operations in /191 the general direction of Rezekne. On July 13 the L'vov-Sandomir operation of the 1st Ukrainian front began. On July 17 the troops of the 3rd Baltic front went over to the advance, and on July 24 the Leningrad front. Thus from mid-July 1944 the advance of the Soviet Armed Forces had begun on a huge front from the Gulf of Finland to the Carpathians.

From July 15 to 19 the forces of the 1st Baltic front carried out regrouping and continued the battle in some sectors. At this time from the reserve of the Supreme High Command the 2nd Guards Army under the command of Lt. Gen. P.G. Chanchibadze and the 51st Army under the command of Lt. Gen. Ya. G. Kreyzer arrived. On July 20 the front went over to the offensive, which developed successfully. On July 22 the city of Panevezhis was liberated, and on July 27 the city of Siauliai. On the same day the troops of the 2nd Baltic front in cooperation with units of the 6th Guards Army of the 1st Baltic front seized a major center of enemy resistance, the city of Daugavpils.

While the 1st Baltic front advanced in the Siauliai direction fierce fighting was taking place on the Niemen. Up to the moment of the breakthrough of the forces of the 3rd Belorussian front to this river the strategic situation in the zone of advance had changed. The enemy had succeeded in restoring a continuous defensive front and organized the handling of troops.* By July 15 in the Kaunas sector alone over ten infantry and Panzer divisions were in operation. The enemy had been striking constantly, attempting to liquidate our beachheads on the west bank of the Niemen.

---

*Archives of MO USSR, col. 241, inv. 2593, div. 504, p. 146.

Great tension could be felt among the troops of the front. The constant advance was telling on them. Few tanks were left in the mobile formations, the rifle units needed replenishment, the artillery (particularly RGK anti-tank grenades) had fallen behind, the rear services were strained, and fuel and ammunition were in short supply.* In spite of these difficulties the forces strongly consolidated the seized beachheads, and successfully repelled all of the enemy's counterattacks. On July 23 our units went over to the defensive, carrying on battles of local significance and simultaneously preparing to renew the offensive.**

The air force rendered essential assistance to the ground forces in the battles for the beachheads on the Niemen River. Side by side with Soviet pilots bravely fought French pilots from the 1st detached air force regiment "Normandy" which had entered the personnel of the 1st Airborne Army. Thus, for example, on July 30 Jr. Lts. Shal' and Beyssad [names transliterated from Russian] flew out in Yak-9 aircraft to cover the ground forces in the Suvalkin sector. In the air they intercepted nine German U-87 airplanes. The French fliers boldly attacked the enemy. In the first attack an enemy airplane was short down. The enemy, however, succeeded in setting Beyssad's aircraft on fire. Remaining alone, Shal' continued to carry on the unequal battle and destroyed two more aircraft. The remaining fascist bombers dropped their bombs in disorder and vanished quickly.***

For heroic actions in the battles on the Niemen the French Air Force regiment "Normandy" was awarded the honorary designation "Niemen." In connection with this the commander of the 3rd Belorussian front, Gen. I.D. Chernyakhovskiy, wrote to the regimental commander Maj. Delfino: "The Military Council of the front congratulates you and the entire personnel of the unit entrusted to you with all our hearts on the award to your regiments of the designation 'Niemen.' We are proud, along with you and your entire personnel, that in your regiment in heroic battle with the enemy such /192

---

* Archives of MO USSR, col. 241, inv. 2593, div. 504, p. 147.

** Ibid, p. 149.

*** Ibid, col. 290, inv. 142208, div. 47, p. 52

officers have sprung up as Albert Marcel and de la Poip Rolland, who are honored with the highest honor of the Soviet country, the title of Hero of the Soviet Union with conferral of the Order of Lenin and the "Gold Star" medal. The Soviet people will never forget the heroic deeds done by them and by your entire unit in the common struggle against the German fascist aggressor. We greet the great free French people and its army, who are heroically battling for the final defeat of Hitler's Germany, through your unit and your entire personnel. We wish you new combat successes in this great, noble activity - the liberation of humanity from fascist tyranny."*

In several days the troops of the 2nd Belorussian front, who had broken through to the Niemen by mid-July and seized beachheads on the west bank, overcame the fierce resistance of the enemy. The Hitlerites, concentrating up to 10 divisions on the Grodno-Svisloch' line, inflicted counterstrikes and went over to counterattacks several times, particularly in the zone of the 50th Army. The troops of this army displayed great fortitude and courage.

In one sector the situation had developed in such a way that on July 18 it was found to be advisable to pull the main forces of the 42nd rifle division of the 50th Army from the west bank of the Niemen back to the east. The 1st and 2nd battalions of the 455th rifle regiment of this division were left on the beachhead. For three days both battalions carried on the battle and consolidated in the ruins of one of the forts of the Grodnensk fortress in the area of the village of Zagorana. The Germans did everything they could to destroy our garrison and liquidate the beachhead. When the enemy infantry, supported by tanks and assault guns, moved directly up to the fortress, the political unit deputy commander of the regiment, Maj. M.V. Sidorets, located with the garrison, drew the enemy fire on himself. Approximately 100 Hitlerites were destroyed by a salvo of vehicle-mounted multi-barreled rocket launchers. Unsuccessful, the fascists issued to the garrison an ultimatum of surrender. In answer they heard the song "Varyag" and cries of "Soviet soldiers do not surrender!"

---

* Archives of MO USSR, col. 35, inv. 279153, div. 7, p. 123.

All of the defenders of the fortress fought with exceptional courage. Many of them perished, but they fulfilled their military duty to the Motherland with honor.*

For several days the troops of the front repelled the enemy's blows, after which they renewed the advance. On July 27 the 3rd Army liberated the city of Bialystok [Belostok]. The Soviet troops emerged from the southeast at the closest approaches to East Prussia.

The greatest success in the second half of July was achieved by the 1st Belorussian front. As has already been observed, by July 16 the troops of the right wing and center of the front had broken through to the line of the city of Svisloch' - Pruzhany - and west of Pinsk. The strategic position of the troops had improved considerably. While at the start of the liberation of Belorussia the two strong flank groupings of the front were divided by the broad swamplands of Poles'ye, now Poles'ye was behind them and the length of the front line had decreased almost twofold. The breakthrough of the right wing of the front to the area northeast of Brest created favorable conditions for the left wing to move over to the offensive, which could lead to encirclement of the enemy's Brest grouping.

Taking into consideration the situation that had developed, the command group of the 1st Belorussian front prepared the troops of the left wing to go over to the offensive in the Kovel - Lublin direction. The plan of the operation had already been approved by Headquarters on July 7, 1944.**

The idea of the new operation, which had received the designation Lublin-Brest, was to rout the Lublin and Brest groupings of the enemy with blows by the troops of the front while flanking the Brest fortified area from the north and south, and, developing the advance in the Warsaw direction, to break through on a wide front to the line of the Vistula River. /193
Then the troops of the front, approaching the border of the USSR, should begin on the move to liberate the eastern regions of Poland.***

---

* Archives of MD USSR, col. 237, inv. 2414, div. 55, p. 394-396.

** Ibid, col. 233, inv. 2307, div. 50, p. 312.

*** At this time the troops of the 1st Ukrainian front performed a similar mission (see Ch. 7).

Major forces participated in the Lublin-Brest operation: nine combined-arms armies (including the 1st Polish), one tank army, two tank, one mechanized and three cavalry corps, and two airborne armies. The participation of the 1st Polish Army in the operation was clear testimony to the unity of the Soviet and Polish peoples in their desire to destroy fascism and liberate the Polish people from the foreign yoke.

It was decided that the troops of the left wing of the front would strike the main blow. By the start of the advance in the first echelon of this wing of the front were the 70th, 47th, and 8th Guards and 69th Armies, and in the second echelon the 1st Polish Army. In the area of Kovel the front also had the 2nd Tank Army, the 11th tank and 2nd and 7th Guards cavalry corps and the 6th Airborne Army.

The 47th Army under the command of Lt. Gen. N.I. Gusev, the 8th Guards Army commanded by Col.-Gen. V.I. Chuykov, and the 69th Army under the command of Lt. Gen. V.Ya.Kolpakchi received the assignment of breaching the enemy defense west of Kovel. Having effected the breach, the combined-arms armies were to secure the entry into the breach of the tank army and cavalry corps and in cooperation with them to develop the advance in two directions - toward Siedlce and toward Lublin. Due to the capable regrouping of forces an overwhelming superiority in forces and equipment had been achieved: a three-fold advantage in men and a five-fold advantage in artillery and tanks. Air support of the troops was entrusted to the 6th Airborne Army under the command of Lt. Gen. of the Air Force F.P. Polynin. By the start of the advance this army had 1,465 airplanes.

Five days before the start of the operation, on July 13, exploiting the success of the Soviet forces in Belorussia, the troops of the neighboring 1st Ukrainian front went over to the offensive. A new blow of enormous power was unleashed on the enemy. By July 17 the strike force of the front, operating in the Rava-Russkaya direction, had already forced the Western Bug with the forward detachments of its mobile troops. At the same time fierce fighting broke out in the L'vov direction. Now the military operations of the 1st Ukrainian front in their turn created favorable conditions for the advance of the troops of the left wing of the 1st Belorussian front.

The advance began July 18 and developed successfully. On July 20 the troops of the strike grouping of the left wing of the 1st Belorussian front broke through on a wide front to the Western Bug and forced it in three places, crossing into Poland. In the following two days the main forces of the armies crossed the river. The 2nd Tank Army under the command of Lt. Gen. of tank forces S.I. Bogdanov (after July 23 Maj.-Gen. of tank forces A.I. Radziyevskiy), entering the battle on July 22 in the zone of the 8th Guards Army, had already seized the city of Lublin on July 23. Continuing the rapid advance on July 25 the army broke through to the Vistula River in the region of Deblin. Two days later the 1st Polish Army, commanded by Lt. Gen. Z. Berling, arrived at that point. The 2nd Tank Army transferred its sector to it and began to move along the east bank of the Vistula toward Warsaw. With the breakthrough of the 2nd Tank and 1st Polish Armies to the Vistula the cooperation between the German fascist army groups "Centre" and "North Ukraine" was disrupted.

North of the strike group advanced the mounted-mechanized group composed of the 2nd Guards cavalry and 11th tank corps. Moving rapidly to the northwest, the mounted-mechanized group liberated the cities of Parczew and Radzyn' and on the night of July 25 engaged in battle for Siedlce. The breakthrough of the troops of the left wing of the front to the Vistula and to the area of Siedlce worsened the strategic situation for the enemy's Brest grouping. The advance of the troops of the right wing of the 1st Belorussian front was also /194 developing successfully. The 65th and 28th Armies reached the Western Bug north of Brest. With the breakthrough of the troops of the 1st Belorussian front to the Western Bug conditions were created for encirclement of the Brest grouping of the enemy.

Fearing to lose Brest, an important center of defense in the Warsaw direction, the Hitlerite command group gathered in the remnants of the 2nd and 9th Armies there and attempted to organize a strong defense to the northeast and east of the city. The enemy conducted strong counterattacks from the northwest and south on Cheremkha. This slowed the advance of our forces but did not stop it. The encirclement of the enemy's Brest grouping was completed on July 27 with the breakthrough of the troops of the 28th and 70th

Armies (the latter was commanded by Lt. Gen. V.S. Popov) to the Western Bug northwest of the city. The following day, July 28, the troops of these two armies took Brest by storm. The celebrated fortress, which had taken the first blow of the fascist horde in June 1941, became Soviet again.

On the basis of the situation that had developed, on July 28 in its directives Headquarters of the Supreme High Command gave the forces of the fronts assignments for continuation of the advance.

The forces of the 1st Baltic front were to cut off the communications lines connecting the enemy grouping operating in the Baltic with East Prussia. For this the front was ordered to strike its main blow from the area of Siauliai in the general direction of Riga and cut off the ground communications of the German army group "North." * The 3rd Belorussian front received the order to develop the advance with the forces of the 39th and 5th Armies and, with a blow from the north and south, to seize the city of Kaunas no later than August 1-2. With all forces the front was to advance toward the border of East Prussia, break through to it no later than August 10 and strongly consolidate to prepare for an incursion into East Prussia in the general direction of Gumbinnen - Insterburg - Preis-Eilau.** The troops of the 2nd Belorussian front was to develop the advance, striking the main blow in the general direction of Lomza-Ostrolenka, to seize the line of Augustow - Grajewo - Staviski - Ostrolenka no later than August 8-10, and to seize a beachhead on the west bank of the Narev River in the area of Ostrolenka.*** Having fulfilled this assignment they were to consolidate strongly to prepare for the incursion into East Prussia. The 1st Belorussian front was assigned the mission of first seizing the regions of Brest and Siedlce and then with its right wing of developing the advance in the general direction of Warsaw, taking Praga (a suburb of Warsaw) no later than August 5-8 and seizing a

---

* IML. Docs. and maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #9493, p. 17.

** Ibid, p. 18.

*** Ibid, pp. 19-20.

beachhead on the west bank of the Narev in the area of Pultusk-Serotsk; the left wing was to seize a beachhead on the west Bank of the Vistula in the region of Deblin-Zvolen'-Solets.

As a result of the performance of the major new tasks assigned by Headquarters the four fronts were to cut off army group "North" from army group "Centre" and break through to the border of East Prussia and the Vistula. The troops of the fronts turned at once to the fulfillment of these assignments.

The 1st Baltic front, changing the direction of its main blow from the west to the north, successfully moved out to the Gulf of Riga. On July 31 the troops of the front took by storm the main center of communications connecting the Baltic region with East Prussia, the city of Jelgava. On the same day the 8th Guards mechanized brigade under the command of Col. S.D. Kremer of the 3rd Guards mechanized corps commanded by Lt. Gen. of tank forces V.T.Obukhov broke through to the shore of the Gulf of Riga near the inhabited area of Klapkalns. The German army group "North" found itself cut off. It had lost its ground communications connecting it with army group "Centre" /195 and East Prussia. However, this success was not consolidated. Three weeks later, as a result of a strong enemy counterstrike, the Soviet forces were pushed away from the Gulf and in the area of Tukkums a 30-kilometer corridor was formed. The enemy was able to partially restore ground communications with army group "North."

After regrouping on July 28 the troops of the 3rd Belorussian front again went over to the offensive in the Kaunas direction. They advanced slowly because the enemy offered stubborn resistance. Enemy aircraft bombed the Soviet troops and crossings on the Niemen in groups of 15-20 airplanes. Retreating, the Hitlerites burned villages, mined roads, and destroyed bridges. Certain inhabited areas passed from hand to hand several times. The German command group wished to hold back the advance of our troops at all costs in order to complete preparation of defensive lines covering the border of East Prussia.* But still, in spite of the fierce resistance of

* Archives MD USSR, col. 241, inv. 2593, div. 504, p. 151.

the enemy, the troops of the front moved steadily westward. On August 1 the 5th Army in cooperation with the 39th and 33rd Armies liberated the city of Kaunas, an extremely important center of enemy defense in the East Prussia direction. Conducting stubborn battles, the troops approached the border of East Prussia. The Soviet soldiers did all they could to draw nearer the total defeat of the enemy in his own lair.

By July 31 the troops of the 2nd Belorussian front had broken through to the line of the Augustow Canal south of the city of Augustow and to the Narev River south of Knyshin, and with intense fighting they continued to advance in the Lomza direction.

After seizing the area of Brest and Siedlce the 1st Belorussian front advanced in the general direction of Warsaw. On July 31 the 2nd Tank Army engaged in battle in the immediate approaches of a suburb of Warsaw, Praga.*

In the period from July 27 to August 4 the 8th Guards and 69th Army of the left wing of the 1st Belorussian front forced the Vistula south of Warsaw and seized beachheads on its west bank in the areas of the cities of Magnushev and Pulawy. Fierce battles broke out to hold and expand the beachheads. The command group of the armies showed great military art in their handling of combat operations and the soldiers and commanders showed courage and valor.

Here are some examples of the exceptional heroism displayed by the soldiers of the 8th Guards Army in the battles for the beachheads. On August 1 a group of soldiers of the 8th rifle company of the 220th Guards rifle regiment, 79th Guards rifle division,under the command of company commander communist Lt. V.T. Burba was among the first to cross to the left bank of the Vistula near the city of Magnushev, and occupied a small beachhead. Fierce, stubborn fighting began. It was necessary to repel several enemy counterattacks every day. On August 7 the Hitlerites undertook seven attacks with the support of tanks and aviation. The attacks came one after another. The Guards repelled six of them, suffering heavy losses. The seventh attack began. Lt. Burba

---

* Military actions in the Praga area are described in Chapter 8.

gathered his remaining soldiers, and with a cry of "We will die for our Motherland, but we will not retreat!" he knocked out the first tank, and when a second had moved close to them he threw himself under it with a shu- cluster of grenades. An explosion resounded. The tank with the swastika ttered and died. The attack was repelled. At the cost of his life communist Burba had blocked the enemy's path.

A similar deed was performed in the neighboring sector by a soldier of the 4th rifle company of the same regiment, Komsomol member P.A. Khlyustin. On August 8 the fascists began to attack the position of the battalion. The Soviet soldiers repelled one attack after another. Then the enemy threw into the battle select infantry and tank units from the S.S. "Herman Goering" Panzer divisions. The soldiers allowed the tanks to cross their trenches, set fire to them and destroyed the enemy infantry. The battle was white hot. All around underbrush blazed, set alight by the Germans. Everything was dim with smoke. Khlyustin's clothing caught fire, but he continued to annihilate the Germans. When an enemy tank approached him the courageous soldier, enveloped in flame, leaped out of the trench, and with a cry of "For the Motherland!" threw himself with a cluster of antitank grenades under the tank. A deafening explosion resounded and the enemy vehicle burst into flames. The remaining tanks turned back. The Hitlerites' attack had broken down.

Thus Guards V.T. Burba and P.A. Khlustin repeated on the Magnushev beachhead the heroic deed of the people of Sebastopol' performed in 1941.* Lt. V.T. Burba and Pvt. P.A. Khlyustin were awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union.

Many sapper soldiers displayed courage and valor in these battles. Among them Sgt. P.I. Demin particularly distinguished himself. It happened this way. Approximately 70 amphibious vehicles with soldiers of the 172nd Guards rifle regiment started to cross toward the bank occupied by the enemy. But the unexpected happened: in the middle of the Vistula the heavy amphibians hit a sandbank. The enemy opened artillery and mortar fire on them. Sappers

* See Vol. II of this edition, p. 226.

set out in boats to aid their comrades who had fallen into misfortune. The Hitlerites intensified their fire. Enemy aircraft began to operate above the site of the crossing. Under incredibly difficult conditions the sappers were able to transfer the infantry to the opposite bank and thereby ensure fulfillment of the combat objective. The first to reach the enemy's bank was a boat under the command of P.I. Demin. In spite of the hail of fascist fire he crossed the Vistula twelve times, setting an example of courageous and decisive action. For his exceptional courage and fearlessness P.I. Demin received the Order of Glory 1st Degree, becoming a full bearer of this military order. At the same time he was accepted into the ranks of the Communist Party.

With the breakthrough of the troops of the 1st Belorussian front and the seizure of beachheads on its west bank the Lublin-Brest operation ended; the liberation of the Belorussian Soviet Socialist Republic was complete.

During this operation the troops of the front crossed the Soviet-Polish border* and cleared Polish soil in their zone west of the Vistula of occupiers. Conditions had been created for the liberation of the entire Polish territory. Shoulder to shoulder with the Soviet troops the 1st Polish Army fought valiantly. Polish partisans, who increased their struggle at this time, rendered considerable assistance to the Red Army.**

The people of Poland ecstatically greeted the Red Army and the 1st Polish Army which had brought them freedom. The Soviet soldiers were met in many cities and towns with flowers. In liberated inhabited areas Soviet and Polish flags streamed side by side in the wind as a symbol of the unbreakable friendship of the two peoples. Everywhere meetings on Soviet-Polish friendship were held. The workers of Poland helped the Red Army in every way they could: they repaired roads, delivered ammunition, arranged overnight bivouacs for soldiers and officers, and cared for the sick and wounded.

---

* At almost the same time the troops of the 2nd Belorussian and 1st Ukrainian fronts crossed the border.

** The struggle of the Polish people for freedom and independence is described in detail in Chapter 8.

The Polish people treated the memory of Soviet soldiers who had fallen for the liberation of Poland with great repsect. For example, in the battles for the village of Gerasimoviche, Dombrovskiy district [names transliterated from Russian] , Bialystok region, on July 26, 1944 Communist Party member Lance Corporal of the 1021st rifle regiment, 307th rifle division, G.P. Kunavin died the death of the brave. When the company in which he served was advancing on Gerasimoviche an enemy machine gun blocked its path from a dominating height above the area. The company went to ground. Then the courageous fighter rushed forward and covered the embrasure with his body. The company rose at once, tore forward and liberated the village.

The residents of Gerasimoviche were full of deep gratitude to the Soviet fighter. At a general meeting of August 9, 1944 they passed the following resolution: "Grigoriy Pavlovich Kunavin came to us, to our land, from the far Urals as a warrior-liberator. The bullets of the enemy pierced his heart. But he laid for those like himself, courageous soldiers of the Red Army, the road to victory. He fought for our happiness, so that the enemy never crossed the threshold of our home.

We raise the name of the Russian soldier Grigoriy Pavlovich Kunavin as a banner of the great brotherhood of the Russian and Polish peoples... As a sign of gratitude to our Russian brother and liberator the general assembly of the inhabitants of the village of Gerasimoviche decrees:

1. That the name of the Russian soldier Grigoriy Pavlovich Kunavin be entered for all time into the list of honorary citizens of the Polish village of Gerasimoviche.

2. That his name be inscribed on a marble tablet which is to be placed in the center of the village.

3. That the request be made to award the name of Grigoriy Kunavin to the school attended by our children.

4. That every year the teachers begin the first lesson of the first class with the story of the warrior-hero and his comrades-in-arms, by whose

blood the right to happiness and freedom was won for Polish children. Let the children listen to the story standing. Let their hearts fill with pride for the Russian brother Slav-warrior. Let their understanding of life begin with the thought of the brotherhood of the Polish and Russian peoples."*

Grigoriy Pavlovich Kunavin was awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union.

The military operations of our four fronts continued throughout August. The troops of the 1st Baltic front conducted heavy defensive battles in the regions of Dobele and Siauliai.

In the second half of August the enemy, attempting to seize the ground communications lines connecting army group "North" with Eastern Prussia, cut off the troops of the 1st Baltic front, who had broken in deeply, and close up the flanks of the forces of army groups "North" and "Centre," struck heavy blows at our forces with six Panzer and one motorized division and two Panzer brigades. The troops of the 1st Baltic front, maneuvering skillfully, repelled the enemy blows and by the end of August had consolidated on the line of the Memele River - east of Jelgava - west and southwest of Dobele. In repelling these blows the 5th Guards Tank Army, which had been transferred to the front and which at that time had a small number of tanks, took part. The army was commanded by Lt. Gen. of tank forces M.D. Solomatin, and after August 18 by Lt. Gen. of tank forces V.T. Vol'skiy.

In the defensive battles in the Siauliai area the 2nd Guards Army distinguished itself. In its personnel, shoulder to shoulder with the other formations, the 16th Lithuanian rifle division under the command of Maj.-Gen. V.A. Karvyalis stood to the death. This division, formed in the order of the State Defense Committee [Gosudarstvenniy Komitet Oborony, GKO] toward the summer of 1942, had taken part before arriving in the territory of their republic in battles near Orel, in the bulge of the Kursk salient, south of Nevel' and for Polotsk. On August 17, 1944 when the German fascist troops,

* "Krasnaya zvezda," Mar. 23, 1952.

having broken through the defense of units of the Red Army, rushed toward Siauliai, the Lithuanian division received the order to organize the defense in the approaches to this important road center and not to allow the Hitlerites to enter the city. The soldiers of the division steadfastly repelled the numerous attacks of the enemy's superior forces. With the slogans "Not one step backward!" and "The fascists will not be in Siauliai!" communists encouraged the soldiers to perform feats. Exceptional courage and steadfastness in these battles was displayed by the glorious daughter of the Lithuanian people, machine gunner Danute Stanelene. With the fire from her machine gun she helped to repel thirteen attacks by the fascists. For valor and courage D. Stanelene was awarded the Order of Glory 1st Degree and became a holder of the Order of Glory of all three degrees.* Thanks to the mass heroism of the formations and units of the 1st Baltic front, their steadfastness in the /198 defense, the assigned mission was performed. By evening of August 19 the Hitlerites, leaving knocked out tanks, self-propelled artillery and many killed on the field of battle, retreated and ceased their attempts to seize Siauliai.

The troops of the 3rd Belorussian front, having repelled enemy counter-attacks northwest and west of Kaunas, broke through in August to the line of Raseiniai - Kybartai - Subalki, that is to the border of East Prussia, and after August 29 began to prepare for the incursion into its territory. The 2nd Belorussian front, having covered 30-90 kilometers and broken through to the line of Augustow - Lomza, also began to prepare here to advance on East Prussia.

The army of the right wing of the 1st Belorussian front, which had covered 100 kilometers in force, had broken through to the Narev River in a sector from Pultusk to its mouth. The troops of the left wing of the front conducted battles to expand the Magnushev and Pulawy beachheads.

Thus during July and August 1944 the 1st Baltic, 3rd, 2nd and 1st Belorussian fronts achieved great success. Conducting stubborn battles, they

---

* See Y. Matsiyauskas, "The Motherland Calls," Moscow, Voyenizdat, 1960, p. 237.

advanced to a depth of 260-400 kilometers and widened the advance frontage to 1,000 kilometers. On the lines that had been gained the enemy's resistance intensified. In August the German command group was able to restore the strategic front, which along with the great length of our communications lines and the fatigue of the troops, who had been advancing for over two months, caused the advance to halt. On August 29 the troops of the four fronts received the order of Headquarters of the Supreme High Command to go over to the defensive on a front from Jelgava to Yuzefuv. The vast offensive begun on June 23 in the central sector of the Soviet-German front had been completed.

In September only a small part of the forces of the 2nd and 1st Belorussian fronts continued offensive operations. On the directives from Headquarters of August 29 two armies of the left wing of the 2nd Belorussian front were to reach the Narev River on September 4-5, seize a beachhead in the area of Ostrolenko and go over to the defense.* At the same time the armies of the right wing of the 1st Belorussian front were assigned to break through along the entire length to the Narev River, seize beachheads in the areas of Pultusk and Serotsk, then go over to the defense.** Both fronts fulfilled assigned missions by the middle of September. By this time the troops of the 1st Belorussian front had liberated the suburb of Warsaw, Praga.

The successful performance of the largest operation of 1944, the Belorussian operation, was of exceptionally great military and political importance. As a result of the rout of the German army group "Centre" Belorussia, a large part of Lithuania, part of Latvia and a considerable part of the Polish lands to the east of the Visla were completely liberated. The Soviet troops forced the Niemen and Narev Rivers and reached the border of East Prussia.

---

* IML. Docs. and maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #9493, pp. 100-102.

** Ibid, pp. 106-108.

The German fascist armed forces had suffered another great loss in the main strategic direction. Of the enemy's 97 divisions and 13 brigades which had participated in the battles against the Soviet forces, 17 divisions and 3 brigades had been completely destroyed, and 50 divisions had suffered losses of 60 to 70 percent of their personnel.* The troops of army group "North" had also suffered great losses. The enemy's strategic front had been overwhelmed in a short time to a depth of up to 600 kilometers. The Belorussian offensive operation made an enormous impression on the Allies. /199
The President of the USA wrote to the head of the Soviet government: "The rapidity of the advance of your armies is amazing..."** In connection with the success of the Red Army the British Prime Minister evaluated the position of fascist Germany thus: "There was little cause to doubt that the general crash would come soon."***

Even German military historians, who falsify events on the Soviet-German front and try in every possible way to make light of the significance of the victories of the Armed Forces of the USSR, were forced to acknowledge the complete rout of the German fascist forces in Belorussia. Thus the Hitlerite general Butlar writes that "the defeat of army group 'Centre' put an end to the organized resistance of the Germans in the East."**** In the book "Decisive Battles of the Second World War" G. Hackenholtz appraises the results of the Belorussian operation as follows: "The events of the summer of 1944 exerted a still stronger (in comparison with the defeat of the Volga. - Ed.) influence on the overall military situation in Germany: the rout of army group 'Centre' was reflected in the affairs of the entire German eastern front, having given the Russian command group the opportunity to drive the German front back in the center to the Vistula and the border of East Prussia, cut off the German

---

* IML. Docs. and maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #17936, p. 699.

** Correspondence of the Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers with the Presidents of the USA and Prime Ministers of Great Britain during the Great Patriotic War 1941-1945, Vol. II, p. 150.

*** Winston S. Churchill. "The Second World War," Vol. VI, London, 1954, p. 114.

**** "World War 1939-1945," p. 240.

troops in the Baltic area and shattered the position of Germany in the Balkans in military and political terms." * It is curious to observe that in an entry to the war diary of the Supreme High Command it is stated that the rout of army group "Centre" meant a greater catastrophe than Stalingrad.**

As a result of the catastrophe that the enemy suffered in Belorussia the strategic situation on the Soviet-German front changed fundamentally. The Baltic grouping of German fascist troops, preserving limited ground communications with East Prussia, was flanked by our troops from the south and southwest. Favorable conditions had developed for the complete liberation of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. The liquidation of the Belorussian salient removed the threat of a flank strike on the forces of the 1st Ukrainian front from the north, and the transfer of several tank divisions from the Ukraine to Belorussia facilitated the advance of troops of the 1st Ukrainian front in the western regions of the Ukraine. With the breakthrough of a large group of Soviet armies to the borders of East Prussia and the Vistula the opportunity arose to conduct major operations with the goal of seizing East Prussia, conclusively liberating Poland, and driving a wedge deeply into Germany in the Berlin strategic direction.

This prospect, so gloomy for the ruling classes of Germany and its general officers, could not but agitate them. Only now, at the end of the fifth year of the second world war, did the representatives of the German command group begin to realize that an end had come to their unceremonious sway on foreign soil, and the time to fight on their own territory had arrived, that consequently they must change the robber rules and habits ingrained over many long years. In a directive, which was quite curious in this sense, from Gen. Reinhardt, who had commanded the 3rd German Panzer Army in the days of the Belorussian operation, one can find the following frank acknowledgements

---

*Decisive Battles of the Second World War, p. 474.

**See Situation Reports of the High Command of the Wehrmacht, Vol. IV, Part One, pp. 13-14.

and advice. "The arrival of German soldiers of the active army in the territory of Germany will, naturally, provoke great excitement and anxiety among the local population. It is therefore entirely understandable that the German soldier should with his entire behavior instill in his compatriots that confidence of victory that accompanied him in all campaigns into the depths of a hostile enemy country." How does the fascist general require that he "instill confidence of victory"? "For this it will be essential," /200 he writes,"to fundamentally alter all previously existing rules and habits. The wide spaces of the Russian country provided the army with different freedoms than the territory of Germany." There, Reinhardt admits, were permitted "willful acts to arrange one's life and the satisfaction of personal needs. Necessary materials could, as a rule, be taken where they were found. Almost no attention was paid to the population in billeting the troops. The soldier was the 'master of the house' everywhere." Now times had changed. Therefore Reinhardt required his subordinates "to spare woods and fields, houses and personal plots" and to treat them as they would their own property. Too late, on the very border of the German state, when the expulsion of the German invaders from Soviet soil was being completed, he tried to convince the soldiers that "willful provision of additional supplies is a criminal offense."*

Attempting to stop the rapid advance of the Red Army in Belorussia, the German command group constantly transferred there considerable forces from other sectors of the Soviet-German front and from many countries of Europe. Thus from the Baltic area and from the southern flank of the Soviet-German front 23 divisions were transferred. This created favorable prerequisites for the advance of the Red Army in other strategic directions. The transfer of 18 divisions and 4 brigades to army group "Centre" from Germany, Poland, Hungary, Norway and other countries of Europe** facilitated the actions of the Anglo-American troops that landed in Normandy in June.

---

* Archives MD USSR, col. 32, inv. 142111,div. 2, pp. 385-386.

** IML. Docs. and maters. of Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #17936, p. 699.

The Belorussian operation was the first strategic offensive operation of the Soviet Armed Forces conducted at the time when in Western Europe the military operations of the forces of the USA and England began. However, in spite of the Allied landing in France, 70 percent of the ground forces of fascist Germany continued to operate on the Soviet-German front.

The Belorussian operation differed from other operations by the Red Army conducted in the summer and fall of 1944 in its huge scope. The advance developed in a zone of 700 kilometers and was completed on a front of approximately 1,000 kilometers. By the end of August our forces had advanced in force by 550-600 kilometers. The troops of four fronts, long range aircraft, the Dnepr military flotilla and the many-thousands-strong army of Belorussian partisans took part in the operation. This was one of the largest operations of the Great Patriotic War. The composition of the four Soviet fronts, taking into consideration the reserves of Headquarters of the Supreme High Command that were transferred to them, included over 2,500,000 men, over 45,000 guns and mortars of all calibers, over 6,000 tanks and assault guns, and approximately 7,000 airplanes (not including long range aircraft). The enemy army group "Centre" gradually drew in over 1,500,000 men, approximately 17,000 guns and mortars of various calibers, over 1,500 tanks and assault guns, and over 2,100 airplanes.*

The advance was rapid. The daily average advance of the troops was 20-25 kilometers before the liberation of Minsk and 13-14 kilometers during the battles west of Minsk. Such rapid movement was due above all to the great military experience and high degree of skill of the Soviet forces. Thanks to correct planning and capable preparation of the operation and the massing of forces and equipment in the directions of the main blows, the enemy was struck an initial blow of such enormous force that his strategic front of defense very soon collapsed. Favorable conditions were created for pursuit

---

* IML. Docs. and maters. of Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #17921, p. 338.

of the enemy's broken forces. Capably flanking detached enemy groupings, the advance mobile units of the Red Army rapidly broke through to the enemy's lines of retreat, seized the most important lines in the enemy's rear and deprived him of the opportunity to stabilize the defense. Only two months later at the cost of great effort was the Hitlerite command group able to restore the strategic front.

The rapid advance of our troops was facilitated by the constant growth of strike forces achieved by timely entrance into the battle by large reserves from Headquarters of the Supreme High Command. Thus in the middle of July the 2nd Guards and 51st Armies were transferred from Headquarters Reserves to the 1st Baltic front. This significantly facilitated the performance of the missions assigned to the front on July 28 - to strike a main blow in the general direction of Riga* after seizing the region of Siauliai. A large part in the successful completion of the operation and the breakthrough of the Red Army to the Vistula was played by the timely entrance into the battle of the forces of the left wing of the 1st Belorussian front. The beginning of the advance of the 2nd and 3rd Baltic and the 1st Ukrainian fronts was no less important.

Cooperation by the troops of the four fronts was well organized in the Belorussian operation. This was demonstrated in the infliction of blows coordinated in time and place with the purpose of simultaneously breaching the enemy defense on a wide front. As a result of the breach in the defense and the rapid development of the operation the German fascist grouping was broken into units, army group "North" was cut off from army group "Centre" and the enemy lost the possibility of maneuvering its reserves. Conditions had been created to encircle and liquidate the Hitlerite forces.

An outstanding feature of the advance in Belorussia was the artful deployment of such a decisive means of operation as encirclement. The Soviet forces surrounded major enemy groupings near Vitebsk, Bobruisk, Minsk, in Vilnius and in the area of Brest. With this the encirclement at Minsk was effected in the course of parallel and frontal pursuit of the hastily

---

* IML. Docs. and maters. of Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. "9493, p. 17.

retreating enemy at a depth of up to 250 kilometers from the forward edge of the defense. This was a new achievement of Soviet strategic art.

The Belorussian operation was characterized by the mass use of artillery, armored and engineer troops, and aviation.

The Airborne Armies of the fronts carried out approximately 100,000 airplane flights. More than in any other operation of 1944 long range aircraft took part in the Belorussian operation. It inflicted blows on the most important objects of enemy defense and his operative rear. In the interests of the 1st Baltic, 3rd, 2nd and 1st Belorussian fronts from May through September long range aircraft completed 16,065 airplane flights and dropped 16,908 tons of bombs on the enemy.* The Soviet government highly regarded the combat services of the fliers, conferring on many of them the title of Hero of the Soviet Union.

An important part in the rout of the German fascist occupiers in Belorussia was played by partisans, whose actions were capably coordinated with the actions of the advancing forces of the Red Army.

The achievement of the goals of the Belorussian operation was ensured also by the efficient work of operative and administrative rear services, which were able to rationally and expediently exploit the enormous material and technical resources assigned for performance of the advance. The quantity of these resources can be judged from data such as these: during the operation 300,000 tons of fuel and lubricants and 400,000 tons of ammunition were expended, for transport of which approximately 700 railroad trains were required.**

The success of our forces in the Belorussian operation testified to the high level of morale and combat qualities of the Soviet troops - their

---

* Archives MD USSR, col. ADDm inv. 362906 div. 1, pp. 14-27.

** IML. Docs. and maters. of Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. # 9608, p. 802.

political consciousness and boundless devotion to their Motherland, their heroism and valor, and their increased military skill. In the battles for the liberation of Belorussia tens of thousands of soldiers, sergeants, officers and generals were decorated with government awards. Thus, for example, during July and August 1944 orders and medals were conferred on: 74,157 men of the 1st Baltic front, 104,497 men of the 3rd Belorussian front, 74,343 men of the 2nd Belorussian front, and 149,147 men of the 1st Belorussian front.* The overwhelming majority of the awardees were communists and Komsomol members. Communists cemented the ranks of units and formations, and by their personal example of courage and valor inspired the troops to feats of arms. /202

The victory of the Soviet Armed Forces in Belorussia was a victory for all of the Soviet people, who by their heroic work in the rear created the essential conditions for the rout of the enemy.

* Archives of MD USSR, col. 33, inv. 43294, div. 85, pp. 9, 15; div. 86, pp. 149, 155.

CHAPTER 7

THE COMPLETION OF THE LIBERATION OF THE UKRAINE.

1. Western regions of the Ukraine under the fascist occupiers. The missions of the troops of the 1st Ukrainian front.

The defeat of the enemy's strategic grouping in Belorussia improved /203
conditions for the advance of the forces of the 1st Ukrainian front in the Rava-Russkaya and L'vov directions.

For three years the population of the western regions of the Ukraine had been under the yoke of the occupiers. The German fascist invaders burned and destroyed thousands of villages, towns and cities, tortured, shot, hanged and poisoned hundreds of thousands of innocent citizens. In L'vov and the

L'vov region alone the fascist monsters destroyed approximately 700,000 Soviet people, as well as citizens of Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Holland, Great Britain and the United States of America, sent here from the concentration camps of Germany.* For mass extermination of the population the occupiers created a special administrative system and organized a whole network of prisons and concentration camps.

One of the gravest crimes of the Hitlerite invaders was driving masses of Soviet people to hard labor in Germany. According to data which are far from complete, 130,000 persons were taken from the L'vov region for slave labor, and approximately 445,000 persons** from the entire so-called "Galician district."*** The German fascists planned to send the great part of the population of the western regions of the Ukraine to Siberia. In "Observations and Proposals on the General Plan "Ost" of the Reichsfuhrer of the SS" it was noted: "According to the plan of the directorate of imperial security the western Ukrainians should also be sent to Siberia. With this the relocation of 65 percent of the population is called for."**** On the age-old Ukrainian lands the Hitlerites planned to create German colonies. However, they were unable to realize their criminal plans. /204

Ukrainian bourgeois nationalists caused much grief and suffering to the workers of the western regions of the Ukraine. Their ringleaders - paid agents of German fascism - attempted to turn these regions into a breeding-ground of Ukrainian nationalism. The nationalists pushed forward slogans directed at undermining the peoples' unity in their struggle against the occupiers. German and bourgeois nationalist propaganda slandered the socialist order and the Soviet people, distorted the history of the struggle of the Ukrainian

---

*See "Collected Reports of the Extraordinary State Commission on the Crimes of the German Fascist Invaders," Moscow, Gospolitizdat, 1946, p. 357.
**In the "Galician district" (okrug) the occupiers included the L'vov, Drogobychskiy Stanislavskiv and Tarnopol' regions. This "district" was included in the composition of the Polish general government.
***See "German Fascist Occupation Regime in the Ukraine 1941-1944" (Collection of Documents and Materials), Kiev, Derzhavne vidavnitstvo politichnoy literaturi URSR, 1951, p. 386.
****Quoted from "Defeat of German Imperialism in the Second World War," p. 232.

people for social and national liberation, and widely announced the alleged "liberating mission" of the German army. "The Ukrainian-German nationalists," said N.S. Khrushchev, "did all that depended on them in order to facilitate the German enslavement of our Ukrainian people. They calculated that, covered by nationalist slogans, they would be able to draw the Ukrainian people after them and thereby distract them from the struggle with the Germans, and make them docile before the German oppressors." *

The Ukrainian bourgeois nationalists formed armed bands which were united in the so-called "Ukrainian Insurrectionalist Army" (UPA) and the "Ukrainian Peoples Revolutionary Army" (UNRA). These bands acted against the Red Army and Soviet partisans, and plundered the population along with the Germans. Their nucleus was made up of kulaks, bourgeois elements of the cities, and criminals. A certain number of deceived peasants also enlisted in the bands. On assignments from the Gestapo the bourgeois nationalists performed the vile role of spies and provocateurs; they infiltrated partisan detachments and followed members of the underground. The armed bands arranged ambushes of partisans and underground members, and killed them or passed them into the hands of the Gestapo. At the beginning of 1944 the nationalists tracked down an underground group of the Glinyanskiy district, L'vov region, and brutally tortured many of them.** Attempting to undermine the population's trust in the people's avengers the nationalists committed outrages in cities and towns and ascribed them to the partisans. However, they were unable to attract any significant part of the population to their side.

In spite of cruel terror and repression the workers of the western regions of the Ukraine did not submit to the occupiers. Underground party and Komsomol organizations, partisan detachments and groups fought bravely against the Hitlerite invaders and their lackeys, the bourgeois nationalists. The victories of the Red Army in 1943 and in the first half of 1944 inspired the population of the still unliberated regions of the Soviet Ukraine to glorious new deeds. By summer of 1944 the battle of the partisans and activists of underground party organizations took on wide scope.

---

* N.S. Khrushchev. The Liberation of the Ukrainian Lands from the German Invaders and Immediate Tasks to Restore the State Economy of the Soviet Ukraine, pp. 15-16.

** See N.I. Suprunenko. "The Ukraine in the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union (1941-1945)" Kiev, Gospolitizdat UK.SSR, 1956, p. 271.

The underground anti-fascist organization of the L'vov region, "People's Guard named for Ivan Franko," operated actively. It was founded as early as the fall of 1942 and by 1944 numbered approximately 150 persons. Its directors and active participants were communists and Komsomol members N.D. Beryezin, V.A. Grushin, I.P. Vovk, P.P. Perchinskiy, Ye.G. Tsibrukh, and I.G. Matveyshin. The organization conducted a great deal of mass-political work among the population. It possessed a press and published the newspapers "Partizan," "Bor'ba," and "Novosti Dnya" in Ukrainian, Russian and Polish. There summaries were regularly printed from the Soviet Information Bureau, articles on the international and internal position of the Soviet Union, and material exposing the fascist and bourgeois nationalist ideology. Leaflets /205 were also published, which were pasted on the walls of buildings and distributed among the population.

In the Zolochevsk, Gorodok, Brodovsk, Krasnensk, Rava-Russkaya, Vinnikov, and other districts of the region militant partisan groups formed by the "People's Guard named for Ivan Franko" were in operation. The partisans carried out many operations to destroy important enemy targets.*

In the 1st half of 1944 when the Soviet forces, having liberated the Right Bank Ukraine, were moving successfully to the west, many partisan formations and detachments crossed to the western regions of the Ukraine and continued to operate there in the rear of the German fascist forces. Some of the detachments crossed the Western Bug and established close contact with Polish partisans. By the end of April 10 partisan formations and 53 detachments numbering 8,882 persons were fighting in the western regions of the Ukraine and the southeastern areas of Poland. **

---

* See "Struggle of the Workers of L'vov against the German Fascist forces. (1941-1944). Collection of documents and material. Lvov, Vidavniptvo "Vil'na Ukrayna", 1949, p. 153.

** Party archive of the Inst. of History of the Party of CC CP of the Ukraine, Col. 1, inv. 14, div. 905, pp. 173-174.

During the preparations of the troops of the 1st Ukrainian front for the new advance, Ukrainian partisans in close cooperation with Polish partisans carried out military operations on the enemy's lines of communication.* In May-June Soviet and Polish partisans put the L'vov-Warsaw and Rava-Russkaya-Yaroslav railroads out of operation for almost a month and destroyed 13 large enemy garrisons.**

The military operations of Soviet partisans in the occupied territory of the western Ukrainian regions were conducted under very difficult conditions. In the district of L'vov and Stanislav by the summer of 1944 the enemy had concentrated a major grouping of forces and was guarding communications more intensively. In order to liquidate the partisans in the western regions of the Ukraine and in southeastern Poland the German fascist command group systematically conducted punitive expeditions using tanks and aircraft. However, all of these attempts ended in failure.

The partisans operated under the control of party organizations and were closely connected with the people. Under the very difficult conditions of the occupation regime the workers helped the partisans to battle the enemy, believing deeply that the Red Army would soon bring liberation.

In the course of the winter campaign of 1944 the Soviet forces, having routed the southern strategic grouping of the German fascist forces, liberated not only the Right Bank Ukraine and the Crimea, but also a considerable section of the western regions of the Ukraine. In mid-April the 1st Ukrainian front

---

* By military operations of the partisans are meant: attacks on combat units and garrisons of the enemy, destruction of enemy lines of communication, organization of train crashes, burning supply depots and other diversionary acts, and also defensive operations.

** Party archives of Inst. of History of the Party of the CC CP of the Ukrainian SSR, col. 1, inv. 14, div. 816, p. 17.

temporarily went over to the defense on the line west of Lutsk - Chervonoarmeysk - west of Tarnopol' - Kolomyya - Krasnoil'sk (map 7). On May 15 Marshal of the Soviet Union I.S. Konyev took command of the troops of the front. The members of the Military Council of the front were Lt. Gen. N.S. Khrushchev and K.V. Kraynyukov, and Chief of Staff was Gen. V.D. Sokolovskiy.

Before the 1st Ukrainian front was operating the enemy's army group "North Ukraine" under the command of Col.-Gen. Y. Harpe, which occupied the defense from Poles'ye to the Carpathians. Its composition included the 4th and 1st German Panzer Armies and the 1st Hungarian Army. This army group was supported by the 4th and 8th air corps of the 4th Air Force.

Army group "North Ukraine" was assigned to hold the occupied lines and to prevent a breakthrough by the Soviet forces to the area of L'vov and to the important industrial and oil region of Drogobych-Borislav. In addition, the enemy planned on covering with its defense in the sector of the front between Poles'ye and the Carpathians the strategic directions leading toward the southern areas of Poland, to Czechoslovakia and the Silesian industrial region, which were of great economic importance for fascist Germany.

After the rout of the main forces of army group "Centre" the German fascist command group was forced to transfer troops from Germany and from other sectors of the front to Belorussia. Thus in mid-July six divisions, including three Panzer divisions, were sent from army group "North Ukraine," which considerably weakened this group.

Army group "North Ukraine" opposed the main forces of the 1st Ukrainian front and a part of the forces - in the sector west of Kovel - of the 1st Belorussian front. In all by the start of the advance opposite the 1st Ukrainian front the enemy had 34 infantry, 5 Panzer, and 1 motorized division, and 2 infantry brigades.* In addition, each army included many special units and sub-units. The group numbered over 600,000 men and possessed 900 tanks and assault guns, 6,300 guns and mortars 75 mm caliber and greater, and 700 airplanes. The most numerous enemy grouping was located in the L'vov direction in the Brody-Zborov sector.

---

* Collected mats. on composition of forces of fascist Germany, 4th ed., p..110-113.

Attempting to hold the part of the Ukrainian territory remaining to him, the enemy created a deeply echeloned defense. It was especially strong east of L'vov. The rugged terrain, large tracts of forest, swampy expanses, and the Western Bug, Dnestr, San and Vistula Rivers facilitated the raising of strong defensive lines. The enemy constructed three zones of defense 40-50 kilometers deep. The first zone, with a depth of 4-6 kilometers, consisted of three to four continuous trenches connected by communication trenches. The second zone was located 8-10 kilometers from the forward edge of the battle area and in the sense of engineering was equipped much more weakly than the first. The third zone ran along the west banks of the Western Bug and Gnilaya Lipa Rivers. By the beginning of the advance of the Soviet forces it had not yet been completely equipped. In addition the enemy prepared defenses on the Dnestr, the San, and the Vistula. The cities of Vladimir-Volynsk, Brody, Khrubeshuv, Rava-Russkaya, L'vov, Stanislav and many large inhabited areas were transformed to strong centers of resistance.

Because of the insufficiency of strategic reserves the Hitlerite command group planned to hold the tactical zone of defense at all costs. With this purpose almost all infantry divisions were concentrated in the first and second zones of defense and the Panzer divisions were located at a distance of 10-20 kilometers from the forward edge.

The plan of the summer-fall campaign of 1944 called for the troops of the 1st Ukrainian front to begin the attack after the defeat of the main forces of army group "Centre" in Belorussia. In accordance with this the command group of the 1st Ukrainian front prepared its main ideas on the conduct of the operation with the goal of routing army group "North Ukraine" and completing the liberation of the Ukraine. The commander of the front presented these ideas in early June at Headquarters of the Supreme High Command. Taking them into consideration Headquarters conclusively defined the conception of the operation and on June 24 issued a directive to the front commander. In accordance with this directive the front was to prepare and conduct an operation to defeat the enemy groupings in the L'vov and Rava-Russkaya directions. The troops of the front were ordered to rout the L'vov and Rava-Russkaya groupings and break through to the line of Khrubeshuv - Tomashuv - Yavorov - Galich, for which they were to strike two blows: the

first from the area southwest of Lutsk in the direction of Sokal'-Rava-Russkaya, and the second from the area of Tarnopol' on L'vov.* In order to support the blow in the L'vov direction the advance of units of the front's left wing forces on Stanislav was planned.

From the resolution of Headquarters it can be seen that the Soviet Supreme High Command, in planning the operation which later received the name L'vov-Sandomierz, assigned the troops the mission not only to drive the Hitlerite invaders from the territory of the western regions of the Ukraine, but to begin the liberation of the southeastern areas of Poland. The fulfillment of this mission coincided in time with the operations of the troops of the 1st Belorussian front in the Lublin - Warsaw direction. In the Headquarters directive mentioned it was planned that the advance by units of the right wing of the front on Khrubeshuv - Zamost'ye would support the movement of the troops of the left wing of the 1st Belorussian front. Thus the operation of the 1st Ukrainian front was a component of the mighty Red Army offensive in the center of the Soviet-German front in the summer of 1944.

For successful fulfillment of the assigned mission Headquarters reinforced the 1st Ukrainian front with nine rifle and 10 air force divisions, and artillery and special formations and units. In addition, in order to bring the formations up to prescribed strength the front received 1,100 tanks and 2,747 guns and mortars. The makeup of the front included seven armies (the 3rd Guards, 13th, 60th, 38th, 1st Guards, 18th and 5th Guards), three tank armies (1st, 3rd Guards and 4th), the 2nd and 8th Airborne Armies, and two mounted-mechanized groups.**

---

*IML. Docs. and mater. of Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. # 9492, pp. 309, 310.

**The administration of the 8th Airborne Army entered the composition of the front in mid-July.

The mounted-mechanized group under the command of Lt. Gen. V.K. Baranov consisted of the 1st Guards cavalry and the 25th tank corps. The mounted-mechanized group under the command of Lt. Gen. S.V. Sokolov included the 6th Guards cavalry and the 31st tank corps.

In all before the advance the 1st Ukrainian front had 80 divisions (6 of them cavalry), 10 tank and mechanized corps, and 4 detached tank and mechanized brigades. In addition, the makeup of the front included the 1st Czech army corps. The front possessed 13,900 guns and mortars 76 mm caliber and greater, 1,614 tanks and assault guns, and 2,806 airplanes. The troops of the front numbered 843,000 men.*

The commander of the 1st Ukrainian front, starting on the basis of the assigned objective and an evaluation of the situation, decided to strike a blow in the Rava-Russkaya direction with the forces of the right wing of the front consisting of the 3rd Guards and 13th Armies, the 1st Guards Tank Army and the mounted-mechanized group of Lt. Gen. V.K. Baranov. It was planned that the defenses would be breached by the forces of the combined flanks of the 3rd Guards and 13th Armies in a sector 12 kilometers in with. The blow in the L'vov direction was to be inflicted by the troops of the center of the front consisting of the 60th and 38th Armies, the 3rd Guards and 4th Tank Armies and the mounted-mechanized group of Lt. Gen. S.V. Sokolov. The breach in the enemy defenses here was also to be effected by the forces of the combined flanks of the 60th and 38th Armies in a sector 14 kilometers in width. In the course of the advance it was planned that the enemy grouping in the region of Brod would be surrounded and destroyed. To support the central strike group operating in the L'vov direction it was proposed that the 1st Guards Army would go over to the offensive in the Stanislav - Drogobych direction.

The troops of the front, deployed in a 440-kilometer zone, had a two-echelon tactical battle order. By the start of the operation the 5th Army - the second echelon of the front - was concentrated southeast of Tarnopol'. /208
In addition, one rifle corps was in the front reserves. Three tank armies and two mounted-mechanized groups comprised the mobile groups of the front. On the first day of the operation the armies of the first echelon together

* IML. Docs. and maters. of Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #17936, p. 702.

with the tank armies were to breach the first and second zones of enemy defense to a depth of 20-30 kilometers. In view of the fact that the German fascist command group attached enormous importance to holding the tactical zone and had strongly fortified it, the breach in the enemy defenses was to be effected by a powerful grouping of forces.

The plan of the operation finally developed by the front was sent to Headquarters on July 7. After thorough study of the plan by the General Staff Headquarters approved it on July 10 with the exception of certain points, on which the commander of the front received the following instructions: "1. Tank armies and mounted-mechanized groups are to be used not for the breach but to develop the success after the breach. In the case of a successful breach tank armies are to be brought in one day after the start of the operation, and mounted-mechanized groups two days after the start of the operation, after the tank armies. 2. On the first day of the operation the infantry should be assigned feasible missions, as the missions you have assigned are, without doubt, overestimated."* In accordance with this the front commander altered the order of deployment of tank armies and specified the depth of the objectives of the combined-arms troops. Thus in creative cooperation between the command group of the front and Headquarters of the Supreme High Command the plan of the L'vov-Sandomierz operation was formulated.

In accordance with the concept of the operation the main forces and equipment of the front were to concentrate in the breakthrough sectors - in the Rava-Russkaya and L'vov directions. Since after the completion of the spring battles the main forces were located in the Tarnopol'-Kolomyya sector it was necessary to transfer them to the north from Tarnopol'. From June 24 to July 7 up to 50 percent of rifle divisions, three tank armies and a considerable amount of artillery, engineer and other special units and formations were transferred to the Lutsk-Tarnopol' sector. Regrouping was carried out at a distance of 100-200 kilometers, and in some cases up to 400 kilometers. In the aims of achieving suddenness of the blow the forces were moved only at

* IML. Docs. and maters. of Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #9492, p. 346.

night for the most part, observing camouflage measures. In this rifle troops and artillery completed marches over dirt roads and tank armies by railroad.

After the regrouping up to 70 percent of rifle troops and artillery and over 90 percent of tanks and assault guns were concentrated in the breakthrough sectors. Artillery density was from 150 to 250 guns and mortars to one kilometer of the front. In the breakthrough sectors were concentrated the main forces of the front aviation. The overall superiority of the forces of the 1st Ukrainian front over the enemy was: 1.4 times in men, 2.2 times in guns and mortars, 1.8 times in tanks and assault guns, and 4 times in aircraft. In the breakthrough sectors an overwhelming advantage had been created: by almost 5 times in manpower, 6-7 times in guns and mortars, 3-4 times in tanks and assault guns.

Air support of the operation was entrusted to the 2nd Airborne Army, which was commanded by Col.-Gen. of the Air Force S.A. Krasovskiy. This army was assigned the following objectives: to strongly maintain mastery of the air, reliably cover the main groupings of the forces of the front from the effects of enemy aircraft, to support the ground forces in breaking the enemy defenses, to prevent enemy reserves from approaching the field of battle and occupying the defense on the line of the Western Bug, to support the entrance of tank armies and mounted-mechanized groups into the battle. and their actions at the enemy's operative depth of defense, and to conduct constant reconnaissance and observation of the field of battle.

In connection with the fact that the troops of the front would strike blows in two directions, two air force groups were created, the northern and the central. The northern group, including four air force corps, supported the advance in the Rava-Russkaya direction; the central, consisting of five air force corps, supported the L'vov direction. With the arrival on July 16 of the administration of the 8th Airborne Army into the composition of the front, the corps comprising the northern air group were transferred to this army. However, the commander of the 8th Airborne Army was operatively subordinate to the commander of the 2nd Airborne Army.

In addition to the front air force, to support the ground forces long range aircraft and fighter aircraft from the country's air defense was called upon. The long range aircraft were to participate in the struggle for mastery of the air and to deny the enemy the opportunity to maneuver the reserves. The fighter aircraft of the AA defense of the country were assigned to cover the targets of the front rear services and railroad communications.

In preparing the defense much was done for technical support of the troops. The network of railroads, highways and unsurfaced roads in the zone of the front was well developed. Road, bridge and sapper units repaired 2,200 kilometers of highways and unsurfaced roads, and built and restored 389 bridges.* The capacity of the railroads was increased to 30 pairs of trains in two-way sectors and 12-18 in one-way sectors. A great deal of work on repair of automobile transportation was done by automobile drivers.

Among the forces and in army and front depots by the start of the operation there were 2.5 to 5 ammunition allotments, from 6 to 10 refills of automobile gasoline and diesel fuel and stores of provisions for 15-30 days.[2]

In party-political work an important place was occupied by the explanation to the personnel of the noble mission facing the troops of the front - to complete in a very short period the liberation of the Soviet Ukraine, to take military operations outside the borders of the Motherland and to begin the liberation of our ally, Poland. This mission placed a great responsibility on the Soviet soldiers and demanded all possible strengthening of military discipline and heightening of the role of communists and Komsomol members.

Political organs and party organizations conducted enormous work, receiving into the party soldiers and officers who had displayed courage and valor in battle. In the first five months of 1944 alone in the troops of the front

---

* Archives of MO USSR col. 236, inv. 2719, div. 32, p. 15.

** IML. Docs. and maters. of Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #9608, p. 401.

72,500 persons were accepted into the party, 41,600 of them candidates for membership in the AUCP(b) [All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks].* Thousands of soldiers joined the Komsomol. Thus before the advance the number of communists and Komsomol members had increased considerably and on July 1 was: of the combined-arms armies, 32 to 41 percent, and of the tank armies, 50 to 75 percent of the total personnel.

The growth of the party ranks and the distribution of members and candidates of the party among the formations and units made it possible to strengthen party organizations by the start of the advance. This task was accomplished very successfully in the tank forces. For example, in the 61st Guards tank brigade of the 4th Tank Army there were 418 members and candidates of the party, which provided the opportunity to have a party organization in every company** and increase its role in the military life of the subunit.

Particular attention was given to work with the new reinforcements who arrived from the liberated areas of the Ukraine, including its western regions. As early as March 1944 the political directorship of the Red Army issued a special directive on work with recruits from the western regions of the Ukraine. Pointing out the special characteristics of the arriving reinforcements, the political directorship demanded from all party organs attentive study of this category of servicemen, and deep and comprehensively thought-out organization of political-educational work. In the directive it was stressed: "The officer personnel and above all the political workers are required to help, with all means of educational work, the Soviet citizens of the western regions of the Ukraine to free themselves as quickly as possible from the effects of fascist and bourgeois-nationalistic propaganda and prepare themselves to fulfill their military duty in the battle to liberate our Motherland from the German invaders." ***

---

* IML. Docs. and maters. of Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #11968, p. 27.

** Archives of MO USSR, col. 32, inv. #41694, div. 88, p. 209.

*** IML. Docs. and maters. of Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #373, p. 1.

The command groups attached exceptional importance to increasing vigilance, since in the rear and in the area of the coming operations of our troops bourgeois nationalist bands had been equipped. Party activities and meetings were held in the formations and units, at which questions of combating these bands were discussed. The need to increase vigilance was also discussed at Red Army meetings in the units. Great work was carried out among the local population.

The creation of a strong offensive burst in the troops was promoted to a great degree by the appeals of the Military Councils of the front and armies to the soldiers and officers. These appeals called on the soldiers to rout the enemy and complete the liberation of the Soviet Ukraine. In the companies and battalions, wherever it was possible, meetings were held at which the appeal of the Military Council was read. The soldiers and officers speaking at the meetings assured the command group that the order of the Motherland would be carried out.

By July 12 the troops of the front were ready for the advance. At that time the Soviet troops, rapidly developing their progress in Belorussia, broke through to the area of Vilnius and Volkovysk and were approaching Korbin. Conditions for the 1st Ukrainian front to go over to a decisive offensive had improved considerably.

THE COMPLETION OF THE LIBERATION OF THE UKRAINE.

2. Encirclement of the enemy forces in the area of Brod.
The liberation of L'vov.

Toward the start of the advance of the forces of the 1st Ukrainian front reconnaissance revealed that in several sectors a premeditated retreat by the enemy from the occupied positions to the depth of defense was possible. In connection with this the commander of the front decided to conduct reconnaissance in force on the night of July 13 with the forces of the reconnaissance detachments and in the event that an enemy retreat was ascertained to

begin the advance on July 13 with the forward detachments, without artillery and air force preparation.

Notes in the war diary of the German 4th Panzer Army, which fell into our hands after the war, support the reliability of the data of Soviet reconnaissance and the expedience of the decision made by the commander of the front. Considering the experience of the battles in Belorussia and wishing to preserve their troops and fighting equipment from the Soviet artillery in the period of preparation of the attack, the command group of army group "Northern Ukraine" ordered the army commanders to pull their troops back to the second zone of defense as soon as the beginning of the Red Army's advance should be established.*

However, the enemy did not succeed in realizing this idea. On the night of July 13 the Soviet reconnaissance detachments discovered the retreat of the enemy forces in the Rava-Russkaya direction. On the morning of July 13 the forward battalion of the 3rd Guards and 13th Armies went over to the offensive. Destroying the enemy's covering forces, with the support of parts /211
of the forces of the first echelons of the divisions they moved westward. In the second half of the first day of the advance the enemy began to offer stubborn resistance. Especially fierce fighting developed for the city of Gorokhov, which had been turned into a strong center of resistance by the enemy. The enemy garrison went over several times to counterattacks. With aggressive action the artillerymen, infantrymen and tank crew members repelled the counterattacks of the Hitlerites. By a flanking maneuver from the north and south our troops seized Gorokhov and continued to develop the advance to the west. By the end of the day the forward units had progressed by 8-15 kilometers.

On the morning of July 14 the main forces of the 3rd Guards and 13th Armies were brought into the battle with the purpose of breaching the second zone of defense. The enemy, attempting to stop the advance of our forces

---

* IML. Docs. and maters. of Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #13621, p. 27.

here, threw into the battle the 16th and 17th Panzer divisions, which frequently went over to counterattack. Enemy aircraft began to display great activity. Groups of bombers consisting of 20-30 airplanes bombed the battle formations of the advancing units and their rear services. An attempt by our forces to rush the second zone was without success.

On the morning of July 15 the troops of the right wing of the front continued the advance after artillery and air preparation. The battles on this day were exceptionally fierce in nature. Communists and Komsomol members, as always, were in the front. Displaying fearlessness and courage, they served as an example to the other soldiers.

By evening of July 15 the northern strike group of the front completed a breach of the tactical zone of defense and progressed 15-20 kilometers. In breaching the second zone the air force provided considerable assistance to the ground forces. Ground-attack aircraft destroyed and neutralized the enemy's manpower and equipment, and fighter planes reliably covered the battle formations of the advancing troops. The enemy expended all of his tactical reserves in these battles and the 16th and 17th Panzer divisions suffered heavy losses.

On July 15 the command group of the front decided to bring the mobile forces into the breach. In connection with the slow development of the advance in the L'vov direction the mounted-mechanized group of Gen. Baranov was assigned the mission of entering the breach in the zone of advance of the 13th Army in the area of Stoyanov on the morning of July 16, striking a blow on the enemy's rear services, seizing Kamenka-Strumilovskaya by the morning of July 17 and cutting off lines of retreat to the west by the Brod enemy grouping. However, as a result of indecisive actions by the command group and headquarters of the group they were unable to bring it into the breach on the morning of July 16. Only toward evening did the group's formations overtake the infantry and break through to the area of Kholoyuv. On July 17 and 18 they developed the advance in the general direction of Zholkva. In this period the mounted-mechanized group defeated the enemy's 20th motorized

division and forced the Western Bug; on July 17 they seized Kamenka-Strumilovskaya, and Derevlyany on July 18, cutting off the lines of retreat to the west by the Brod enemy grouping.

On the morning of July 17 the 1st Guards Tank Army commanded by Col.-Gen. of tank forces M. Ye.Katukov was brought into the breach. The army's objective was to strike a blow in the general direction of Sokal'-Rava-Russkaya, force the Western Bug and seize a beachhead in the Sokal'-Krystynopol' area. On the same day the 44th Guards tank brigade of this army reached the Western Bug, forced it by ford and seized a beachhead in the area of Dobrochin. The forward units of the 1st Guards Tank Army crossed the state boundary of the Soviet Union and on July 17 entered the territory of Poland, beginning the liberation of the brotherly Polish people from the fascist yoke. On July 18 the main forces of the army crossed to the beachhead seized in the area of Dobrochin and repelled counterattacks.

Overcoming enemy resistance, by evening of July 18 the forces of the right flank of the 3rd Guards Army engaged in battle for Vladimir-Volynsk and the forces of the left flank broke through to the Western Bug in the area of Sokal'. The 13th Army under the command of Lt. Gen. N.P. Pukhov forced the Western Bug and reached the line of Krystynopol'-Selets-Belski.

The advance of the central group of the front in the L'vov direction /212
took place under more complex circumstances. The actions of the forward battalions on July 13 were without success. Therefore it was decided to begin the advance on the morning of July 14 with the main forces of the 60th Army, which was commanded by Col.-Gen. P.A. Kurochkin, and the 38th Army under the command of Col.-Gen. K.S. Moskalenko.

On the morning of July 14 the air force could not operate because of unfavorable meteorological conditions. Only at 1600 hours, after powerful artillery and air preparation, did the strike groupings of the 60th and 38th Armies go over to the offensive. On that day our troops breached the first zone of enemy defense and progressed by 3 to 8 kilometers. The advance of the troops of the front was aggressively supported by the air formations of the 2nd Airborne Army. Bombers and ground attack aircraft inflicted blows on

enemy strong points, artillery positions and areas of concentration of reserves. Fighter aircraft foiled all attempts by the enemy to inflict blows from the air on our troops. In order to hasten the breach of the second zone of defense the decision was made to bring the 69th mechanized brigade from the composition of the 3rd Guards Tank Army into the battle on the morning of July 15 in the zone of the 60th Army. The following day the strike group of the front continued to perform its assigned mission. In the 60th Army the greatest success was achieved by the 15th rifle corps under the command of Maj.-Gen. P.V. Tertyshniy. The 69th mechanized brigade supported the corps.

On the first day of the advance of the Soviet forces the German fascist command group had already begun to gather its reserves into the breakthrough sector. On July 15 with the forces of two Panzer and one infantry division the enemy made a counterstrike from the Plugov-Zborov area on the flank of the front's strike group with the purpose of ruining the advance of the Soviet forces in the L'vov direction. On this day the enemy succeeded not only in stopping the advance of the troops of the 38th Army briefly, but also in pressing some of its formations. The unsuccessful operations of the 38th Army were due to a large degree to the fact that the enemy's counterstrike was unexpected to the army's command group. As a result, repulsion of the enemy's blows was at first not fully organized. To prevent a breakdown of the advance of the 38th Army the commander of the front sent into its zone formations of the 4th Tank Army and artillery-antitank reserves.

Front aircraft, which displayed exceptional proficiency, provided great assistance to the ground forces in repelling the enemy's counterstrikes. In the course of five hours bombers and ground attack aircraft completed approximately 2,000 flights. To cover their operations fighter aircraft carried out up to 1,500 flights. In striking the enemy's tank grouping a group consisting of 15 dive-bombers led by the commander of the 2nd Guards bomber air corps, Maj.-Gen. of the Air Force I.3.Polbinyy, operated particularly effectively. The air strikes weakened the enemy's tank grouping.

Thus by evening of July 15 an unfavorable situation had developed for our forces in the L'vov direction. In two days of battles the formations of the 60th Army with the support of the forward detachments of the 3rd Guards Tank Army had progressed by only 8-16 kilometers in depth. They were unable to breach the entire tactical zone of defense due to the enemy's stubborn resistance and his counterstrike in the area of Zborov. It was necessary to bring tank armies into the battle immediately, since the loss of time had given the enemy the opportunity to bring in reserves, which would make the operations of the 60th and 38th Armies still more difficult.

On the evening of July 15 the front command group decided to bring the 3rd Guards Tank Army commanded by Col.-Gen. P.S. Rybalko into the battle in the general direction of Krasnoye on the morning of the following day. To support the entrance into the battle by the army's main forces it was planned that on the night of July 16 its forward detachments, in cooperation with the 15th rifle corps, would effect a breach in the second zone of defense and seize the line of Sasov-Zolochev; for this purpose considerable air forces were drawn upon.

At this time in the zone of the 38th Army, on its left flank, a strike /213
group of the 1st Guards Army consisting of the 107th rifle and 4th Guards tank corps had concentrated. On the morning of July 16 it was to strike a blow in the general direction of Berezhany, destroy the opposing enemy, turn his defense before the army and seize a beachhead on the Dnestr.

Performing the assigned mission, on the night of July 16 the forward detachment of the 3rd Guards Tank Army with the support of the 15th rifle corps effected a breach in the tactical zone of the enemy defense and broke out to the area north of Zolochev. In the morning the main forces of the army began to enter the battle. The narrow breakthrough zone (the so-called "Koltov corridor", which was 16-18 kilometers in length and not over 4-6 kilometers in width) and the lack of roads forced the troops of the army to move in a single route in a solid column. Here the enemy opened artillery and even machine gun fire on them from the flanks. Upon leaving the "corridor" the 6th Guards tank corps, which was in the second echelon of the army, was

forced to turn to repel enemy counterattacks from the areas of Koltov and Plugov. By evening of July 17 two tank corps reached the Peltev River and began to force it in the area of the city of Krasnoye. On this day the 6th Guards tank corps in cooperation with units of the 15th rifle corps liberated the city of Zolochev.

The entrance of the 3rd Guards Tank Army into the battle was supported by the 2nd Airborne Army. Two bomber air corps inflicted heavy blows on the enemy flank groupings. In addition, the 1st Guards ground attack air corps under the command of Lt. Gen. of the Air Force V.G. Ryazanov, who was located with the administrative facilities in the battle order of the tank formations, constantly suppressed centers of enemy resistance on the routes of tank movement.

With the entrance of the 3rd Guards Tank Army into the battle the advance by the troops of the 60th Army gained speed. However, on the flanks of the breakthrough enemy resistance did not weaken. Holding defensive positions in the area of Koltov, the enemy formed a threat to the flank and rear services of the 15th rifle corps and the 3rd Guards Tank Army. On July 18 the 3rd Guards Tank Army, repelling numerous enemy counterattacks, forced the Peltev River and continued to flank the enemy's Brod grouping from the southwest. Toward evening the main forces of the army broke through to the area of Dzedziluv-Krasnoye. A part of its forces moved out to the line of Busk-Derevlyany and joined the mounted-mechanized group of Gen. Baranov, completing the encirclement of the Brod grouping.

Behind the 3rd Guards Tank Army, along the same route, the 4th Tank Army commanded by Maj.-Gen. D.D. Lelyushenko began to enter the battle on the morning of July 17. Passing through the "Koltov corridor" the army was to develop a rapid advance to the left of the 3rd Guards Tank Army in the direction of Zvongrad (15 kilometers southeast of L'vov)-Gorodok. The army was ordered not to become involved in the frontal battles for L'vov, but to flank it from the south and southwest. On July 17 and 18 it was not possible to bring the army fully into the breach due to strong enemy counterattacks on the flanks. A part of its forces along with the forces of the 60th Army

repelled enemy counterattacks south of Zolochev. By evening of July 18 the 10th Guards Tank Army broke through to the area of Ol'shanitsy, deeply flanking the enemy Panzer grouping from the south.

In the Great Patriotic War our commanders often made bold and original decisions and capably executed them. But the example of bringing two tank armies into a battle in such a narrow breakthrough zone while simultaneously repelling strong enemy counterattacks on the flanks is unique of its type. It indicates the high level of war art of the Soviet generals and officers, their decisiveness and ability to reach the assigned goal under the most difficult circumstances.

In the period from July 13 to 18 the troops of the 1st Ukrainian front in both directions breached the enemy defense on a 200-kilometer front, progressed to a depth of 50-80 kilometers and encircled the enemy grouping consisting of eight divisions in the area of Brod. The breakthrough of three tank armies and a mounted-mechanized group to operative depth created favorable conditions not only for destroying the German fascist group encircled near Brod, but also to develop decisive operations with the goal of splitting army group "Northern Ukraine" and breaking it up into units.

However, the troops of the front did not fully complete the immediate assignment in the period of time given. This had several causes. In planning and preparing the operation the command group of the front did not consider the possibility that the enemy would be able to rapidly concentrate major forces in the approaches to L'vov. Furthermore, these forces offered our troops stubborn resistance. Weak artillery and air preparation, during which the enemy defense was not neutralized to full depth, as well as insufficient saturation of the infantry forces with close-support tanks, led to a low rate of speed of the advance in breaking the enemy's tactical zone of defense. Exploiting this, the enemy drew up reserves to the breakthrough sectors and made a strong counterstrike in the area of Zborov. Only thanks to the actions of the air force and the entrance of the tank armies and a mounted-mechanized group did a break in the course of battle operations occur.

In connection with the fact that on July 18 from the area of Kovel' in the direction of Lublin the troops of the left wing of the 1st Belorussian front went over to the offensive, the position of the 1st Ukrainian front's troops improved still more. They were to complete the elimination of the German grouping surrounded southwest of Brod, defeat the enemy's L'vov grouping, seize L'vov, and begin the advance in the Stanislav direction.

For four days the 60th Army, part of the forces of the 13th Army, and other formations of the front, with the support of powerful air strikes, conducted intense battles to liquidate the German fascist grouping encircled in the area of Brod. The enemy troops undertook desperate attempts to break out of the encirclement in the southwestern direction. Tank units were thrown in to help them, attempting with an encounter attack from the Zolochev-Plugov area to cut off the "Koltov corridor." However, the troops of the front, repelling the enemy counterattacks in the area of Zolochev, continued to tighten the ring of encirclement. Soon the enemy grouping had been broken up into units and on July 22 it was totally defeated. In the Brod "pocket" all eight encircled enemy divisions met their inglorious end. In the course of the battles over 38,000 enemy soldiers and officers were destroyed and 17,175 men were taken prisoner,* including the commander of the 13th army corps Gen. Hauffe and division commanders Gen. Lindeman and Gen. Nedtwig. Our troops captured important trophies. The rapid destruction of the Brod grouping was of great strategic importance because it freed considerable forces of the front, which could now be used for the advance on L'vov.

During the period when a part of the forces of the front were carrying on the battles to liquidate the Brod enemy grouping, the main forces continued to develop the rapid advance. The troops of the right wing of the front achieved particularly great success. On July 19 the formations of the 1st Guards Tank Army broke down the enemy's resistance on the Western Bug and began to pursue its routed units, progressing 30-35 kilometers in a day. Further south advanced the mounted-mechanized group of Gen. Baranov. Exploiting the success of the mobile groups, the 13th Army also moved rapidly out

* Archives of MO USSR, col. 236, inv. 2673, div. 838, pp. 37, 38.

to the San River. By evening of July 23 the Soviet forces broke through to the San. The forward units rushed the river and seized beachheads on the west bank north and south of Yaroslav. The rushing of the river was a result of the bold and decisive actions of our forces. Exceptional fortitude and /215 courage were displayed by the soldiers and commanders of the engineer units operating in the composition of the 1st Guards Tank Army. As soon as the forward units reached the San sappers immediately began to set up crossings. Working under heavy enemy fire, by morning of July 24 the troops of the 15th and 134th pontoon-bridge battalion had built two bridges on which the troops crossed to the west bank of the river.

The enemy undertook several counterattacks in an attempt to liquidate our beachheads. Thus, for example, the 24th Panzer division, which had come from Rumania, was thrown against the formations of the 1st Guards Tank Army in the area of Yaroslav. The battles became fierce. In repelling the counter-attacks of the Hitlerites on the beachhead, gun layer of the 353rd Guards tank-destroyer artillery regiment, communist A.I. Goryev, acted bravely and capably. Under a hail of enemy fire, not losing his self-possession, he aimed his weapon accurately and in three days of fighting destroyed eight tanks.* On September 23, 1944 he was awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union.

The breakthrough of the forces of the front to the San River was of great significance. Having breached the defenses of the 4th and 1st Panzer Armies of the enemy, our forces had formed a gap at the boundary of these armies and foiled the plans of their command group to hold the west bank of the river. In addition, favorable conditions had been created to strike a blow from the north and west on the enemy holding the defensive in the area of L'vov.

---

* IML. Docs. and maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #7258, pp. 1-2.

While the troops of the 13th and 1st Guards Tank Armies were breaking through to the San River in the area of the city of Yaroslav, by the evening of July 23 the 3rd Guards Army had only reached the line of Voyslavitse - Grodyslavitse. As a result a large break had formed between the 3rd Guards and 13th Armies. In order to liquidate it the front commander ordered the mounted-mechanized group of Gen. Sokolov to strike a rapid blow from the Rava-Russkaya direction on Frampol' and to break through by the morning of July 25 to the rear of the Kranystav enemy grouping. The possibility of assigning such a mission was connected to a considerable degree with the successful operation of the troops of the left wing of the 1st Belorussian front, which on July 23 had seized Lublin and begun to advance toward the Vistula.

The advance of the central strike group of the 1st Ukrainian front developed more slowly. Although the enemy had lost eight divisions in the area of Brod he still continued to hold L'vov. On July 19 the front commander ordered the 3rd Guards and 4th Tank Armies to complete a flanking maneuver from the northwest and south and to seize L'vov by evening of July 20. However, the tank armies were unable to seize L'vov by the indicated time: due to heavy rain and washed-out roads their rear services fell behind and were unable to replenish supplies of ammunition and fuel. The artillery also fell behind. The enemy had time to transfer to the L'vov area three divisions from the Stanislav direction, as a result of which on July 20 and 21 the tank armies were not successful in the battles in the northern and southeastern approaches to the city.

It became obvious to the front command group that under the circumstances that had developed the tank armies would be unable to seize L'vov. Therefore a decision was made: the 3rd Guards Tank Army would bypass L'vov from the north and break through to the area of Yavorov-Mostiska-Surdovaya Vishnya, thereby cutting off the enemy's line of retreat to the west; the 4th Tank Army would continue to flank L'vov from the south, and the 60th Army would advance on the city from the east. On July 22 and 23 the 3rd Guards Tank Army, exploiting the success of the troops of the right wing of the front, completed a 120-kilometer march maneuver to outflank L'vov from the north,

broke through in the assigned area by evening of July 24, and began an advance simultaneously on L'vov from the west and on Przemysl from the east.* The tank army's march maneuver and particularly its decisive advance in two opposite directions testified to the great skill of the army command group and the group commander. The 4th Tank Army, skirting large centers of defense and destroying small enemy groups, moved toward L'vov from the south. At dawn of July 22 the army's forward units reached the southern outskirts of L'vov and engaged in street fighting. The enemy offered stubborn resistance. In these battles our soldiers and officers displayed mass heroism and valor. The soldiers of the 10th Guards tank corps under the command of Maj.-Gen. of tank forces Ya.Ya. Byelov particularly distinguished themselves. /216

The great deed of the crew of the T-34 tank "Guard" of the 63rd Guards tank brigade has entered history forever. The command group assigned the crew the mission of breaking through to the center of the city and raising the red flag on the L'vov town hall. The tank was commanded by Lt. A.V. Dodonov and driven by mechanic F.P. Surkov; the road was cleared by turret gunner A.A. Mordvintsyev. Radio operator A.P. Marchenko, who knew the city well, was assigned to show the tank the way, then ascend to the town hall and attach the red flag. On July 22 the tank "Guard" operating in the composition of its sub-unit, broke into the center of the city. Surkov drove the tank up to the actual approach to the city hall. With a group of submachine gunners Marchenko, having destroyed the enemy guard, burst into the building, ascended to the tower and raised the red flag. The Hitlerites, seeing the Soviet banner, opened a hail of fire on the city hall and the tank. When leaving the building Marchenko was seriously wounded, and he died a few hours later. For six days the tank "Guard" carried on the battle in the city. During this time the crew destroyed over 100 fascist soldiers and officers and burned eight enemy tanks. At last the enemy succeeded in knocking out the Soviet tank. Lt. Dodonov was killed, turret gunner Mordvintsyev and driver Surkov were seriously wounded. On the initiative of the workers of

* Archives of MO USSR, col. 236, inv. 2673, div. 1033, p. 186.

L'vov the tank was set up on a high pedestal on Lenin St. It is a reminder of the heroism of the Soviet soldiers in the struggle with the fascist invaders. The government regarded the tank crew's deeds very highly. For courage and valor a number of soldiers of the 63rd Guards tank brigade were awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union, among them the commander of that brigade Col. M.G. Gomichev, and Sgt. Major F.P. Surkov.

In the battles for L'vov the Soviet troops were aided by members of the underground and partisans of the "People's Guard named for Ivan Franko." They attacked detached sub-units and convoys of the occupiers, destroyed bridges and communication lines. Reconnaissance groups of underground members provided the Soviet command group with important information. For instance, one of them, having discovered a large accumulation of enemy tanks and infantry in the area of Vinniki, informed our command group of this. The following day Soviet aircraft made a heavy bombing strike on the grouping of German fascist troops. Members of the underground informed the population of the advance of the Red Army and called on them to hide their property and food products from the occupiers.*

The breakthrough of the tank armies to the western and southern outskirts of L'vov as well as the advance of the 60th Army from the east placed the enemy grouping defending L'vov under the threat of encirclement. On July 24 the German fascist command group began to withdraw its troops from L'vov to Sambor. Front aircraft poured heavy blows on the retreating enemy columns. The road running from L'vov to Sambor turned into a cemetery for the retreating Hitlerites. By the morning of July 27 the troops of the 1st Ukrainian front liberated L'vov. On the same day the formation of the 3rd and 1st Guards Tank Armies dislodged the enemy from the fortress and city of Przemysl.

The joy of the residents of liberated L'vov was great. This is how the newspaper "Pravda Ukrainy" described the meeting of the population and the army. "From all directions troops rush onto the streets of the city. The

---

* See Stepan Makivka. National Guard imeni Ivan Frank. Memories of a Revolutionary. L'vov, Knizhkovo-zhurnal'ne vidavnitstvo, 1959, pp 115-119.

people, who had hidden in cellars during the street fighting, run out onto the sidewalks. The formidable army goes in an endless living wall in tanks, assault guns, armored transports... The residents of L'vov run out onto /217
the streets, press the hands of their liberators... The soldiers catch in mid air the bouquets flying above their heads."*

By evening of July 27 the troops of the central strike grouping were in the following positions: the 3rd Guards Tank Army was concentrated in the area of Przemysl; the 4th Tank Army was pursuing the enemy retreating to Sambor; the 60th and 38th Armies, continuing the advance in the L'vov area, had moved out to the line south of L'vov - Sokoluvka - Leshchin.

In the period from July 24 to 27 the troops of the 1st Ukrainian front, exploiting the successful progress to the Vistula of the troops of the 1st Belorussian front, developed the advance. By the end of July 27 the 3rd Guards Army and the mounted-mechanized grouping of Gen. Sokolov had broken through to the line of Vil'kolaz - Nisko and continued to progress toward the Vistula; the main forces of the 13th, 1st Guards Tank Armies and the mounted-mechanized group of Gen. Baranov conducted battles on the line of Nisko - Sokoluv - Pshevorsk - Dubetsko.

As the result of the successful operations of our troops in the Rava-Russkaya and L'vov directions, favorable conditions had been created for the left wing of the front to go over to the offensive. Since in the course of the battles for L'vov the Hitlerite command group had transferred a part of its forces from the Stanislav direction to the L'vov, the enemy defense against the 1st Guards and 18th Armies was weakened. Furthermore, with the breakthrough of the tank armies to the immediate approaches to L'vov a threat was created to the flank and rear of the enemy grouping operating east of Stanislav. Under these circumstances on July 20 the enemy command group began to withdraw its forces from Stanislav to the west. However, the Germans were unable to retreat according to plan. On the morning of July 21

* "Pravda Ukrainy," July 28, 1944.

the main forces of the 1st Guards Army under the command of Col.-Gen. A.A. Grechko went over to the offensive along the entire front. Beating off rear-guard attacks, by the end of the day the troops of the army broke through to the Zolotaya Lipa River. With the cooperation of the 18th Army under the command of Lt. Gen. F.P. Zhuravlev, which had gone over to the offensive on July 23 in the general direction of Otynya, by the morning of July 27 the 1st Guards Army seized Stanislav.

The population of the city greeted its liberators with joy. In three years of occupation the Hitlerites had caused the residents much grief and suffering. They had shot and tortured over 15,000 people, and thousands of girls and youths had been taken away for slave labor. The occupiers had burned the pedagogical institute, blown up dozens of enterprises, schools, hospitals, and residential houses,and taken the equipment of the city's electrical plant away to Germany, leaving the city without light or water. Many towns of the Stanislav region had been barbarously destroyed and tens of thousands of people deprived of homes and property.

During the advance of the troops of the 1st Ukrainian front in the western regions of the Ukraine the local population rendered them active assistance: they built bridges, repaired roads, helped wounded soldiers. During the battles for L'vov the inhabitants of the little town of Svirzh, L'vov region, performed a patriotic deed. On July 22, 70 wounded Soviet soldiers and officers were brought to the town. There were no medical or other sub-units there. The inhabitants found places for the soldiers in the former count's manor and organized care for them. Soon the enemy went over to the counter-attack. Fearing for the wounded, the peasants hid them in their huts. However, 25 seriously wounded soldiers, who could not be moved, remained in the manor. The Hitlerite monsters, having seized Svirzh, forbade the population to treat these soldiers, preparing for them an agonizing death. In spite of the threats of the fascists the peasants continued to care for the soldiers. Four days later the Soviet troops again entered the little town. The lives of the wounded soldiers and the patriotic residents were saved.*

* Archives of MO USSR col. 236, inv. 2675, div. 65, pp. 32-33.

On July 27 Moscow twice saluted the troops of the 1st Ukrainian front who had seized L'vov and Stanislav. The 79 formations and units of the 1st Ukrainian front which had most distinguished themselves were awarded the honorary designation "L'vov" and 26 formations and units were awarded the designation "Stanislav." /218

In connection with the liberation of Western Ukrainian soil from the German fascists, meetings and assemblies were held in cities and towns. On July 30 in L'vov a city-wide meeting was held at which approximately 50,000 people were present. The city residents and peasants from the nearby villages warmly greeted the First Secretary of the CC CP(b)U N.S. Khrushchev, the commander of the 1st Ukrainian front Marshal of the Soviet Union I.S. Konyev, leading party and Soviet workers of the Ukrainian SSR, and soldiers of the Red Army. At the meeting the Chairman of the Melekhov town Soviet A.A. Savka spoke. According to ancient custom, two peasant women, A.D. Brik and A.N. Bubis, served the dear guests with bread and salt. In all in the month of July in the districts of L'vov region 560 meetings and assemblies were held.*

With the advance units of the Red Army local partisans and Soviet workers returned to the liberated cities and towns. They turned to the restoration of the Soviet order and mobilization of the workers to regenerate the state economy.

* Party archives of L'vov obkom of the CC of the Ukraine, col. 3, inv. 3-5-1, div. 5, pp. 265-270.

THE COMPLETION OF THE LIBERATION OF THE UKRAINE

3. The forcing of the Vistula and seizure of a beachhead in the area of Sandomierz. Development of the advance in the Drogobych direction.

Having lost L'vov and Stanislav, the German fascist command group began to take urgent measures to stabilize their defenses on the Vistula and in the Carpathians. The enemy attached particular importance to the defense on the line of the Vistula River. /218

In spite of the exceptionally serious situation in Belorussia the Hitlerite command group concentrated considerable reserves against the forces of the 1st Ukrainian front. At the end of July and in the first half of August seven divisions, including three Panzer and seven infantry divisions from

Germany, three infantry divisions from Hungary and the administration of the 17th Army, the troops of which were routed in the Crimea, were transferred from army group "Southern Ukraine" to army group "North Ukraine." Beside these 17 divisions, six brigades of assault guns, several detached tank battalions armed with new super-heavy "Royal Tiger" tanks, and other units were gathered at the Vistula in the area of Sandomierz.

However, these forces could not seriously alter the situation. In the 18-19 days of the operation the troops of the 1st Ukrainian front moved to a depth of 200 kilometers in a zone reaching 400 kilometers in width. These successes, like the victories of the Soviet troops in Belorussia, promoted the further development of the advance. In the situation that had developed, at the end of July the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command made a decision according to which the troops of the 1st Belorussian and 1st Ukrainian fronts were to force the Vistula on a wide front from Warsaw to the mouth of the Visloka River, and to seize several beachheads on the opposite bank for the subsequent advance to the borders of fascist Germany.

On July 27 and 28 Headquarters ordered the 1st Ukrainian front to rapidly develop the advance in the western direction, to deny the enemy the opportunity to occupy the defense on the Vistula, to force the river at a rush and seize a beachhead in the area of Sandomierz. To succesfully force the Vistula it was proposed that the main forces be concentrated on the right wing of the front, transferring the 1st and 3rd Tank Armies from the Przemysl area to the Sandomierz direction. The forcing of the Vistula was planned to take place no later than the beginning of August. The troops of the center of the front were to break through to the line of the Visloka /219
River - Sanok, and those of the left wing to seize the passes through the Carpathian range in the directions of Gumenne (40 kilometers before the Radoshitskiy pass), Uzhgorod, Mukachevo.* In the same directive Headquarters ordered the front commander to keep in mind an advance from the Sandomierz

* IML. Docs. and maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #9493, pp. 14, 23-24.

beachhead in the Chenstokov and Cracow directions and a breakthrough by the troops of the left wing of the front through the Carpathian passes to the Mid-Danube plain.

In accordance with the instructions of Headquarters the front decided on the advance and on July 27 assigned the armies new objectives.

The 3rd Guards Army received the order to break through to the Vistula by the evening of July 28, to force it on the night of July 29, to seize beachheads on the front of Zembozhin - Konary, take Sandomierz and occupy Ostrovets and Opatuv with its strong forward detachments. The right flank formations of the 13th Army were to break through to the Vistula on July 29 in the sector of Sandomierz and the mouth of the Visloka River, to force the river by the morning of the following day and seize beachheads on the front of Konary - Polanets. The left flank formations of the army were to liberate the city of Zheshuv. The 1st Guards Tank Army was assigned the mission of striking a blow on July 29 in the direction of Maydan - Baranuv, forcing the Vistula with a rush and breaking through by morning of August 1 in the area of the inhabited area of Bogoriya.

The following day the 3rd Guards Tank Army received the assignment to break through in the area of Baranuv and, in cooperation with the 1st Guards Tank and 13th Army, to force the Vistula. The forcing of the Vistula was extremely difficult: its width in the area of Sandomierz reached 200-250 meters, and its depth two or more meters. It was also planned to move the second echelon of the front, the 5th Guards Army commanded by Lt. Gen. A.S. Zhadov, out in the Sandomierz direction. The troops of the center and left wing of the front were to continue the advance, take the cities of Dembitsa, Sanok, Sambor, Drogobych, Borislav, and Dolina and seize the passes across the Carpathians.*

In connection with the new objectives assigned to the troops of the front, the political organs instructed the party and Komsomol organizations to

* Archives of MD USSR, col. 236, inv. 2673, div. 1033, pp. 235, 246, 247.

widely propagandize the directive of Headquarters of the Supreme High Command in which it was proposed to inform the soldiers of the front that "soldiers and commanders distinguishing themselves in the forcing of the Vistula will be decorated with special orders up to the award of the title of 'Hero of the Soviet Union'."* Since the troops were to operate in the territory of Poland the front's political directorate sent to the political organs of the formations and to the units materials for reports and talks on the themes "Modern Poland," and "On Soviet-Polish relations." In addition, it was proposed that work among the Polish population be intensified, paying special attention to explaining the policy of the Soviet Union in relation to Poland.

Having received its new combat objectives and carried out regrouping, on July 28 and 29 the 1st Ukrainian front continued to develop the advance. In the second half of July 29 the rear guard divisions of the 3rd Guards and 13th Armies as well as the forward detachment of the 1st Guards Tank Army broke through to the Vistula on the Annopol' - Baranuv front and after reconnaissance of the opposite shore began to cross. On July 30 the troops of the 3rd Guards Army, acting in cooperation with the mounted-mechanized group of Gen. Sokolov, seized three small beachheads north and south of Annopol'. However, due to unsatisfactory organization of the forcing these beachheads were not expanded further.

The troops of the 13th and 1st Guards Tank Armies forced the Vistula more successfully. The 350th and 162nd rifle divisions, in cooperation with the forward detachments of the 1st Guards Tank Army, overcame the Vistula /220
in the area of Baranuv. In the process of forcing, the soldiers and officers of all arms of service displayed exceptional fortitude, courage and valor. The units of the 350th rifle division commanded by Maj.-Gen. G.I. Vekhin acted boldly and decisively. A group of scouts of the 416th reconnaissance company of this division under the command of Sgt. V.M. Sobolyev swam across

---

* IML. Docs. and maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #9493, p. 27.

to the west bank of the Vistula and supported with fire the crossing of another group of scouts in boats.* In the second half of the day on July 29 sub-units of the 1178th rifle regiment of this division under the command of Lt. Col. F.A. Barbasov reached the Vistula north of Baranuv. The 2nd rifle battalion of Capt. A.I. Yakushev, using materials at hand and fishing boats, started to cross to the bank occupied by the enemy. The Hitlerites fired furiously on the daring men. But under cover of the fire from sub-units of their regiment the brave soldiers reached the opposite shore and seized a small beachhead.

In his memoirs Col.-Gen. N.P. Pukhov, commander of the 13th Army, wrote: "The forcing of the Vistula occurred so rapidly that the some cases on the waves of the river rocked both the boats of the retreating enemy and the boats and even ferries of our advance guard sub-units." **

On July 30 by the end of the day the units of the 350th rifle division and the forward detachment of the 1st Guards Tank Army expanded the seized beachhead to 12 kilometers on the front and up to 8 kilometers in depth. On July 30-31 the formations of the 1st and 3rd Guards Tank Armies began to break through and cross to the beachhead. The enemy attempted with counter-attacks to liquidate the beachhead of the Soviet forces on the west bank of the river. Simultaneously the enemy army began to strike blows on the crossings and render them inoperable, hindering the transfer of our forces and equipment to the beachhead.

In connection with the great activity of enemy aircraft the Military Council of the front passed a special resolution on improving the organization of the air defense of the crossings. At the beginning of August fighter aircraft divisions were re-deployed to the Vistula and anti-aircraft units and formations were drawn up. As a result of their activities the activity of the German fascist air force decreased sharply.

---

* IML. Docs. and maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #12369, p. 1.

**N. P. Pukhov, "Year of Trials", Moscow, Voyenizdat, 1959, p. 63-64.

The engineer troops offered great assistance to the armies in the forcing of the Vistula. In spite of powerful bombing strikes by the enemy aircraft they were able to supply continuity at the crossings. The company of the 20th pontoon-bridge battalion under the command of Hero of the Soviet Union Sr. Lt. Kh. A. Russkikh particularly distinguished itself. For 16 hours the company tranported troops and military equipment to the beachhead on three ferries. During one air raid the ferry of St. Lt. Russkikh was hit and the company commander himself was wounded. But he evacuated to a hospital only after a new ferry was assembled. The pontoon crews of the 6th pontoon bridge brigade under the command of Ya. A. Berzin acted rapidly and with organization. By Aug. 1 there were 24 ferries at the crossings in the zone of the 13th Army, of which 2 ferries had a load capacity of 50-60 tons and 9 a load capacity of 16 tons. On these ferries were transported the soldiers and officers of two corps, 182 tanks, 11 armored transports, 55 guns and 94 automobiles.* Thanks to precise organization of the crossing and also the bold and decisive actions of the Soviet forces the seized beachhead was expanded by the evening of August 1 to the line of Koshivnitsa-Stashuv-Polanets.

The rapid movement of the forces of the 1st Ukrainian front to the Vistula, forcing it at a rush and seizing a beachhead in the area of Sandomierz were /221 of great strategic importance; the enemy was deprived of a very advantageous defensive line and our troops obtained the opportunity to advance further into Poland.

The German fascist command group, not possessing sufficient reserves, could not organize a strong defense in the first days of the Soviet troops' forcing of the river. Only at the beginning of August did fresh enemy divisions begin to arrive in the area of Sandomierz, and attempts were immediately made to liquidate our beachheads, destroy the crossing forces or throw them back beyond the Vistula. Fierce battles developed on both banks of the river simultaneously. Having concentrated a strong grouping of forces on the east bank of the Vistula in the area of the city of Melets, on August 1

---

* IML. Docs. and maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #9608, p. 418.

the Hitlerite command group moved it in a sharp wedge from the mouth of the Visloka River to Baranuv. At the same time a grouping consisting of two infantry divisions struck a blow on Baranuv from the region of Tarnobzheg. Enemy aircraft conducted raids on our beachheads and crossings.

The enemy counterattacks presented a serious threat for the Soviet troops since the crossings were covered from the flanks by relatively inconsiderable forces. The most dangerous was the Melets group, which broke through on August 3 at the southern approaches to Baranuv. For the defense of the city and the crossings sapper and artillery units and the 70th mechanized brigade of the 3rd Guards Tank Army were drawn up. Thanks to the courage and fortitude of the Soviet troops the Hitlerite onslaught was held back.

In these battles many soldiers and officers distinguished themselves, particularly the commander of the 1st tank company of the 229th detached tank regiment Sr. Lt. M.V. Kopytin. As a result of counterattacks, on August 3 the enemy surrounded the 2nd motor rifle battalion of the brigade in the village of Zhokhuv. On his own initiative M.V. Kopytin decided to go to the aid of the battalion with five tanks. Completing this complex maneuver, with accurate fire on the enemy the tanks helped the battalion to break out of the encirclement. In this battle the courageous tank crew members destroyed 5 tanks, 2 assault guns, 1 armored transport and over 100 enemy soldiers and officers. The company itself suffered no losses.

For courage and valor in forcing the Vistula and repelling enemy counterattacks, on September 23, 1944 a large group of officers and soldiers of the 1st Ukrainian front were awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union. Among the heroes were Sgt. V.M. Sobolev, Sr. Lt. M.V. Kopytin, Capt. A.I. Yakushev, Lt. Col. F.A. Barbasov, and Col. Ya. A. Berzin. On the same day, for model performance of the assignments of the command group, capable handling of troops and manifest personal bravery in the battles at L'vov and during the forcing of the Vistula, a second "Gold Star" medal was awarded to the second in command of the 6th Guards tank corps, Col. I.I. Yakubovskiy, and commander of the 53rd Guards tank brigade Col. V.S. Arkhipov.

With the goal of routing the enemy grouping that inflicted the strike from the area of Melets and of expanding the beachhead on the west bank of the Vistula, the front commander decided on Aug. 4 to bring the second echelon, the 5th Guards Army, into the battle. By Aug. 3 this army had concentrated in the area of Yezhov - Maydan - Sokoluv. On Aug. 4 the 33rd Guards rifle corps of the army in cooperation with the 9th mechanized corps of the 3rd Guards Tank Army struck a blow on the flank of the enemy's Melets grouping. In the course of intense battles the enemy was thrown back beyond the Visloka River. By evening of Aug. 6 our troops liberated Melets, forced the Visloka and seized a beachhead on the left bank to the west of that city. The main forces of the 5th Guards Army, crossing to the beachhead on Aug. 6-7, began to develop the advance in cooperation with the 3rd Guards Tank Army in the direction of Osek - Busko - Zdruy. On Aug 8, they broke through to the line of Shidluv - Stopnitsa - Novy-Korchin. Their further progress was stopped by the counterattacks of arriving fresh divisions.

Until the end of August the troops of the 1st Ukrainian front, repelling /222
constant enemy counterattacks, conducted battles to expand the Sandomierz beachhead. It should be taken into consideration that as early as Aug. 4 the front commander ordered the soldiers located at the beachhead to renew the advance with the purpose of routing the main forces of the 4th German Panzer Army and expanding the beachhead in the direction of Sandomir. The advance began the following day. However, our troops, which were far from up to required strength in manpower and experiencing ammunition shortages, achieved only negligible success.

Attempting to liquidate the beachhead and restore their defense along the Vistula, the German fascist command group continued to strengthen the 4th Panzer Army. By Aug. 10 they had concentrated a large grouping in the area of Khmel'nikconsisting of four tank and one motorized division and several infantry brigades. The enemy intended to strike a blow on Boranuv with this grouping, break through to the Vistula and split up our forces at the beachhead, then destroy them unit by unit. At the same time the enemy troops were to undertake strong counterattacks from the area of Opatuv. However, the

enemy's counterstrike did not take our forces unawares, because the front command group, guessing the enemy's intention, had strengthened that sector of the beachhead. The occupied banks were engineer equipped. In addition, the command group also planned to transfer to the beachhead the 4th Tank Army from the area of Sambor and one rifle corps of the 3rd Guards Army, and also to strengthen the 5th Guards Army with the 31st tank corps.

On Aug. 11 the enemy's tank grouping made a counterstrike on Stashuv at the boundary of the 13th and 5th Guards Armies. For two days fierce battles continued. The Soviet troops, firmly holding their lines, destroyed the enemy's manpower and equipment. The close cooperation of all arms of service promoted the success in defensive battles. At the cost of great sacrifices the enemy was able to drive a wedge into our defense by only 8-10 kilometers. Further attempts to develop the strike in the direction of Baranuv shattered against the steadfastness of Soviet infantrymen, artillerymen and tank crew members. Then the German fascist command group decided to change the direction of the counterstrike. Concentrating their main forces in the area west of Stopnica, on Aug. 13 the Germans inflicted a new counterstrike. During stubborn fighting from Aug. 13 to 18 the enemy pressed the 5th Guards Army back 6-10 kilometers and seized Stopnica. The further advance of the Hitlerites in this direction was also stopped. The timely transfer to the beachhead of the 4th Tank Army and of the 31st tank corps to the zone of the 5th Guards Army promoted the repulsion of the enemy's counterstrike.

Simultaneously with the repulsion of the counterstrike in the area of Stopnitsa the troops of the front renewed the advance with the purpose of expanding the beachhead. On Aug. 14 the 13th and 1st Guards Tank Armies struck a blow from the area of Klimontuv in the general direction of Ozarow, and the 3rd Guards Army from the beachhead south of Zavikhost to the west. On Aug. 17 our troops surrounded units of two enemy infantry divisions northwest of Sandomierz and on Aug. 18 liberated Sandomierz.

The German fascist command group was forced to cease attacks in the area of Stopnica and transfer its tank divisions to the area of Ozarow, whence on August 19 a new counterstrike followed to the south. On that day the enemy

tank division succeeded in joining their grouping encircled northwest of Sandomierz, but their attempt to develop the strike to Sandomierz was not crowned with success.

The troops of the 1st Ukrainian front carried on combat operations on the Sandomierz beachhead until the end of August 1944. With the liberation of Sandomierz the beachhead was expanded considerably, to 75 kilometers on the front and 50 kilometers in depth. On it were concentrated the main forces of the front.

In the battles for the Sandomierz beachhead the troops of the front were supported by a specially created air force group consisting of three air corps. It inflicted strikes on the enemy tank groupings and battled with the enemy air force. With great skill the Soviet fliers performed the assignments of /223 the command group, displaying courage and valor. On August 22 pilot-communist of the 106th Guards fighter regiment of the 11th Guards Air Force division Sr. Lt. A.I. Voloshin teamed with Jr. Lt. A.I. Penyaz' engaged in battle with four German FV-190 aircraft. On the first attack he shot down an enemy plane. But soon Voloshin's own airplane caught fire. In his burning machine the courageous pilot rammed an enemy aircraft, shot it down and, reaching the front line, landed in the disposition of his troops.*

The actions of the pilots of the 9th Guards fighter air division, commanded by two-time Hero of the Soviet Union Col. A.I. Pokryshkin, were distinguished by daring and decisiveness. Recalling his actions in the operation, former commander of the 2nd Airborne Army S.A. Krasovskiy writes: "In the combat actions of Pokryshkin and his subordinates there was much that was new, original. The famous Pokryshkin formula 'Altitude, maneuver, fire,' became a law in the combat work of the 9th Guards fighter division."**

---

* Archives of MO USSR, col. 302, inv. 4207, div. 50, p. 26.

** S.A. Krasovkiy. "Life in the Air Force." Moscow, Voyenizdat, 1960, p. 233.

The following figures also indicate the great scale of the operations of front aviation and the high level of skill of the Soviet pilots during the battles for the beachhead. Throughout August the 2nd Airborne Army performed over 17,000 flights and carried on up to 300 air battles in which approximately 200 enemy aircraft were shot down. Heroism and great aeronautical skill were the distinguishing features of many pilots of our Motherland. On Aug. 20 for the fourth time during the years of the war the country observed Aviation Day. On that day the Soviet government decorated the reknowned pilot Col. A.I. Pokryshkin with his third "Gold Star" for model performance of combat command assignments and heroic feats. At the same time Maj. A.V. Vorozheykin, Capt. I.N. Kozhedub and Lt. Col. N.V. Chelnokov were awarded their second "Gold Star" and twelve pilots including Yu. A. Akayev, V.A. Budaragin, P.A. Galkin, and V.N. Yevgrafov were awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union.

During the intense battle for the Sandomierz beachhead the troops of the center and left wing of the front continued to advance on Dembitsa and toward the passes through the Carpathians, overcoming the stubborn resistance of the enemy occupying the defense at the natural boundaries. The troops of the center (60th and 38th Armies and the mounted-mechanized group of Gen. Baranov) slowly moved westward. By the end of August they broke through to the line of Shutsin - Dembitsa - east of Krosno.

Liberating Poland, the troops of the 1st Ukrainian front progressed in force over 200 kilometers from the Western Bug to the Vistula. The Polish population greeted the Soviet soldiers with a feeling of deep gratitude for ridding them of the fascist yoke. In cities and towns, meetings often arose spontaneously. At a meeting Yan Vel'bemskiy [transliterated from Russian] a peasant of the village of Gorodishche, said: "At last the liberation we have waited for has come. Now we have ourselves seen the Red Army, and have been convinced of the lies of the Germans, who frightened us with the Russians."* Polish patriots helped the Soviet soldiers in any way they could: they repaired roads and bridges, and caught German soldiers hiding in the forests. The

* Archives of MO USSR, col. 236, inv. 292048, div. 2, p. 291.

workers of Poland rendered particularly great assistance to the troops of the front during the forcing of the San and the Vistula. In the area of Baranuv the peasants helped the Soviet soldiers to build ferries, and set up crossings on the Vistula. The workers of one plant brought building materials to the crossing. Another group of workers built 20 boats on their own initiative. When fierce battles broke out to expand and hold the Sandomierz beachhead, Polish partisans beyond the Vistula carried out aggressive military operations on the enemy communications. Bridges flew into the air, enemy military /224
trains were derailed. Partisan detachments of the Kelets voivodeship undermined 129 railroad trains with troops and fighting equipment and destroyed 48 bridges on railroads and highways.*

While the troops of the front were conducting battles in the territory of Poland, in the western regions of the Ukraine bands of bourgeois nationalists began to display activity. The command group of the German fascist troops supplied them with arms and ammunition, meaning thereby to undermine the rear of the Red Army. On the assignment of the Hitlerite command group the nationalists killed party and Soviet workers, attempted to disrupt conscription into the Red Army and grain collection, made attacks on the rear area targets and garrisons of the Soviet forces and effected diversions on front communications. In August they blew up several railroad bridges and trains with military loads. On Aug. 19 the Military Council of the 1st Ukrainian front passed a resolution to carry out an operation to liquidate the nationalistic bands and establish strict order in the rear of the Soviet forces.** To assist the forces the NKVD rear guard assigned one cavalry and two motorcycle regiments. As a result of the operation carried out from Aug. 22 to Sept. 7, 36 armed bands numbering 4315 persons were liquidated.***

---

* See S.A. Lesnevskiy, V.I. Sokolovskiy. "Fighting Alliance. Brotherly Friendship of the Soviet and Polish Fighters." Moscow, Voyenizdat, 1958, p. 85.

** CSASA (Central State Archive of the Soviet Army-Tsentral'nyy Gosudarstvennyy Arkhiv Sovyetskoy Armiyi) col. 32880, inv. 5, div. 185, p. 302.

*** IML. Docs. and maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #11968, p. 32.

In connection with the fact that the main forces of the front were intended for operation in the Sandomierz direction and the advance in the Carpathians required special training, equipping and arming of the troops, as well as special methods of handling them, Headquarters of the Supreme High Command decided as early as July 30 to form a new strategic formation from the 1st Ukrainian front. Thus the 4th Ukrainian front arose again. Its administration was transferred from the Crimea to the area of Stanislav. On August 5 the front included the 1st Guards and 18th Armies, the administration of the 8th Airborne Army, and air force, tank, artillery and other formations and units.* Col.-Gen. I.E. Petrov was appointed front commander, Col.-Gen. L.Z. Mekhlis Military Council member, and Lt. Gen. F.K. Korzhenevich Chief of Staff.

The troops of the 4th Ukrainian front, continuing the advance in the southwestern direction, were to clear the Drogobych industrial area of the enemy and thereby complete the liberation of the Ukraine, and seize the passes across the Carpathians for a later breakthrough to the Mid-Danube plain.

The Hitler command group attempted to pull its forces back from the area of Stanislav, to organize a defense in the Carpathian foothills, hold the Drogobych area and not to allow the progress of the Soviet forces to the passes across the Carpathians. For this in the 1st half of August to the Drogobych area three infantry divisions and the administration of the 3rd army corps were transferred from Hungary, and a mountain rifle division and the 49th mountain-rifle corps of the 1st Panzer Army, consisting of two divisions, from Rumania.** All six divisions were included in the 1st Hungarian Army, which conducted defensive battles in this area. With the arrival of the reserves the enemy's resistance was considerably strengthened.

---

* IML. Docs. and maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #9493, pp. 40, 41.

** Collected materials on the composition of the forces of fascist Germany, 4th edition, pp. 130-133.

The troops of the 4th Ukrainian front, operating under the conditions of a rugged, forested terrain in the foothills of the Carpathians, progressed slowly. On August 5 the 1st Guards Army seized the city of Stryy, and on August 6, overcoming a swampy sector northeast of Drogobych, took this regional center of the the Ukraine by storm. On August 7 Sambor and Borislav were taken. With the liberations of these cities as well as of several other /225 inhabited areas, the entire territory of the Soviet Ukraine, with the exception of insignificant, sparsely inhabited areas located near the passes through the Carpathian range, had been cleared of the German fascist invaders.

Bearing in mind the increased resistance of the enemy and the great fatigue of the troops, the Military Council of the 4th Ukrainian front requested permission from Headquarters of the Supreme High Command to halt the advance for a time to bring up the rear services, replenish the troops and prepare them for operations in mountainous, forested terrain. On August 15 Headquarters ordered the 4th Ukrainian front to temporarily go over to the defense and begin preparations for advance operations in the Carpathians. By this time the forces of the front had broken through to the line of Sanok - Skolye - Nadvornaya - Krasnoil'sk. The new advance was planned for August 28. However, on August 26 this decision was altered: the advance of the 2nd Ukrainian front in Rumania, begun August 20, was developing successfully, which gave the Red Army the opportunity to break through to the Mid-Danube plain from the southeast. This should sharply change the situation and ease the advance of the troops of the 4th Ukrainian front across the Carpathians.

Having successfully completed the L'vov - Sandomierz operation, according to instructions from Headquarters of the Supreme High Command of August 29, the troops of the 1st Ukrainian front went over to the defense on the lines that had been achieved.*

* IML. Docs. and maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #9493, pp. 103-105.

The victory of the Soviet forces in the western regions of the Ukraine were of great military-political and strategic importance. As a result of the successful completion of the L'vov - Sandomierz operation the troops of the 1st Ukrainian front and the 4th Ukrainian front formed during the advance completed the liberation of the Soviet Ukraine. The troops of the 1st Ukrainian front, in conjunction with the troops of the 1st Belorussian front, liberated a considerable part of the territory of Poland east of the Vistula. An important result of the military operations of the 1st Ukrainian front was the forcing of the Vistula and the formation in the Sandomierz area of a broad beachhead which could serve as a "springboard" for a new decisive advance to the southeastern border of fascist Germany.

In the L'vov - Sandomierz operation the forces of the 1st Ukrainian front inflicted destruction on one of the four strategic enemy groupings on the Soviet-German front, army group "North Ukraine." Thirty-two divisions were routed and 8 divisions were totally destroyed.* In the battles to liberate the western regions of the Ukraine the Soviet troops increased the glory of the Red Army, showed great military skill, and displayed mass heroism. Over 123,000 soldiers and officers were decorated with state awards and 160 persons received the title of Hero of the Soviet Union.**

The completion of the liberation of the Ukraine and the breakthrough of the Soviet forces to the immediate approaches to Czechoslovakia brought the hour nearer when the peoples of that country would be rid of German fascist oppression. The victories of the Red Army and the major defeat of the Hitlerite forces on the Soviet-German front caused a new rise in the national liberation struggle of the Czech and Polish peoples.

The favorable overall military-political situation in the summer of 1944 promoted the successful operations of the troops of the 1st Ukrainian front

---

* Collected materials on the composition of the forces of fascist Germany, 4th edition, pp. 112-113, 132-133.

** Archives of MD USSR, col. 33, inv. 43294, div. 85, pp. 9, 20, 25; div. 86, pp. 149, 350.

in the western regions of the Ukraine and the southeastern areas of Poland. The operation of the 1st Ukrainian front began during the period of the powerful advance of the Soviet forces in Belorussia, which forced the enemy to weaken the grouping in the L'vov area and thereby facilitated the operation of the troops of the front. /226 At the same time the victorious advance of the 1st Ukrainian front and the defeat of the large enemy grouping between Poles'ye and the Carpathians led to a certain weakening of the enemy's forces in Rumania. This aided the forces of the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts in liberating Soviet Moldavia and Rumania.

The L'vov - Sandomierz operation was one of the major offensive operations of 1944. Unlike other strategic offensive operations of that year, it was effected by the forces of one front and was characterized by great scope, a variety of forms of military operations by the troops, capable transfer of forces from one direction to another, skillful use of all arms of service and aviation, and the encirclement and destruction of a large enemy grouping in a short time.

An extremely important feature of the military operations of the troops of the 1st Ukrainian front was the forcing at a rush of such large rivers as the Western Bug, the San and the Vistula. The success of the forcing in all cases was achieved by the suddenness of the troops' breakthrough to the water obstacles, the timely supply of forward units with standard crossing equipment and the use of local materials at hand, simultaneous crossing on a wide front, seizure and holding of beachheads.

A large part in the operation was played by armored and mechanized forces. Their rapid movement and close support of infantry and air force ensured the encirclement in a short time of the enemy grouping in the area of Brod, the breakthrough by the forces of the front to the enemy communications west of L'vov, and rapid advance to the San and Vistula Rivers.

The L'vov - Sandomierz operation was conducted in a situation of complete mastery of the air by our aircraft, the main efforts of which were directed toward supporting rifle and tank formations. In the course of the

operation the 2nd and 8th Airborne Armies carried out 48,100 combat flights.* In addition, long range aircraft completed 1,529 flights.**

The maneuvering nature of the operation required intense and flexible work by the operative and administrative rear services. In July-August over 140,000 railroad cars of military equipment, provisions and ammunition were delivered to the troops of the 1st Ukrainian front.*** However, the delivery of material resources to the troops was complicated by the slow rate of restoration of railroads. In connection with this the main burden of transport was placed on automobile transportation, the roads for which stretched for 200 kilometers and more. Medical establishments ensured evacuation of the wounded and their treatment during the operation.

Soviet and Polish partisans, who cooperated well with one another, provided considerable assistance for the troops of the front. They struck blows on enemy communications, destroyed manpower and military equipment, and disrupted the operation of the enemy's rear.

After the liberation of the western regions of the Ukraine the local party and Soviet organs were faced with the task of restoring Soviet order and laws, and of raising the masses to regenerate the ruined state economy. The expulsion of the invaders was a great and joyful occasion in the life of the workers of the western Ukrainian regions. Immediately after they were rid of the fascist yoke the greater part of the population, who actively supported the measures of the local party and Soviet organs, joined in the work to restore industry, agriculture and cultural establishments. However, there were serious difficulties connected with the solution of these problems. These were due to the fact that during the three-year German occupation the population had been systematically poisoned with false fascist and bourgeois-nationalist propaganda. This found "its expression in displays of various /227

---

* IML. Docs and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #9608, p. 432.

** Archives of MO USSR, col. ADD, inv. 362906, div. 1, pp. 20-26.

*** Op. cit., Inv. #11968, p. 34.

degrees of nationalism, in self-seeking tendencies and sometimes in incidents of an unconscientious attitude to collective labor" * by a certain section of the population. The situation in the western regions of the Ukraine was also complicated by the actions of nationalist bands who hindered the restoral of normal life. In a number of cases the bands blocked measures by Soviet organs and attacked Soviet and party workers. Under these conditions ideological-political work among the masses took on particular importance. An important role in improving it was played by the statement of the CC AUCP(b) of Sept. 27, 1944, "On shortcomings in political work among the population of the western regions of the UkSSR."

To reinforce Soviet authority and normalize life in the western regions of the Ukraine the return to the peasants of the lands taken from them by the fascist occupiers was of great importance. This was an act of great political significance. It promoted the unity of the working peasantry and the complete isolation of the kulaks, the social focus of Ukrainian bourgeois nationalism.

In mid-October 1944 in the course of the advance, which had been renewed in the Carpathians, the Red Army totally liberated the Soviet Ukraine from the German fascist invaders. A ceremonial meeting of the party Soviet and public organizations of Kiev was dedicated to this great historic event. At the meeting First Secretary of the CC CP(b)U, N.S. Khrushchev, read a report. He congratulated the Ukrainian people on their great victory and emphasized that for their liberation the people of the Ukraine were "obliged to our Bolshevik Party, which was and remains the inspiration and organizer of the national struggle against the German invaders."**

---

* N.S. Khrushchev. "Results of the First Year of Restorational Work in the Ukraine and Our Immediate Tasks." Kiev, Gospolitizdat UkSSR, 1945, p. 35.

** "Pravda Ukrainy," Oct. 21, 1944.

CHAPTER 8

BEGINNING THE BUILDING OF A NEW, DEMOCRATIC POLAND

1. The upsurge of the national liberation struggle in Poland in the first half of 1944.

One of the most important results of the military operations in the /228
central sector of the Soviet-German front in July-August 1944 was the liberation by the Red Army in military collaboration with the 1st Polish Army of almost all Polish land east of the Vistula (maps 6 and 7). In this territory, comprising one-fourth of Poland, lived approximately 5,600,000 people in 1944. The Soviet forces entered Polish territory under generally favorable political conditions, prepared by the long struggle of the workers of the country against the Hitlerite invaders. Polish patriots did not reconcile themselves to the bloody German occupation that destroyed the independence and unity of their state. In 1939 the occupiers had split Poland into two parts; its western and northern regions, which were industrially more developed they included in the composition of Germany and in

the eastern and central regions they formed the so-called "general government" headed by Hitler's deputy, Frank. Poland was essentially turned into a territorial appendage of fascist Germany, and the Polish people were condemned to be destroyed or Germanized. Taking up the responsibilities of general governor, Frank declared openly: "From now on the political role of the Polish people has ended... We will achieve the total erasure for all time of the very idea of Poland. The Kingdom of Poland or any other Polish State will never be restored."*

Frank's cynical declaration reflected the political course which the fascist government began to take in relation to the peoples of Eastern Europe. The Hitlerites were preparing a terrible fate for the Polish people. According to the "Ost" plan they planned to transform Poland into their colony, and in the event of a victory over the USSR to forcibly relocate 80-85 percent of the Poles to Siberia.** The Germans wanted to transform the freedom-loving people of Poland, who had given the world Mickiewicz, Chopin, Kosciuszko, /229 into a people deprived of their national independence and national culture. "The population (of Poland - Ed.)," wrote Himmler, "will be a mass of manpower deprived of leadership and will provide Germany annually with seasonal labor and workers for use as unskilled labor..."***

Executing their monstrous plans, from the first day of the occupation the Hitlerites began mass extermination of the Poles. The country was covered with a network of concentration camps in which the finest sons of Poland were destroyed. During the years of the occupation the fascists exterminated 5,384,000 people.**** Hundreds of thousands of Poles were driven to forced labor in Germany. But, in spite of cruel terror, the Polish workers bravely fought

---

* Quoted from History of Poland, Vol. III, Moscow, Izd-vo. Academy of Science of the USSR, 1958, p. 531.

** See "Defeat of German Imperialism in the Second World War," p. 231.

*** Ibid, p. 227.

**** See "Trybuna Ludu," Sept. 1, 1959.

for the liberation of their motherland. Every year the liberation movement in the country broadened. In the vanguard of this struggle was the working class, led by the Polish Worker's Party (PPR). "The Polish Worker's Party was distinguished and stood out among other political parties operating during the years of the occupation for its far-seeing political thought borne by the class and national interests of the Polish workers, its correct program showing the only way to liberation and the best future for the Polish people."*

Thanks to the stubborn activity of the Polish Worker's Party directed at consolidation of democratic forces, in 1943 actual conditions were created for the formation of an antifascist national front. By this time serious class shifts had occurred in the country. The wide mass of workers, peasants and intellectuals, convinced of the correctness of the PPR's policy, supported it ever more actively in its struggle to establish unity of action in the national liberation movement.

In November 1943 the Polish Worker's Party issued a declaration of historic significance, "For what we are fighting," in which was set forth the program for creation of a new, people's Poland. On December 15, 1943 on the initiative of the PPR a manifesto of the democratic social-political and military organizations of Poland was published. This manifesto, which was the result of an agreement reached between the 14 democratic organizations, discussed the decision to create a supreme agency of authority of the Polish people and defined its general political platform.

On the basis of this platform, on January 1, 1944 the Polish People's Government (KRN) was formed - the supreme representative organ of the democratic forces of the country. The main organizer of the KRN was the Polish Worker's Party. In the creation of the KRN also participated activists of the left wing of the Worker's Party of Polish Socialists, representatives of the Stronnitstvo lyudove [transliterated from Russian] (the peasant party),

---

* Vladislaw Gomulka. "Articles and speeches," Moscow, Gospolitizdat, 1959, p. 868.

the youth organization Zvejonzeh val'ki mlodykh [transliterated from Russian], labor unions and other social organizations. One of the leaders of the Polish Worker's Party, B. Bierut, was elected Chairman of the KRN. The formation of the KRN was an important stage in the political unification of the patriotic and most democratic forces of the Polish people, and the creation of a democratic national front. It indicated the victory of the political line of the PPR.

The KRN showed the way for the struggle for national and social liberation of the workers. The program of the new revolutionary organ of the people's power was set forth in a special declaration. In it the main tasks of the KRN were set forth: mobilization and unification of all antifascist forces into a single front, the guidance of the peoples' struggle against the occupiers with the goal of rapidly liberating the country, the democratization of the socio-political system, expropriation of landholders' land and redistribution of it to the peasants and agricultural workers, and nationalization of large industry, mines, banks and transportation. In the area of external policy, the KRN supported the USSR in the question of the Soviet-Polish border, spoke out for rapid establishment of relations of firm friendship and cooperation with the Soviet Union and with other countries, for the return to Poland of all age-old Polish land in the west and the north and for solutions to border problems in the east by friendly agreement between Poland and the USSR.* 1238

The program advanced by the Polish People's Government responded to the tasks of the people's democratic revolution and reflected the interests of broad strata of the population. This promoted the further unity of the Polish people into a single democratic national front, the strengthening of the fighting alliance of the workers and peasants, and the broadening of the national liberation movement. The antifascist national front, which arose as a result of the unification of the working class, the peasantry, progressive elements of the intelligentsia, and the petty bourgeoisie, and was

---

*See The Formation of the Bases of the Polish Workers' Party program in 1942-1945. (Selected Materials and Documents,) Warsaw, 1958, pp. 469-473.

directed not only against the German fascist occupiers but also against the Polish bourgeois landowning reactionaries. The workers began to create people's governments , new revolutionary organs of authority in the provinces. In six months people's governments had appeared throughout the country. In the Warsaw voivodeship alone 15 novyatovykh [transl. from Russian](district), 15 city and approximately 100 gminny [transl. from Russian] (town) people's governments were formed.*

Around the KRN all of the democratic forces of the country united. For further consolidation of the progressive forces of Poland the organizational work carried on by the Polish Worker's Party among the masses was of great importance. "During this period," noted Bierut, "the Party created local people's governments throughout the country, formed new units of the People's Army, reinforced the links of the worker-peasant alliance not only at the "higher levels" but in the mass struggle and organizational work from below."** At assemblies and meetings party workers explained to the people the role of the KRN and local people's governments and the program of these organs of the workers' authority, and told of the victories of the Red Army. The illegal pamphlets, proclamations and newspapers published by the PPR had a significant influence on the growth of political consciousness among the masses.

As a result of the great organizational and political activity of the Polish Worker's Party and the KRN the national liberation movement rose to a new level and began to take on the character of a people's democratic revolution. The armed struggle of Polish patriots intensified. This was promoted to a large degree by the formation, on the basis of a decree of the KRN of Jan. 1, 1944, of a people's armed force - the People's Army (AL), the core of which was the People's Guard (GL). The People's Army also included some detachments of people's militia from the Worker's Party of Polish Socialists and units of the Khlopskiy [transl. from Russian] Battalions.***

*See From the Polish People's War of Liberation 1939-1945. Warsaw, 1960, p. 388.

**Boleslaw Bierut. "On the Party." Warsaw, 1952, p. 126.

*** The khlopskiy battalions (1942-1943) were the military organization of the Stronnitstvo lyudove party.

On the basis of numerous partisan detachments larger units began to form - brigades numbering 1,000 and more persons. The first brigade of the People's Army was formed in February 1944, and in the first six months 11 brigades in all were formed.* The numerical strength of the People's Army, supported by the broad masses of the people, continually grew.

The victories of the Armed Forces of the USSR had an enormous effect /231
on the development of the armed struggle of the Polish people against the Hitlerite aggressors. The rapid approach of the Soviet forces to the Polish border strengthened the belief of the country's patriots that they would soon be liberated from the fascist yoke, and increased their combat activity. "In the gloom of the Hitlerite occupation, in an atmosphere of constant crimes and atrocities, every piece of news about the victories of the Soviet Army was a support, a stimulus to continue the struggle," writes the Polish historian Tuszynski. "Moscow, Stalingrad, Leningrad - the names of these hero-cities connected with the most glorious victories of the Soviet Army, passed from mouth to mouth, gave cheer and hope to the tormented people, heralded the impending liberation from Hitlerite oppression. The remarkable successes of the Soviet Army stirred the broad masses of the Polish people and mobilized them for armed struggle against the occupiers."**

The help which the Soviet Union gave to the patriots of Poland played a great part in intensifying the national liberation movement.

In the spring of 1944 a delegation from the Polish People's Government arrived in Moscow. They made the leaders of the Soviet government familiar with the situation existing in the country, with the course of the national liberation movement and the prospects for its development, and informed them of the need of the People's Army for arms and equipment. During the negotiations questions of the cooperation of the Red Army and the People's Army and the rendering of comprehensive assistance to the latter were discussed.

---

*See Symposium on the Polish People's War of Liberation 1939-1945. Materials. Warsaw, 1959, p. 77.

**Waldermar Tuszynski. Partisan Warfare in the Forests of Lipsko, Janów, and Puszcza Solska (June 1944) Warsaw, 1954, pp. 14-15.

Beginning in April 1944 the Polish patriots received from the USSR a great quantity of submachine guns, ammunition, explosives and also heavy machine guns and antitank weapons. All of this was delivered through the Polish Headquarters of the partisan movement* and also through Soviet partisan formations and detachments operating in occupied Polish territory. One of the leaders of the People's Army, Frantsishek Yuz'vyak (Vitol'd) [transl. from Russian] wrote that "the Soviet armament was not only the simple weapons so awaited by everyone, not only reinforcements of our armed forces. This outstretched brotherly hand of the Soviet Union gave our detachments faith in the impending victory and strength for the battle. This weapon was given as a symbol of the common goals uniting Soviet and Polish partisan detachments, it testified to the fact that the mighty Country of Socialism was helping the Polish people in their fight..."**

1944 was the year of the largest partisan battles. Armed battles raged throughout Poland. The partisans in the Lublin voivodeship fought aggressively. The proximity to the Soviet-German front and the areas of operation of Soviet partisans and the favorable geographical conditions made the Lublin region the center of operations for partisan detachments.

On February 26, 1944 the high command of the People's Army issued an order assigning objectives to the partisans: to destroy and keep under constant threat enemy communications, to create their own operative bases in the Yanowski, Bilgoraj and Parczew forests, to carry on broad combined combat operations, achieve superiority over enemy garrisons and to prevent enemy operations in the given region.***

---

* The Polish Headquarters of the partisan movement was created at the end of April 1944. It was headed by the second in command of the 1st Polish Army formed in the territory of the USSR, Gen. Aleksandr Zavadskiy.

** Frantsishek Yuz'vyak (Vitol'd). "The Polish Worker's Party in the Struggle for National and Social Liberation." Moscow, Izd-vo. inostrannoy literatury, 1953, p. 122.

***See W. Tuszynski. Partisan Warfare in the Forests of Lipsko, Janów, and Puszcza Solska. p. 22.

Carrying out this order, the People's Army intensified its struggle against the fascist invaders. In the Lublin area battles with the occupiers continued constantly until liberation. The patriots inflicted serious blows on the enemy in other voivodeships as well. The scale of the partisan operations conducted can be judged from the fact that in the battles in the Lipski forests, near Zhechitsa, Ostrow-Lubelski, Dombrovka and other areas whole divisions of the occupiers took part, with tanks, artillery and aircraft.* But in spite of their great superiority in forces the Hitlerites were unable to suppress the rapidly growing national liberation movement. /232

The partisans controlled some regions almost completely. The General Governor of Poland, Frank, was forced to admit this: "...Almost one-third of the Lublin region is no longer in the hands of the German administration. There neither the administration nor the executive organs are operating, only the transportation system. In this territory the German police cannot operate in units smaller than a regiment."**

The partisans were particularly active on the railroads. They blew up trains, railroad lines and bridges. In one report the Hitlerite director of a railroad department wrote to Frank: "The number of acts of destruction of trains involving explosives, attacks on stations and railroad structures (in the Lublin region - Ed.) in the period of Feb.-May this year increases continually. At the present time an average of 10-11 attacks take place per day. In some sectors travel is possible only in a convoy and only at night, for example in the Lukuv - Lublin sector. On another line, Zavada - Rava-Russkaya, one can travel only on certain days and at certain hours; the rest of the time movement stops. In the Bilgoraj forests also we are helpless against attacks."***

The arrival in Polish territory of Soviet partisan formations and units, which had rich experience in the struggle with the German fascist invaders, also had a strong influence on the development of the partisan movement in

---

* See B. Bierut. Report of the Central Committee of the Polish United Worker's Party to the II Session of the Party March 10, 1954. Moscow, Gospolitizdat, p. 11; Communique's of the High Command of the People's Guard and the People's Army (Documents), Warsaw, 1959, pp. 273-276.

**Quote. from W. Tuszynski. Partisan Warfare in the Forests of Lipsko, Janow, and Puszcza Solska, p. 30.

*** Ibid, pp. 31-32.

Poland, especially in the Lublin voivodeship. In connection with the approach of the front line, in February-April 1944 in a broad sector from Brest to L'vov the 1st Ukrainian partisan division of P.P. Vershigora, and the partisan formations and detachments of I.N. Banov, V.A. Karas'ev, G.V. Koval'ev, M.Ya. Nadelin, V. P. Pelikh', N. A. Prokopyuk, S. A. Sankov, V. P. Chepigi, B. G. Shangin, I. P. Yakovlev went into the southeastern region of Poland.

The Polish population rendered the Soviet partisans every possible assistance. It was characteristic that the Polish and Soviet partisans conducted almost all major battles in close cooperation, and sometimes under a single common command. Thus, for example, in May detachments of the People's Army under the command of Mieczyslaw Moczar jointly with the Soviet partisan group of Capt. Chepigi conducted a battle against the German SS tank division "Viking" in the area of Remblevo (Rombluv).* In June, Polish and Soviet partisans under a common command fought the Hitlerites heroically in Yanovskiy forests, containing three enemy divisions in the course of two weeks.** In battles with the German fascist invaders Soviet-Polish friendship grew stronger.

In Poland, beside the People's Army, there existed another large armed organization, the Home Army (AK) subordinate to the emigrant government in London. Its leaders were violent reactionaries attempting to restore the bourgeois landholding order in the country. "We must oil the rails so the German trains will reach the Eastern front faster," declared the command group of the AK.*** To all of the appeals of the PPR and People's Guard to establish unity of action and organize a joint effective armed struggle against the fascist invaders the leadership of the Home Army responded in one way: it increased its actions against the PPR and the democratic forces of the country. It wished to create the impression of a struggle against the occupiers and preserve its strength for an armed action with the purpose of seizing power the moment the Germans retreated from Polish territory. /233

*See Communique's of the High Command of the People's Guard and the People's Army (Documents), p. 274.

**See Ibid, p. 275.

***Quot. from Wladislaw Gomulka. "People's Poland Confidently on the Bright Path of Socialism," "Pravda," July 22, 1959.

However, the greater mass of the soldiers and the larger part of the lower officers of the Home Army, wrote W. Gomulka, "consisted of honest, patriotic feeling and thinking Poles; they strained to be in battle like the battle waged by the People's Guard, and then by the People's Army upon the call and under the direction of the Polish Worker's Party."* The majority of the soldiers of the ranks in the Home Army, against the will of their London leadership, took part in the battle against the German fascist invaders.

The victories of the Red Army, the rise of the national liberation movement, the creation of the Polish People's Government, the growth of the authority and influence of the Polish Worker's Party, the increasingly intense political activity of the masses of the people - all of this caused serious anxiety in Polish reactionary circles. The emigrant government took measures to still further retard the development of the national liberation movement, weaken and paralyze the battle of the workers against the occupiers, to undermine the position of the KRN and the Polish Worker's Party, to isolate them from the people. Long before the liberation of Poland the reactionaries had worked out plans pursuing a single goal - to prevent the victory of the democratic forces in the country. On January 9, 1944 the leadership of the reactionary underground announced the creation of the Polish Government of National Unity. In February the so-called "Public Anti-Communist Committee." The Polish Government of National Unity and the Anti-Communist Committee carried on aggressive activities against the KRN, the Polish Worker's Party and other democratic parties operating in the country.** Openly reactionary elements headed by the commander in chief of the armed forces of the emigrant government, K. Sosnkowski, and the leadership of the Home Army located in Poland raised the question of ceasing the struggle against the Germans and preparing all of their forces for armed resistance to the approaching Soviet troops. In one of his speeches at the end of 1943 the commander of the AK,

---

* Quot. from Wladislaw Gomulka. "People's Poland Confidently on the Bright Path of Socialism," "Pravda," July 22, 1959.

**From the History of the Polish People's War of Liberation 1939-1945, p. 387.

Gen. Bor-Komorowski, declared bluntly that they could not consider the Soviet Union a military ally and that it would be better "if the Russian armies are far from us." "From this follows,"he continued, "a logical conclusion, that we cannot raise an insurrection against the Germans until they contain the Russian front and thereby hold the Russians far from us. Furthermore, we must be prepared to offer armed resistance to the Russian troops entering Polish territory."*

However, the Polish reactionaries could not ignore the fact that the announcement of a cessation of the struggle against the Hitlerite occupiers would discredit them once and for all in the eyes of the public both within the country and abroad, and would alienate the very strata of the Polish population that still continued to believe the emigrant government. Because of the fear of complete political bankruptcy the Polish reactionaries did not make up their minds to commit an open act of national treason. However, they carried on the struggle against the Polish Worker's Party, against the democratic forces in the country, ever more furiously. Covering themselves with hypocritical, demagogic declarations of "protecting the population from subversive elements," the reactionaries of the Home Army and the fascist /234
organization the Polish Armed Forces Narodovy sily zbroyny [transl. from Russian] included in the AK in March 1944 destroyed the finest sons and daughters of the Polish people. Brutal reprisals were inflicted on patriots in Warsaw and also in the Krasnikovskiy, Sedletskiy, Yarovskiy, Pulavskiy, Keletskiy and other districts and voivodeships [transl. from Russian]. The Polish reactionary press called for intensification of the struggle with the democratic forces. The newspaper "Narud," the organ of the bourgeois party Stronnitstvo pratsi [transl. from Russian], wrote: "...The Germans have already ceased to be enemy number one... The struggle against Communism is the greatest and, we believe, the only important task of the moment." "The time has come to liquidate the centers of distribution of the PPR communes," wrote the newspaper of the party delegature "Shanets," "The People's

*Archive of the Department of Party History, Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party, 203/1-I.

Guard and various red partisans must vanish from the face of Polish land."* This type of statement could be found in all publications of the party delegates.

Even at the end of 1943 the command group of the Home Army, in conjunction with the emigrant government, developed plans of action in the event of the entrance into Poland of Soviet forces. The so-called "Buzha" ("Burya") plan was accepted. According to this plan, units of the Home Army were to act against the rear guard German fascist troops withdrawing from the east in order that, exploiting the victory of the Red Army, they should attempt to seize the cities and large inhabited areas before it arrived. This, according to the ideas of the authors of the "Buzha" plan, would provide the opportunity to demonstrate before the entire world the involvement of the Home Army in the struggle with the occupiers and,most importantly, force the command group of the Soviet units liberating Poland to enter into official relations with the leadership of the AK and recognize them as authority. In one of his reports to London, Bor-Komorowski frankly exposed the political idea of the "Buzha" plan: "Lack of action by the AK at the moment of the Soviets' arrival (in Poland - Ed.) is unlikely to be tantamount to passivity of the country. In that case the PPR (communists) would take on itself the initiative of doing battle with the Germans, and a considerable part of the less informed citizens might join them. Then the country would, in fact, enter collaboration with the Soviets without any hindrance. The Soviets would be met not by the Home Army, which is subordinate to the government and the supreme high command, but by their supporters, who would welcome them with open arms."** Thus the "Buzha" plan was a plan of military and political demonstration, directed not so much against the Germans as against the Red Army entering Poland.

In addition, the "Buzha" plan called for forcible annexation of the western regions of the Ukraine and Belorussia as well as the area of Vilnius.

---

*Quot. from W. Gomulka. The PPR Has Shown the Polish People a New Road of Historical Development. "Zycie Warsawy," January 21-22, 1962.

**T. Bor-Komorowski. "The Secret Army." London, 1951, p. 201.

Particular attention was devoted to military operations in those territories, which in the ideas of the creators of the plan would emphasize the "rights" to them of the Polish emigrant government. On June 12, 1944 at a conspiratorial meeting in Warsaw, the decision was made to concentrate the AK in the region of Vilnius in order to go over to the offensive upon the approach of the front to the city, and seize it.* The purpose of the proposed operation was clearly formulated in the instructions of commander in chief Sosnkowski, directed to Bor-Komorowski. "If in the event that at the last moments of the Germans' retreat and before the arrival of the Red Army the possibility of occupying Vilnius, L'vov or another large center or territory with our forces, even temporarily or for a short time, this should be done, acting in the role of legal master."** On July 6-7 detachments of the Home Army /235 attempted to seize Vilnius, but unsuccessfully. On July 13, after seven days of fierce battles, Soviet troops liberated Vilnius.

In deep secret another plan was also developed, calling for a battle against the troops of the Red Army after the liberation of the Polish lands. On November 23, 1943, Bor-Komorowski reported to Sosnkowski that he was preparing "in the deepest secret... a masked framework for a network of leaders of a new secret organization... This will be an independent network not connected with the wide organizations of the Home Army."*** At the end of May 1944 the emigrant government sent Gen. Okulitski to Poland to bring instructions relative to the reorganization of the Home Army. According to these instructions, after the arrival of the Red Army in Poland the command group of certain formations of the Home Army should establish communication with the Soviet military command, at the same time preserving subordination to the London Polish government and the high command of the Polish forces. The remaining forces of the Home Army would remain underground in order to continue the struggle against the Red Army.**** Upon receipt of the instructions

---

* See A. Skarzynski. The Political Objectives of the Burza action and the Warsaw Uprising. [Copy rest of footnote]
Sept.-Dec. 1958, p. 271.

** Ibid, pp. 271-272.

***The Polish Armed Forces in the Second World War, Vol. III, London, 1950, p. 557.

****See Judicial report on the matter of organizers, directors and participants in the Polish underground in the rear of the Red Army in Polish territory, Lithuania and the western regions of Belorussia and the Ukraine. Stenograph. report. Moscow, Gospolitizdat, 1945, p. 10.

the process of creating a deeply conspiratorial anti-Soviet organization, which later received the designation "NE" ("Independence"), was hastened. The AK detachments began to break up into smaller units, new armories were created, special teams formed to conduct sabotage, diversions and terrorist acts against officers of the Red Army and Soviet official persons.

In their activity directed against the peoples of Poland and the Soviet Union the emigrant government rested on the support of the ruling circles of the USA and England, who wished to restore the old bourgeois, pre-September Poland and transform it to an anti-Soviet bridgehead. On November 16, 1943 the emigrant government addressed Prime Minister W. Churchill in a memorandum in which it was requested that it be given the right to restore power in Poland as it was liberated.* On Jan. 5, 1944 the Polish emigrant government made an announcement demanding the immediate introduction of its administration in the western regions of the Ukraine and Belorussia directly after their clearance of the occupiers.

The Soviet government decisively rejected these claims. In a special announcement made Jan. 11, 1944 it exposed the anti-people policy of the Polish emigrant government, which had broken away from the people and was incapable of raising them for the active struggle against the fascist invaders. Indicating that the amendment of the eastern boundary of Poland in 1939 created a reliable basis for strong friendship between the Polish and Soviet peoples, the government of the USSR emphasized that it stood for the recreation of a strong and independent Poland and wished the establishment of neighborly relations between the Union of SSR and Poland based on friendship and mutual respect. Poland should be reborn not through the seizure of Ukrainian and Belorussian lands, it was noted in the announcement, but by the annexation to Poland of traditionally Polish lands in the west which had

---

* See S. Mikolajczyk. "The Rape of Poland. Pattern of Soviet Aggression." New York - Toronto, 1948, pp. 267-268.

been taken earlier by Germany. Without this it would be impossible to unite the entire Polish people in their state and obtain the necessary access to the Baltic Sea. The justified desire of the Polish people for full unification in a strong and independent state should receive acceptance and support. The government of the USSR indicated that "the interests of Poland and the Soviet Union are to establish strong friendly relations between our countries and to unite the peoples of Poland and the Soviet Union in the struggle against the common external enemy, as the common concern of allies demands."*

In spite of the clearly formulated position of the Soviet government in /236 relation to Poland, the emigrant government continued to find support from the ruling circles of the USA and England.

"The Polish question" was acquiring ever greater urgency in the international arena. Its essence consisted in the question of what Poland should become after the expulsion of the German occupiers. Would Poland be a democratic, peace-loving, strong, independent state or would the bourgeois landowners' power be restored there and would the country become a tool in the hands of the large imperialist states? In international politics the two diametrically opposed lines in this question appeared more and more clearly. The Soviet Union consistently spoke out in the support of the Polish people in their struggle for national and social liberation and the creation of a peace-loving democratic state. Such a Poland would conduct a policy of friendship toward neighboring countries, including the USSR. The United States of America and England wished to prevent the victory of the democratic forces in Poland and restore the power of the bourgeoisie and landholders in the country after the war.

These two lines were seen in the solution of specific questions, particularly on the composition of the Polish government and the eastern border of Poland. The Soviet Union decisively supported the broad circles of Polish society, who demanded the democratization of the government. The American

---

* External policy of the Soviet Union during the Patriotic War, Vol. II, p. 61.

and English governing circles resisted this. They did all they could to force the Soviet Union to recognize the emigrant government.* On January 18, 1944 the government of the USA expressed its readiness to take on itself the role of intermediary in negotiations between the Soviet government and the Polish emigrant government. Attempting to exert pressure on the USSR, it declared that vacillation or refusal by the Soviet government would reflect unfavorably in the matter of mutual international cooperation.** The Soviet government, consistently defending the interests of the Polish people, rejected the proposal of mediation, stating that the true goal of the emigrant government was "not the achievement of agreement with the Soviet government, but a desire to deepen the conflict and draw the allies into it."***

The government of England particularly intensified diplomatic activity in this area. In February-March 1944 alone the English Prime Minister addressed the head of the Soviet government four times on the Polish question. He wrote:"The creation in Warsaw of a Polish government other than that which we have heretofore recognized... would place before Great Britain and the United States the question of what damage that would inflict on the complete agreement existing between the three great powers on which the future of the world depends."****

Concerning the eastern boundary of Poland, the government of the USSR declared officially that it did not consider the Soviet-Polish border of 1939 unchanged and would agree to the establishment of the border along the Curzon line.***** However, the Polish emigrant government not only did not intend to

---

* Diplomatic relations between the Soviet Union and the Polish emigrant government were cut off on April 25, 1943 in view of the fact that that government began to conduct a policy hostile to the Soviet Union.

** Archive of Foreign Policy (AVP) of the USSR, col. 0129, inv. 28, p. 154, div. 3, p. 11.

*** Ibid, div. 1, p. 9.

**** Correspondence of the Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers with the Presidents of the USA and the Prime Ministers of Great Britain during the Great Patriotic War 1941-1945, Vol. I, p. 196.

***** The Curzon line was the designation of the line recognized Dec. 8, 1919 by the Supreme Allied Council as the eastern border of Poland. This ran somewhat farther east than the western border of the USSR established in Sept. 1939 after the liberation by the Red Army of the Western Ukraine and western Belorussia.

recognize the Curzon line, but it laid claim to Soviet territories, demanding that the border be established in accordance with the Riga treaty.* At the Teheran conference Churchill and Roosevelt agreed on the establishment /237 of the eastern border of Poland along the Curzon line. Some time later, however, the English government essentially denied this. In a letter to J.V. Stalin of March 21, 1944 W. Churchill proposed that the question of establishing the border along the Curzon line be brought to a peace conference and declared that England could not "recognize any transfer of territory accomplished by force."** In the given case, that meant support of the emigrant government. In the answering message of the head of the Soviet government the position of the USSR on the question of establishing the Soviet-Polish border was once again set forth precisely and clearly. "As regards myself and the Soviet government," wrote J.V. Stalin, "we continue to stand by the Teheran position and are not thinking of retreating from it, since we believe that the realization of the Curzon line is not a manifestation of a policy of force, but a manifestation of a policy of restoration of the legal rights of the Soviet Union to those lands which even Curzon and the Supreme Allied Council recognized as non-Polish in 1919."***

Thus the Soviet government decisively spoke out against the attempts of the governing circles of the USA and England to force it with threats and blackmail to reestablish relations with the emigrant government. The government of the USSR indicated that the only way to a solution of the Polish problem was the democratization of the Polish government. The exclusion from

---

* According to the Riga treaty imposed by Soviet Russia in 1921 the Western Ukraine and western Belorussia went to Poland.

** Correspondence of the Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers with the Presidents of the USA and the Prime Ministers of Great Britain during the Great Patriotic War 1941-1945, Vol. I, p. 213.

*** Ibid, 214.

its composition of pro-fascist imperialistic elements and the inclusion in it of democratic figures, wrote the head of the Soviet government, "would create suitable conditions for the establishment of good Soviet-Polish relations and the solution of the question of the Soviet-Polish border, and generally for the regeneration of Poland as a strong, free and independent state."*

With a principled external policy directed at the protection of the interests of the Polish people, the Soviet Union gave support to the democratic forces of Poland in their struggle for the liberation and independence of their homeland.

* Correspondence of the Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers with the Presidents of the USA and the Prime Ministers of Great Britain during the Great Patriotic War 1941-1945, Vol. I, p. 198.

BEGINNING THE BUILDING OF A NEW, DEMOCRATIC POLAND

2. The activity of the Polish Committee of National Liberation and the formation of the Polish Provisional Government.

The liberation in the summer of 1944 of a considerable section of Poland strengthened the political activity of the workers of the country. The masses of the people, who had long fought selflessly for national and social liberation, received the opportunity to take the fate of their homeland in their own hands. Developing the best traditions of the Communist Party of Poland, the PPR by its tireless work won enormous authority and influence among the broad masses of workers. Its ranks became filled with the best representatives of the people, and by the middle of 1944 had reached 20,000 people.*

*See W. Gomulka. The PPR Has Shown the Polish People a New Path of Historical Development. "Zycie Warszawy," 21-22 January 1962.

Carrying out the program planned by the party, the revolutionary organs of the Polish workers and peasants began to effect democratic reorganization.

On July 21 the Polish People's Government published a law on the formation of the Polish Committee of National Liberation (PKWN) (ПКНО) - the central organ of public power. The age-old dream of Polish workers, who had fought heroically for freedom and the establishment of a truly democratic system in the country, had come true. /239

The Polish Committee of National Liberation included representatives of various political parties: the Polish Worker's Party - the guiding force of the democratic bloc in the country, the socialist party, the peasants party, the democratic party, as well as non-party members. Among the representatives of the parties and non-party members were included figures from the Union of Polish Patriots in the USSR.

On July 22 in the city of Khelm [transl. from Russian] the Polish Committee of National Liberation approved an historic manifesto, which had enormous significance in the building of a democratic Poland. In this document, which developed the fundamental positions of the declaration of the Polish People's Government, a program for revolutionary reorganizations was called for and the clear prospects for a people's revolution were shown.

The manifesto proposed the restoration of democratic liberties destroyed by the Pilsudskiites even before the war, and the carrying out of extremely important social reorganizations, specifically the effecting of broad agrarian reforms and the creation of a Provisional Government Administration, to the authority of which would be transferred enterprises of heavy and almost all medium industry. The emigrant government, which pushed the country to a new catastrophe by its adventuristic policy, was declared illegal. The PKWN was announced to be the provisional organ or executive authority.

The Polish Committee of National Liberation declared that the Red Army had entered Poland as a liberation army and called upon the people to render it every possible assistance. The basis of the external policy of the New

RZECZPOSPOLITA

ORGAN POLSKIEGO KOMITETU WYZWOLENIA NARODOWEGO

DEKRET KRAJOWEJ RADY NARODOWEJ O UTWORZENIU POLSKIEGO KOMITETU WYZWOLENIA NARODOWEGO

MANIFEST
POLSKIEGO KOMITETU WYZWOLENIA NARODOWEGO

DO NARODU POLSKIEGO!

The Manifesto of the Polish Committee of National Liberation, published in the newspaper "Rzeczpospolita," July 23, 1944.

Polish state was pronounced in the manifesto to be a firm alliance and friendship with the Soviet Union. "For 400 years," the manifesto read, "the period of constant conflicts has gone on between Poles and Ukrainians, Poles and Belorussians, Poles and Russians, with losses for both sides. Now an historic change has come in these relations. The conflicts are giving way to friendship and cooperation which are dictated by vital mutual interests. Friendship and military cooperation, which were given their start by the brothers in arms of the Polish Army and the Red Army, should grow into a strong alliance and neighborly cooperation after the war."* In the manifesto it was observed that in the establishment of the border with the Soviet Union, Polish lands would be included in the composition of the Polish state, and Ukrainian, Belorussian and Lithuanian lands in the composition of the Ukrainian, Belorussian and Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republics. The western Polish lands torn away by the invaders should be returned to Poland.

The manifesto met a wide response in the country since it expressed the deepest hopes and aspirations of the workers. The manifesto, said W. Gomulka, "opened a new page in the history of our people...The workers have taken governmental power into their own hands."** All of the genuinely patriotic forces of Poland, who had fought for the creation of an independent, democratic Polish state, united around the PKWN.

The announcement by the People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs of the USSR on the relations of the Soviet Union with Poland, which was published July 26, 1944, had enormous significance for the further consolidation of the democratic forces of the country under the leadership of the Polish Worker's Party, and for the strengthening of the friendship between the peoples of Poland and the Soviet Union. In the announcement it was stated that the Soviet Government would not pursue the goal of annexing any Polish land to the USSR or changing the social system in Poland, and that the military

---

*The Formation of the Bases of the Polish Workers' Party Program in 1942-1945, p. 505.

** W. Gomulka. "Articles and speeches," p. 121

operations of the Red Army in the territory of Poland were dictated by purely military necessity and the desire to render the friendly Polish people assistance in their liberation from the German occupation.* This announcement confirmed once more that the Soviet Union, the true friend, of the Polish people, regarded Poland as a sovereign, friendly allied state. /240

A clear example of the consistent Soviet external policy respecting the independence of other states was the announcement of the completion by the USSR and the PKWN of July 26, 1944 of an agreement on the relations between the Soviet High Command and the Polish administration after the arrival on Polish territory of the troops of the Red Army. In this agreement, which was directed at ensuring military cooperation of the peoples of Poland and the USSR, it was anticipated that as the country was cleared of the enemy the Polish Committee of National Liberation should create administrative organs, direct them, and carry out measures for the further organization, formation and outfitting of the Polish Forces. The Polish military units formed on the territory of the USSR should operate in Poland. In Article Six of the agreement it was stated that "as soon as any part of the liberated territory of Poland ceases to be a zone of direct military operations the Polish Committee of National Liberation will take upon itself the direction of all matters of civil administration."**

This agreement again testified to the fact that the Soviet Union, in bringing its forces onto the territory of allied countries, pursued a single goal - to help brother peoples rid themselves of the German fascist yoke, and that it had no intentions of interfering in the internal affairs of the states and above all recognized the right of the liberated peoples to decide their fate.

To establish closer contact with the Polish Committee of National Liberation the Soviet government sent a representative to Poland, who, according

---

* See "External Policy of the Soviet Union during the Patriotic War," Vol. II, p. 155.

** Ibid, p. 158.

to the directive of Headquarters, was to "act in the spirit of friendship and close cooperation" and "see to the precise and undeviating observation on the part of the Soviet military organs of the Agreement of July 26, 1944.."*

The selfless, heroic battle of the Soviet soldiers for the liberation of Polish cities and towns strengthened the faith of the Polish peoples in the victory over fascism, and promoted the expansion of the national liberation movement. Through the blood of Soviet soldiers, officers and the finest sons of Poland, spilled in cruel battles with the common enemy, the brotherhood and friendship of the Soviet and Polish people were sealed.

The law ratified on July 21, 1944 by the Polish People's Government on the unification of the People's Army and the 1st Polish Army formed in the USSR into a single Polish Force was of great significance in the struggle for the independence and democratic development of Poland.

The creation in a short period of a strong national army was one of the most important tasks facing the Polish Worker's Party and the Polish Committee of National Liberation in the summer of 1944. It was clear that for the most rapid expulsion of the occupiers and the building of an independent, strong, democratic Polish state it was essential to form a new army called upon to defend the interests of the workers.

In the course of building the armed forces the Polish Worker's Party was met with extremely great difficulties. The economic and technological base of the liberated regions was weak. Armaments were insufficient. An acute shortage of officer cadres was felt. These difficulties were made still worse by the fact that the creation of a people's army was stubbornly resisted by Polish reactionaries. The emigrant government and its supporters in the country blocked the enlistment of patriots in the army, called upon the Poles to boycott the measures of the party and the PKWN, not to appear at mobilization points and to desert from the army. The reactionaries' people infiltrated the army in order to undermine its fighting effectiveness.

---

* IML. Docs. and maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #9493, p. 50.

Nevertheless, the Polish Worker's Party and the Polish Committee of /241
National Liberation, with the active support of the working masses, were able in a short time to create a new, people's army. In the course of several months 100,000 recruits from the liberated territory joined the Polish Force.* The PPR sent its best representatives into the army. Over 10,000 young workers were sent to officers schools, and 500 party members to a political academy.** Along with the 1st Army, which was included in the composition of the Polish Force, a 2nd Army was also organized, headed by Gen. K. Sverchevskiy [transl. from Russian] . At the same time, tank and artillery units and the country's air force were formed. The High Command, Main Headquarters and Political-Educational Directorate were formed. Gen. M. Rolya-Zhimerskiy was named commander in chief of the Polish Force, deputy commanders in chief were Generals Z. Berlin, who had previously commanded the 1st Polish Army, and A. Zevadskiy and Col. M. Spykhalskiy was named Chief of Staff*** [names transliterated from Russian].

The Soviet Union rendered great assistance to the young Polish state in building the armed forces. Headquarters of the Supreme High Command, taking into consideration the clearly hostile position of the Polish reactionaries in relation to the enactments of the PKWN, indicated with the agreement of the Polish Committee of National Liberation the necessity of forbidding the activity of detachments of the Home Army in the rear of the Soviet forces and the mobilization of the population by the AK command group. This right could be exercised only by the PKWN as the executive organ of the Polish sovereign state.****

The Soviet government despatched a considerable number of officers and military specialists to the Polish Force, and also transferred a large amount of military equipment, arms, ammunition, fuel, means of transportation,

---

* See M. Spykhal'skiy. "On Polish-Soviet Military Cooperation." "Voyenno-istoricheskiy zhurnal," 1960, No. 1, p. 44.

** See "PPR. Resolutions, Proclamations, Circulars, and Directives of of the CC". Warsaw, 1959, pp. 83-84.

*** Later V. Korchits became Chief of Staff and Gen. M. Spykhal'skiy was named deputy commander in chief for political-educational work. Gen. S. Poplavskiy became the commander of the 1st Polish Army.

**** IML. Docs. and maters. of Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #9493, pp. 38-39, 42-43.

provisions and clothing. In the third quarter of 1944 alone 150,000 sets of clothing and the same amount of footwear, linen and personal equipment were prepared for the Polish army.* In all in the course of the Great Patriotic War the Polish Force received approximately 700,000 rifles and submachine guns, 3,500 guns, 1,000 tanks, 1,200 airplanes, several thousand medium machine guns and other arms, and over 1,800 automobiles.**

Thanks to the active work of the Polish Worker's Party the total numerical strength of the Polish Force by the end of 1944 reached 286,000 persons. The armed forces included 10 infantry divisions, 1 cavalry brigade, 1 tank corps, 2 detached tank brigades, 12 artillery and 1 mortar brigade, 3 anti-aircraft artillery divisions, 5 sapper-engineer brigades and 4 airborne divisions.***

The establishment of the power of the workers in the liberated Polish territory, the scope of the national liberation struggle in the occupied regions, and the growth of the authority of the Soviet Union among the masses of people caused concern and fear in the Polish reactionary circles. The plans they had nurtured for the restoration of the pre-war regime were found to be under the threat of failure. Under these circumstances the emigrant government took a step that cost the Polish people enormous losses.

As soon as the Polish reactionaries learned of the formation of the Committee of National Liberation they decided to take several urgent countermeasures, and first of all to organize an uprising in Warsaw. The decision /242

*Archives of MO USSR, col. 67, inv. 20089, div. 362, p. 56.

** See "Military Operations of the People's Polish Force 1943-1945," Moscow Voyenizdat, 1961, p. 35.

***Ibid, p. 32.

for the uprising was made July 24 by the High Command of the Home Army. The leadership of the AK believed that Warsaw should be taken no later than 12 hours before the arrival there of the Soviet forces, in order to establish in the capital the political and administrative power of the emigrant government.* On July 25 the emigrant government in London approved the decision to organize an uprising in Warsaw.** The representatives of the emigrant government and the leadership of the AK were to determine the time for the uprising to begin according to the speed of the advance of the Soviet forces.***

Even before the actual decision on the uprising was made Bor-Komorowski thus described the political goals of the future armed demonstration in a report to the emigrant government of July 14: "Offering the Soviets minimal assistance, but simultaneously creating political difficulties for them, the AK emphasizes the will of the people for independence. This will force the Soviets to break our will by force and create difficulties for them in the resolution of our internal problems."****

Thus the Polish reactionaries frankly and cynically declared that the goal of the impending uprising was not to render genuine aid to the Red Army but to create for it obstacles to the liberation of Poland and consequently not to give it the opportunity to assist the workers in building a new, democratic state. They calculated that having seized the capital they would be able to establish their power and prevent the arisal in the country of a people's democratic system.

*See The Polish Armed Forces in the Second World War, vol. III, pp. 662-664.

** IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #13499, p. 15.

***See Jerzy Kirchmayer. Observations and Polemics. Warsaw, 1958, pp. 94-97.

****Archiv Zaklada Historii Partii przy KC PZPR, 203/1.

On August 1 the Home Army began the uprising in Warsaw. It coincided with the arrival of the Prime Minister of the Polish emigrant government, Mikolajczyk, in Moscow, where he was to conduct negotiations with representatives of the Polish Committee of National Liberation on the reorganization of the government. The reactionary circles of Poland hoped that the coincidence of the uprising in Warsaw and the negotiations in Moscow would strengthen Mikolajczyk's position. Concerning this in the London Polish emigre publication "Polish Armed Forces in the 2nd World War," it is stated, "The Prime Minister, who traveled at this time through the Middle East to negotiations in Moscow, saw in the military efforts of the country (the Home Army - Ed.), directed against the Germans, a weighty argument for himself which he could use in the negotiations with the Soviet government."*

During the negotiations Mikolajczyk, not wishing to consider the enormous political shifts that had taken place in the country up to the summer of 1944, demanded that the emigrant government be given 80 percent of the spaces in the new government, and insisted on retaining the fascist constitution of 1935. The Polish Committee of National Liberation could not agree with such groundless demands.

The uprising was not prepared in the area of military equipment. The insurgents did not have enough arms and ammunition. On August 1, 1944 in the Warsaw district the detachments of the Home Army had at their disposal 16 heavy and light mortars, 2 antitank cannon, 29 antitank guns, 47 light and medium machine guns, 145 (light) hand machine guns, 30 flame throwers, 2629 carbines, 657 submachine guns, 3,846 pistols, 406 antitank grenades, and approximately 44,000 hand grenades.** There was sufficient ammunition only for two or three days of battle. Furthermore, many underground organizations did not know the time of the action. /243

*The Polish Armed Forces in the Second World War, vol. III, P. 664.
**See Adam Borkiewicz. The Warsaw Uprising 1944. Warsaw, 1957, pp. 35-36.

As a result at the beginning of the uprising only 40 percent of the forces in Warsaw available to the Home Army acted.* It is not surprising, therefore, that the attack was already unsuccessful in the first hours. The insurgents could not seize the command points of the capital, take the depots or the bridges across the Vistula, and this gave the Germans the opportunity to bring up their forces.** The failures of the first day of fighting led to the commanders of some insurgent detachments dismissing their detachments or taking them out of the city, not believing in the success of the uprising.***

But in spite of these unfavorable conditions the battle continued. It broke out with new strength when it was joined by the population of Warsaw. The residents of the capital and the rank and file of the Home Army, not knowing the true purposes of the organizers of the revolt, bravely fought the Hitlerite occupiers. With them fought units of the People's Army, although their command group had not been informed by the leadership of the AK of the action being prepared.**** The active participation of the people of Warsaw in the uprising testified to the deep hatred of the freedom-loving Polish people for the fascist invaders, to their desire to avenge the terrible crimes committed by the occupiers. In the battles with the German forces the Polish patriots displayed mass heroism and selflessness. Even the German command group was forced to admit in secret instructions of August 21, 1944, that the insurgents "fight fanatically and fiercely. Our success after three weeks of battle has not been great in spite of the employment of a large quantity of modern weaponry."*****

However, the forces were too unequal. Because of the lack of heavy guns and especially of military experience the rebels suffered heavy losses. In

---

*See Symposium on the Polish People's War of Liberation 1939-1945, p. 88.

**See Modern History of Poland. Materials and Studies. Vol. I, Warsaw, 1957, p. 181.

***See Symposium on the Polish People's War of Liberation 1939-1945, p. 88.

**** Ibid.

*****Modern History of Poland. Materials and Studies, Vol. I, p. 173.

the first two days they lost 2,000 persons, while in 27 days the Hitlerites lost only 3,860 soldiers and officers.* In the second half of August the situation of the insurgents grew sharply worse. The enemy barbarously destroyed the city, fulfilling Hitler's order to level Warsaw to the ground.

The Soviet government was advised of the uprising only when it had already begun. Having received the first information on the uprising and studied it, the government of the USSR took a distinct position on the matter. In its message to the English government of August 16, 1944, it stated: "... the Warsaw action is a reckless, horrible adventure costing the population great sacrifices. This would not have been if the Soviet command group had been informed before the start of the Warsaw action and if the Poles had maintained contact with the Soviet command group. In the situation that has developed the Soviet Union has come to the conclusion that it must dissociate itself from the Warsaw adventure..."**

This was the principled attitude of the government of the USSR toward the Warsaw uprising. However, the Soviet government, seeing that tens of thousands of Warsaw patriots had taken part in the uprising, whom the Polish reactionaries, pursuing their mercenary, narrow class interests, had thrown to certain destruction, did all it could to assist the insurgents and decrease the number of their losses.

"Cold war" henchmen have often declared that the Soviet command group seemingly consciously halted its forces at the walls of Warsaw and thereby /244
doomed the uprising to perish. This could only be propagated by enemies of the Soviet people who do not attempt to study the position and opportunities of the Red Army up to the moment of the Warsaw uprising and do not wish to deal with the facts. It is sufficient to study them to become convinced of

*Modern History of Poland. Materials and Studies, Vol. I, p. 181, 189.

** Correspondence of the Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers with the Presidents of the USA and the Prime Ministers of Great Britain during the Great Patriotic War 1941-1945. Vol. 1, p. 257.

the flimsiness of these anti-Soviet fabrications.

In the second half of July 1944 the troops of the 1st Belorussian and 1st Ukrainian fronts entered the territory of Poland, and began to develop the advance to the Vistula* in accordance with the general concept of the Supreme High Command (maps 6 and 7). By the end of July, before the uprising in Warsaw, the speed of the advance had begun to slow. The German command group transferred considerable reserves to the directions of strikes by our troops. The Hitlerites offered stubborn and ever increasing resistance to the Red Army. The facts that in previous battles the Soviet rifle divisions and tank corps had borne heavy losses, the rear services and artillery had fallen behind, and there were shortages of ammunition and fuel for the forces also affected the speed of the advance. The infantry was not receiving needed fire support from the artillery. Due to slow redeployment to new airfields the air force had decreased its activity. It is known that the advance in Belorussia began with a significant superiority of Soviet air force and its mastery in the air. However, in the first half of August these advantages were lost to a certain extent for a time. Thus, for example, the air force of the 1st Belorussian front from 1-13 August had made 3,170 airplane flights and the enemy air force 3,316.** The situation changed only in the second half of August when redeployment of the air force was completed.

Consequently, after the long, forty-day advance under conditions of growing enemy resistance the Soviet forces could not continue offensive operations at high speed and render immediate air to the insurgents. This was clear even to the German command group. For example, Tippelskirch (writes) that the uprising flared up on August 1 when the force of the Russian blow was already exhausted***. The performance of the task was also made difficult that the troops would have to force a large water obstacle, the Vistula River.

---

* See chapters six and seven.

** Archives of MO USSR col. 233, inv. 2356, div. 122, pp. 155-352.

*** K. Tippelskirch. "History of the Second World War," p. 452.

By August 1 the troops of the left wing of the 1st Belorussian front broke through to Warsaw from the southeast. The 2nd Tank Army, in approaching the Warsaw suburb of Praga, met fierce resistance from the enemy occupying a previously prepared defense. The defensive line covering the approach to Warsaw had long term firing points, field type fortifications, antitank and anti-infantry obstacles. Stone buildings on the outskirts of Praga were widely used for the defense. All of this considerably complicated the fulfillment of the mission assigned to our tank units. In the area of Praga the enemy had concentrated a strong grouping consisting of four tank and one artillery division, which in the beginning of August made counterstrikes and pressed the formations of the 2nd Tank Army out of Praga even before the combined-arms formations arrived. The serious position of the 2nd Tank Army in Praga can be judged from its losses. In the battles for Polish territory - in the area of Lublin, Deblin, Pulawy and in the approaches to Warsaw - it lost approximately 500 tanks and assault guns.* Unable, due to the very strong resistance of the German fascist troops, to seize Praga, the tank army was forced to go over to the defense and repel counterattacks.

At the same time that the 2nd Tank Army, having moved forward, was conducting the battle in the area of Praga, the center and right wing of the front had fallen far behind. The troops of the right wing were located at the line of Surazh - Lositse with the front to the west, and the troops of the center from Lositse to Minsk Mazowsiecki with the front to the north.

Consequently, to the right of the Red Army troops who had broken through /245
to Praga a salient had formed on the line of the front stretching over 200 kilometers, projecting in our direction. The enemy forces located in the salient could strike a blow on the right flank of the troops advancing on Praga. In order to avoid this the troops of the right wing of the front had to be moved to the line of the Narev River - mouth of the Western Bug - Praga. This difficult task was performed in August and the first half of September.**

---

* Collected materials on the composition of the forces of fascist Germany, 4th ed., pp. 128-129.

** Archive of MO USSR, col. 307, inv. 4152, div. 28, pp. 300, 323.

The advance developed slowly and the battles were heavy, since the enemy resisted fiercely. The troops of the right wing of the 1st Belorussian front also bore great losses in the battles on Polish territory. At the cost of those losses by the end of August they had only broken through to the Narev River north of Warsaw and seized a beachhead in the area of Serotsk.

South of Warsaw the troops of the left wing of the 1st Belorussian front and the troops of the 1st Ukrainian front, who had broken through to the Vistula and forced it at a rush at the end of July and the beginning of August, seized three beachheads in the regions of Magnushev, Pulava and Sandomierz. In August fierce battles developed to expand the beachheads. The enemy constantly increased his forces. For example, from July 25 to the end of August two tank and five infantry German fascist divisions and also four infantry and motorized brigades arrived at the Vistula south of Warsaw.* The battles were of a particularly intense nature on the Sandomierz beachhead where the troops of the 1st Ukrainian front repelled several counterstrikes by large enemy tank and infantry forces. The resistance of the enemy on the Sandomierz beachhead was so stubborn that the Soviet troops (three combined arms, three tank and one airborne army) in August and September were only able to increase the beachhead slightly, but could not completely fulfill the assignment to expand it.** As is known, at the end of August our forces went over to the defense. Preparations began for a new advance with the purpose of completely liberating Poland. For this four-and-a-half months were required.

In spite of the complexity of the situation in the Warsaw sector of the front the Soviet command group took measures to assist the insurgents. At the beginning of September they concentrated forces on the east bank of the Vistula in the area of Praga where the enemy had weakened his grouping, transferring Pahzer divisions for the liquidation of our beachheads south of

---

* IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #9608, p. 358.

** See Ch. 7, p. 218-222.

Warsaw. On September 10 the 47th Army of the 1st Belorussian front, reinforcedwith one Polish division, went over to the offensive. As a result of four days of fierce battles the enemy was routed and on September 14 the Soviet forces liberated Praga. The situation in the Warsaw sector of the front improved considerably. Conditions were created to render direct assistance to the insurgents. This mission was assigned to the 1st Army of the Polish Force. On September 15 it entered Praga and began preparations for an operation to force the Vistula and seize beachheads in Warsaw.

The plan of the operation called for the forcing of the Vistula by units of the 3rd Polish infantry division reinforced with five Soviet artillery brigades and one mortar regiment, with the support of an artillery brigade and six artillery divisions of the Supreme High Command's Reserve. To force the river to this division were attached three engineer battalions and a special purpose battalion (wheeled amphibians). The military operations of the Polish forces were to be supported by the air force of the 1st Belorussian front.

After the crossing of the Vistula by units of the 3rd Polish infantry division they were to develop the advance in the westerly direction along Allee May 3 to join the central group of insurgents holding the area of the main post office, and in the southwesterly direction (observatory - Belvedere) to join the southern group of insurgents in the Mokotuv area. The 2nd Polish /246 infantry division also prepared for the forcing in this sector.

On the night of September 16 the 1st Army of the Polish Force began to force the Vistula. From September 16-19 up to six battalions of infantry of the 3rd and 2nd infantry divisions were taken across to Warsaw. In the battles across the Vistula the soldiers and officers of the Polish Army displayed heroism and selflessness. However, the enemy, supported by powerful defenses, did not allow the sub-units that had ferried across to expand their seized beachheads and form a common beachhead. On of the reasons for the failure was also the desire of the leaders of the revolt not to permit joint battle by the rebel detachments and the Polish units fighting on the beachheads. By September 21 the enemy was able after infantry and Panzer

counterattacks to split the sub-units that had crossed over and deprive them of mutual support. The situation on the beachheads was so serious that the commander of the 1st Army of the Polish Force made the decision to evacuate the sub-units from Warsaw to the east bank of the Vistula. By September 23 the evacuation was completed, with great losses.

After the seizure of Praga the Soviet command group rendered the insurgents constant assistance in material resources. On the eve of the forcing of the Vistula in the Warsaw area the Military Council of the 1st Belorussian front assigned the 16th Airborne Army the mission of delivering arms, ammunition, provisions and medical supplies to the insurgents. Its performance was entrusted to the 9th Guards night bomber air force under the command of Col. K.I. Rasskazov. After communications were established with the insurgents, on Sept. 14 the Soviet air force began to regularly drop loads in the area of Warsaw. On the night of Sept. 14 our pilots made 644 airplane flights and dropped 45 tons of provisions, 500 submachine guns, 60 mortars, 6,020 grenades and other military equipment. In all, from Sept. 14 to Oct. 1, 1944 the Soviet air force completed 2,243 flights and dropped to the insurgents 156 mortars, 505 antitank guns, 2,667 submachine guns and rifles, 41,780 grenades, 3 million cartridges, 113 tons of provisions and 500 kilograms of medical supplies.*

Many thousands of Soviet soldiers gave their lives for the liberation of the Polish people. The losses of the 1st Belorussian front in killed and wounded on Polish territory in August and the first half of September 1944 were 166,808 persons, and the losses of the 1st Ukrainian front in August alone were 122,578.**

While units of the 1st Army of the Polish Force were conducting bloody battles with the goal of aiding the insurgents, the command group of the Home Army refused to act jointly with the Red Army and Polish units. Thus when the representative of the Soviet command group arrived in the headquarters

---

* Archives of MO USSR, col. 233, inv. 2380, div. 23, p. 4; inv. 2356, div. 329, pp. 219-220.

** Ibid, div. 310, pp. 280-281; div. 329, pp. 231-232; col. 236, inv. 2673, div. 311, pp. 218, 220.

of the insurgents to ascertain the possibilities of rendering them assistance, the commandant of the Warsaw district of the AK, Gen. Monter (A. Khrus'tsiyel') even at that critical moment declined to discuss the question concerning coordinating the actions of the Home Army and the Red Army. The only "basis" for this was that "the Soviet representative. did not have the authority to conduct political negotiations."*

At a moment when the position of the insurgents had become completely hopeless the command group of the Red Army had proposed to the leaders of the rebellion the only feasible way out - to break through to the Vistula under cover of Soviet aircraft and artillery. However, Bor-Komorowski forbade the detachments of the Home Army to meet the Soviet soldiers. Only isolated sub-units which refused to carry out this traitorous order were able to break out of Warsaw. On October 2, 1944 the commander of the Home Army, Bor-Komorowski, signed the decree of capitulation.

With sufferings and numerous sacrifices the Polish people paid for the /247
criminal adventure of the emigrant government. The losses of the Home Army, People's Army and also the civilian population in the Warsaw uprising were enormous. The capital of Poland, Warsaw, was subjected to terrible destruction. Describing this uprising, the secretary of the CC PPR, W. Gomulka, said: "The provocation of the Warsaw uprising was a terrible crime which the reactionaries committed against the Polish people... It was not the battle for Poland and the freedom of the people that inspired the command group of the AK to begin the uprising. The reactionaries regarded the mountains of corpses of the heroic defenders of Warsaw only as a means to power... In proposing an armed uprising without agreement with the command group of the Red Army or with the other military organizations in Warsaw, for the sake of a base, egoistic desire for power, risking terrible sacrifices and the suffering of the entire capital, the command group of the AK committed an unheard-of crime against the people. This crime tears the mask from the face of the reaction. At the same time it has become a decisive factor in its political

* Archive of MO USSR, col. 233, inv. 2380, div. 22, p. 238.

death in the eyes of the entire people."* Thus the Warsaw uprising was on one hand a selfless heroic battle by the insurgents with the occupiers, and on the other an act of the criminal anti-Soviet policy of the government of Mikolajczyk and the leaders of the London camp located in Poland.

In the period when the emigrant government was preparing its "Warsaw action" the Polish Committee of National Liberation carried out measures directed at complete liberation of the country and the building of a democratic sovereign state.

The people's government was faced with the task of realizing very important revolutionary-democratic reorganizations. The Polish Worker's Party understood that the further development of the revolution was possible only with the most active participation of the broad masses of the people, with the existence of a union of the working class and the peasantry. Therefore the primary tasks were to carry out radical agrarian reform in the country, and the creation of a new, democratic state system. It was necessary to gather and unify the forces of the working class, which had borne on its shoulders the main weight of the struggle with the Hitlerite invaders and been made strong in battle, to strengthen the union of the working class and the peasantry and the leading role of the working class in this union.

On the path toward putting these tasks into practice the Polish Committee of National Liberation had to overcome enormous difficulties caused above all by the destruction. The Polish economy was in an extremely serious condition. The country had been devastated and plundered. Many cities lay in ruins. As they retreated the Hitlerites destroyed industrial enterprises, railroad stations, means of transportation, and blew up bridges and electrical plants.

The difficulties were made worse by the fact that as the country was liberated the class war intensified, the resistance of the reactionaries operating under the orders of the Polish emigrant government increased. The reactionary circles of Poland, seeing that their attempt to bind the London emigrant

*The formation of the Bases of the Polish Workers' Party Program in 1942-1945. p. 296. 298.

government to the people had not succeeded, took recourse to new tactics directed at undermining the new democratic system from within. They demanded the activization of counterrevolutionary forces in the country, increased terrorism against the leaders and activists of the Polish Worker's Party and other parties of the democratic bloc, and against figures in the Polish Committee of National Liberation and representatives of the Red Army.*

But in spite of that the Polish Committee of National Liberation, supported by the help of the broad masses of the people, achieved serious success in solving problems of the people's democratic revolution. /248

Its great service was above all carrying out land reform. The CC PPR indicated that land reform was "the most effective means of uniting the broad masses of land-hungry and landless peasants, and also agricultural workers, with the democratic social-political system of the Poland returning to life, by strengthening the worker-peasant union."**

Even before the publication of a decree on land reform the PKWN passed a resolution on the mandatory delivery of agricultural products. For land-hungry farms and peasant farms which had suffered, favorable terms were established. It was made the obligation of landholders to turn their entire harvest over to local organs, with the exception of the part needed for personal use and sowing. An increase was determined in shipments for kulak farms. The struggle for mandatory delivery released the political activity of the peasantry and prepared conditions to effect land reform.

On September 6, 1944 a decree was accepted on carrying out land reform, according to which all landholders' land over 50 hectares of usable agricultural area and also land belonging before liberation to Hitlerites and traitors to their homeland was subject to confiscation and distribution among the

---

* See Judicial report on the matter of organizers, leaders and participants in the Polish underground in the rear of the Red Army in the territory of Poland, Lithuania and the western regions of Belorussia and the Ukraine, p. 11.

** The formation of the Bases of the Polish Workers' Party Program in 1942-1945, p. 279.

peasants and agricultural workers. This degree responded to the interests of the working masses of the Polish provinces. However, its execution was connected with great difficulties. In the country incidents of attacks on members of the Polish Workers' Party increased. Counterrevolutionary elements attempted to frighten the peasants with terrorist acts and diversions, and to prevent the division of landholders' land.

But the working class, guided by the PPR, in alliance with the working peasantry, successfully overcame these difficulties. On the appeal of the party hundreds of worker's brigades went to the villages in order to assist the working peasants in carrying out the reform. Communists went to the most difficult sectors of the work. Everywhere party organizations were formed. Strengthening its alliance with the other parties of the democratic bloc, the PPR energetically resisted the reactionaries.

The party struggled against any distortions in executing the revolutionary reorganization in the provinces. Great importance was attached to the special instructions of the CC PPR accepted in October 1944*, in which shortcomings were revealed in the execution of land reforms and specific measures for their liquidation were proposed. Thus in the instructions of the Central Committee of the party of October 25 it was emphasized that it was essential to observe correct proportions in dividing the land between the farm laborers and poor peasants, and also to allot the land of middle peasants. These statements of the party put an end to incorrect practice when only the laborers divided the land, and helped to rally the majority of the peasantry around the PKWN

In the process of carrying out the reform the Polish Worker's Party, supported by the political activeness of the working masses of the peasantry, strengthened their positions in the country still more.

By the end of 1944 land reform in the liberated territory was complete. The peasants received 260,000 hectares of land. Of this quantity the laborers

*This in reference to the instruction of Oct. 10 on speeding the execution of land reform and organization of worker's brigades and the instructions of Oct. 25 against distortions in the execution of the reform.

and landless peasants were given 47 percent of the land, land-hungry and middle peasants 49 percent, craftspeople and other strata of the population 4 percent.* For the first time in the history of Poland the working peasantry received land as a result of revolutionary reform carried out by a worker-peasant government. This ensured the support of the millions of workers in /249
the villages for the people's power and strengthened the alliance of the working class and the peasantry. Thus in a relatively short time the most important task of the people's democratic revolution - the expropriation of landholders' land and its transfer to the working peasantry - had been fulfilled.

*See W. Gora. The PPR in the Struggle for Consolidation of the People's Power. Warsaw, 1958, p. 36.

In addition to the solution of the land problem, the PKWN carried out enormous work on the creation of the new state apparatus and the effecting of revolutionary reorganizations in industry.

The building of the new state apparatus, the wide democratization of all of social and political life took on great scope. The People's Governments became the main organs of state power in the provinces. "The expressors of the people's unity," stated the resolution of the CC PPR passed in September 1944, "are first of all the Polish People's Government and its organs in the provinces... Today the expanded People's Governments, uniting all strata of the population, all democratic social and political organizations, fulfill, in addition to the functions of the organs of authority, functions of representatives of the society."* In the resolution it was stated that "the desire of the party should be ensuring the People's Governments' actual influence on the executive organs of the central state apparatus. The Governments should become the main means of democratization of state power in reborn Poland."** The people's democratic state apparatus was largely formed of representatives of the working class ideologically and organizationally connected with the PPR. In this the guiding role of the working class in the new Poland was most clearly expressed.

The Central Committee of the PPR called upon the workers for heroic, selfless labor in the name of the most rapid renewal of the country: "A negative attitude toward labor, which was correct from a national point of view during the period of the German occupation, must give way to the creative efforts of the working class - the masters of the state."***

*The formation of the Bases of the Polish Workers' Party Program in 1942-1945, p.279.

** Ibid, p. 281.

***Ibid, p. 280.

In response to the appeal, the working class set to work restoring the operation of enterprises to normal, first of all taking them under their protection and creating their organs of administration and supervision. Thus, on the revolutionary initiative of the masses the nationalization of industry took place. Thanks to that, large and medium industrial enterprises, banks, and means of transportation which had belonged during the occupation either to Hitlerites or to owners who had fled to the west were found to be in the hands of the state long before the appearance of corresponding state acts.

As the result of the effecting of land reform and the nationalization of large industry, the socio-economic bases of the new order were laid and the prerequisites were created for the further development of the people's democratic revolution and its growth into socialism. This became possible only because the moving force of the revolution was the working class in alliance with the peasantry, and the organizer and leader of the masses was the Polish Worker's Party.

Simultaneously with the execution of revolutionary transformations in the liberated territory of the country, the Polish Worker's Party and the Polish Committee of National Liberation devoted great attention to activating the battle in that segment of the population still under the yoke of the German fascist invaders. In the summer and fall of 1944 in the western regions of the Ukraine the partisan movement grew stronger. In the Cracow and Kielce voivodeships, in the Plotsk district, in the region of Radom (Chenstokhovskiy district) new brigades of the People's Army were formed.* In Silesia detached brigades were operating. Partisans carried out diversions, damaged enemy communications, inflicted blows on supply bases of the fascist forces and frequently engaged in battle with superior enemy forces. Thus, for example, at the end of September several brigades of the People's Army operating in the Kielce voivodeship, jointly with detachments of Soviet partisans, conducted a successful battle near Grushka. Major battles developed in Svin'yey Gur [transl. from Russian], near Staszow and Pinczow, near

---

* IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #13499, p. 20.

Evina and Opoczno.* The struggle of the Polish patriots weakened the rear of the Hitlerite army and spurred the political activity of the workers.

The Soviet Union rendered the Polish people enormous aid at this time which was so hard for them. In the summer of 1944 the Polish Committee of National Liberation turned for assistance to all allied countries and Polish organizations abroad. The governments of the USA and England responded by refusing. Only the Soviet Union extended the hand of brotherly aid to the Polish people. The fierce struggle with fascist Germany was still going on, but trains set out for Poland from the USSR with provisions, industrial equipment and medical supplies.

After the arrival of the Red Army in the territory of Poland the Soviet government transferred considerable provision supplies to the Polish Committee of National Liberation. On September 30 the residents of Praga received free of charge 10,000 tons of flour and essential medical supplies.** The Soviet command group opened eight hospitals in Praga to serve the population.*** Goods in acute deficit at that time such as kerosene, salt, tea and soap were sent to the villages. In Poland there was almost no branch of the economy that did not receive real help. At the end of 1944 the Soviet government granted the Polish Committee of National Liberation 10 million rubles' credit without interest.****

Resting on the support of the Soviet Union, the Polish people, freed of German fascist slavery and landlord-capitalist exploitation, restored the country's war-damaged economy. By the end of December, 1944, in the liberated lands the four largest electrical stations went into operation, 84 kilometers

---

*See Symposium on the Polish People's War of Liberation 1939-1945, p. 94.

** See "Pravda," October 2, 1944.

*** Archives of MO USSR, col. 32, inv. 65607, div. 10, p. 56.

**** Archives of Ministry of Foreign Trade, inv. 5907, div. 164, p. 8.

of high-tension networks had been repaired, and several enterprises of the textile industry had been restored; the yield of oil in the Krosnensk basin was 75 percent of the pre-war level.

During the joint struggle the friendship of the Soviet and Polish people had grown strong. On September 9, 1944 agreements were completed between the Polish Committee of National Liberation and the governments of the Ukrainian and Belorussian Soviet Republics on the evacuation of Poles from the territory of the Ukraine and Belorussia and of Ukrainians and Belorussians from the territory of Poland.* On September 22 a similar agreement was signed by the PKWN and the Lithuanian SSR.** Soon these agreements began to be carried out in fact. One of the sources of discord between the neighboring brother peoples was thereby liquidated. Democratic Poland was reborn as a sovereign, nationally homogeneous state.

The activity of the Polish Committee of National Liberation met the warm approval of the working masses of Poland, who saw in it the only protector of their interests. The PKWN achieved such major successes as the formation of a new army, the beginning of the restoration of the national economy, the execution of agrarian reform, the establishment of people's organs of power, the strengthening of the union of the working class and the peasantry, the expansion of the national front, and the strengthening of the friendship between the Polish and Soviet peoples, and had ensured to the people's author- /251
ity of the new Poland the active support of the masses. A clear confirmation of this were the congresses of the numerically greatest political parties in September.

The 1st Congress of the party Stronnitstvo lyudove, which united the broad masses of the Polish peasantry, declared in its resolution: "The 1st Congress of the party 'Stronnitstvo lyudove' stands for the social and political platform proposed in the Manifesto of the Polish Committee of National Liberation

---

* See "Foreign Policy of the Soviet Union During the Patriotic War," V. II, p. 202-204.

** Ibid, p. 230-232.

on July 22, 1944. Perceiving in this Manifesto a reflection of the desire of Polish democrary to build a reborn, independent Poland on the basis of the 1921 Constitution, on the basis of legality, social justice and serious democratic reforms, the Congress calls upon the Polish peasantry to cooperate with the Polish Committee of National Liberation in the matter of restoring an independent, democratic, sovereign Polish state."* The 1st Congree of the Polish Socialist Party spoke out for full support of the Polish Committee of National Liberation and the necessity for close cooperation with the Polish Worker's Party. The Democratic Party also declared its support of the Polish Committee of National Liberation.

In December 1944 at numerous assemblies and meetings in Lublin, Krosno, Lukuv, Sandomierz, Vengruv and other cities and inhabited areas, workers, peasants and intelligentsia spoke out for the transformation of the Polish Committee of National Liberation into the Provisional Government of Poland. "... We declare unanimously and from all our hearts," the peasants of Zhemuvskiy voivodeship wrote to the Chairman of the Polish People's Government, B . Bierut, "that the Polish Committee of National Liberation is the only legal representative of the Polish people. The Polish Committee of National Liberation is we, the workers, the Polish people. The time has come for the Polish Committee of National Liberation, which led us in the struggle for liberation and the creation of an independent democratic Poland, to be declared the government, for that is what it is in fact and it is thus that we know it."** In these wores the feelings and thoughts of all simple people of Poland were expressed.

Fulfilling the will of the masses, on December 31, 1944 the Polish People's Government transformed the Polish Committee of National Liberation into the Provisional Government of the Polish republic. On January 1, 1945 the Provisional Government was formed, including representatives of the main political parties of the country - the Polish Worker's Party, the Socialist Party, the peasants' party and the Democratic Party. The Prime Minister of the new government was E. Osubka-Moravskiy name transliterated from Russian .

---

* Quoted from "Pravda," Sept. 28, 1944.

** Quoted from "Slavyanye," 1944, No. 12, p. 37.

The main tasks of the Provisional Government were to expel the Hitlerite occupiers from the country as soon as possible, strengthen the democratic Polish state, mobilize all of the strength of the workers, restore and develop the economy, which had been destroyed by the war, to ensure to Poland an honored place in the family of free peoples of the world, and strengthen friendship with the USSR and other countries.

The formation of the Provisional Government was of enormous political significance in the life of the Polish people. This event was an important step on the road to the rebirth of a free, independent, democratic Poland. It hastened the process of uniting the democratic forces of the country, and promoted the consolidation and further development of the revolutionary reorganizations executed by the PKWN. The formation of the Provisional Government struck a blow to the plans of Polish and international reaction. It was obvious that the Polish people would not take the path toward which the imperialists had pushed them. The plans of Mikolajczyk to bind the anti-national emigrant government to the workers had failed.

The Provisional Government of Poland turned to all of the allied /252
countries with a proposal to establish diplomatic relations with them. The USA and England did not respond to this address. Furthermore, they attempted in every way to prevent the formation of the democratic government when it was created, and American and English diplomacy attempted to block the normal activity of the Polish government, conducting a policy of its isolation. Thus, for example, on December 31, 1944 the President of the USA proposed to the Soviet government that it refrain from recognizing the Polish Provisional Government.* The governing circles of England took the same position. The newspaper "The Times" of January 2, 1945 wrote that in connection with the situation created after the formation of the Polish Provisional Government in Lublin the governments of the USA and England did not intend to alter their attitude toward the Polish government in London.

---

* See Correspondence of the Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers with the Presidents of the USA and Prime Ministers of Great Britain during the Great Patriotic War 1941-1945. Vol. II, p. 181.

The Soviet government decisively refused the proposals of Washington and London. In a letter to Roosevelt of December 27, 1944 the head of the Soviet government stated that the Polish Committee of National Liberation had achieved great progress in strengthening the Polish state, in organizing the Polish Forces, and in carrying out a number of important state measures. At the same time, the emigrant government had "lost the trust of the Polish population in the country and is furthermore creating a threat of civil war in the rear of the Red Army, thereby damaging our common interest of a successful struggle against the Germans."* Exposing the criminal policy of the Polish reaction, in its message the Soviet government emphasized that the emigrant government, encouraging terrorist activities against the Soviet forces liberating Poland, was essentially assisting our enemies.

The Soviet Union, true to its policy of supporting peoples that were fighting for freedom and independence, passed a resolution on January 4, 1945 recognizing the Polish Provisional Government. This important foreign policy act of the USSR was of great significance. It strengthened the people's democratic power in Poland and promoted the entrance of the young Polish democratic state into the international arena.

The Polish workers met the announcement that the Soviet Union had recognized the Provisional Government with great joy. "We will never forget this act by the government of the USSR," wrote"Rzeczpospolita ", "just as we will not forget the great contribution in blood and effort made by our eastern neighbor in the restoration of the independent Polish state."**

The year 1944 was an important stage in the struggle of the Polish people for independence. A quarter of Polish territory was liberated by the Red Army jointly with Polish forces. Favorable conditions had been created to

---

* See Correspondence of the Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers with the Presidents of the USA and the Prime Ministers of Great Britain during the Great Patriotic War. Vol. II. p. 296.

**"Rzeczpospolita," 7 January 1945.

further develop the battle of Polish patriots against the fascist occupiers for the complete liberation of their homeland and for the consolidation of the positions of the country's democratic forces.

This struggle was met with deep understanding and support on the part of the Soviet Union. The aid of the USSR promoted the successful execution of revolutionary reorganizations in the liberated section of Poland.

The formation of the Polish Committee of National Liberation and then of the Provisional Government meant the transfer of governmental power in the territory that had been cleared of the enemy into the hand of the people, in the vanguard of which was the working class. It gave a start to the building of a new, people's democratic Poland and to the national and social liberation of the Polish workers.

Many years of stubborn struggle by the workers for an independent, democratic Poland, which had cost them enormous sacrifices, were crowned with success. The plans of the Polish reactionaries, and of the governing circles of the USA and England that supported them, to restore the bourgeois landholder regime in Poland and turn it into an anti-Soviet beachhead had failed. The Polish people had taken the country's fate into their own hands.

CHAPTER 9

THE ROUT OF ARMY GROUP "SOUTH UKRAINE." THE EXPULSION OF THE FASCIST OCCUPIERS FROM SOVIET MOLDAVIA.

1. Rumania on the eve of liberation. Preparations for the Iasi - Kishinyev operation.

The position of Rumania in the summer and fall of 1944 in comparison with 1939-1941 had become much worse. The plundering of the country by the Hitlerites, the upper bourgeoisie and the landholders, exorbitant military expenses, the bombing of industrial centers and railroad networks, great losses of manpower - all of this had greatly disordered the Rumanian economy. Many enterprises were not in operation due to the lack of raw materials. The

production of cotton and knitted fabrics, for example, had decreased by 4-5 times. The prices of food products and essential items had increased by 14 times, while the wages of workers and employees had increased only 2.75 times. Furthermore, of quite low actual wages the workers were required to give one-third to the fascist state in the form of a war loan and various taxes. Land cultivated in wheat had decreased by half, in corn and barley by 3 times.* In the summer of 1944, out of an anticipated crop of 174,000 train carloads of wheat the Germans planned to take over 30,000 carloads only for the needs of their troops.**

The calamities connected with the aggressive war caused resentment among the broad masses of the people toward the ruling clique of I. Antonescu and its German fascist masters. The workers' indignation appeared in various forms: in sabotage and diversion at enterprises, refusal to deliver agricultural products, in avoiding military conscription, in strikes and demonstrations and the organization of armed detachments for the fight against the existing regime.

Dissatisfaction with the war was also growing in the Rumanian army. Some soldiers deserted, others maimed themselves. More and more incidents of soldiers going over to the Red Army were seen. There were many cases when deserting soldiers actively joined the struggle against fascism. On July 16, 1944 the Rumanian General Staff was forced to issue a special directive in which it was demanded that captured deserters be executed before a firing squad and their families subjected to cruel punishment.*** On July 28 the Rumanian command group selectively investigated several formations positioned at the front. It was found that not only soldiers but also officers "did not want to fight against the USSR. The majority of regimental commanders confirmed that they could no longer rely on their units."****

---

* See N.I. Lebedyev. "Rumania During the Years of the Second World War. External and Internal Political History of Rumania in 1939-1945)," Moscow, Izd-vo IMO, 1961, p. 205.

** Arhiva centrală a Institutului de istorie a partidului de pe lîngă C.C. al P.M.R., fond. 103. Inv. nr. 1. Unit de păstr. Nr. 8460, fila 17.

*** Arhiva M.F.A. - M. St. M., dosar 781, fila 113-114.

**** "Rumania's Contribution in the Defeat of Fascist Germ... (23 Aug. 1944 - 9. May, 1945.)" Moscow, Voyenizdat, 1959, p. 50.

The internal political situation in the country had become so acute that the command group of the German fascist forces located in Rumania was seriously concerned for the fate of Antonescu's military-fascist regime. In the war diary of army group "South Ukraine" of August 1 the following evaluation was given of the state of the country and the army: "The Rumanians' fighting spirit is falling lower and lower... The Rumanian people is tired of the war and will take any opportunity to get out of the war... There is a large group of persons that would agree to various types of revolt... His position (referring to Antonescu - Ed.) due to the failures of the last year and a half is becoming more and more isolated."* The ruling classes, fearing an explosion of the people's rage, sought a way out of the war.

The declaration by the Soviet government of April 2, 1944 had an enormous effect in strengthening the antiwar and anti-fascist moods of the Rumanian people and the army.** It served as a new impetus to an upsurge in the national liberation movement in Rumania. Commenting on this document, the illegal organ of the Rumanian patriots, "Rominia libera", wrote: "The moment of decision has come... We can no longer wait. The Rumanian people must take their fate into their own hands and fight to leave the war."***

The Communist Party of Rumania (CPR) was the only party in the country that had correctly evaluated the situation from the very beginning of the war, predicted the inevitability of Hitlerite Germany's defeat, taken an internationalist position, carried on the struggle to unite the people against fascism and the war, and become the organizer of the anti-fascist movement. As a counterweight to capitulant elements of the CC CPR, the main cadres of the party, directed by G. Gheorghiu-Dej, who was in prison, had as early as August 1943 taken the course of preparing an armed uprising. Important prerequisites for an uprising were: the removal of capitulant and traitorous elements from the leadership of the party; uniting non-fascist

---

* IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #13633, pp. 3, 4.

** See Chapter 3, p. 82.

***"Rominia liberă," 9 May 1944

parties and groupings under the flag of the struggle against Antonescu's regime and the war; drawing the patriotic forces of the army to the side of the uprising; organizing fighting patriotic detachments and equipping them with arms and ammunition.

On April 4, 1944 the traitorous and capitulant elements led by S. Foris* were expelled from the leadership of the party, which created the necessary conditions for strengthening the party ranks and carrying out activities to unite the anti-fascist forces of the country. From the numbers of party activists in the underground a temporary leadership was formed. Supporting close connections with party figures confined in prisons and concentration camps, they carried out great work to effect the measures called for in August 1943. /256

A major event in the matter of uniting the patriotic front was the formation of the United Worker's Front. T. Petrescu and other leaders of the Social Democratic Party had long declined the proposals of the Communists on united action. However, in the spring of 1944 when the Soviet forces broke through to the northeastern regions of Rumania, they were forced by the conditions that had developed to accept the proposals of the CC CPR. In a manifesto published May 1 the United Worker's Front called all workers to the battle to overthrow the dictatorship of Antonescu and to form a government of representatives of the anti-fascist parties and organizations, to drive the Hitlerite forces from the country and aid the Red Army, to build a free, democratic and independent Rumania.**

Having achieved the formation of the United Worker's Front, the Communists took every opportunity to unite under the leadership of the working class all national forces concerned for one reason or another in the overthrow of Antonescu's clique and Romania's withdrawal from the war. In May they were

---

* See Central Archives of Institution of History on the Party from C.C. and P.M.R. Resource 1, Unit Nr. 22, Group III.

** See "Rominia lebera", May 26, 1944.

able to reach an agreement between the Anti-Hitler Patriotic Front* and the group of G. Tatarescu, which represented the segment of the Rumanian bourgeoisie that had been injured by the German monopolies. That spring the Communists established communications with the patriotic officers who were seeking ways to save Rumania from a national catastrophe, and who saw in the CPR a consistent and decisive force capable of saving the nation.

At the same time the Communits began negotiations with the king and the court circles on a joint action against Antonescu's clique. This step, unusual at first glance, was due to the fact that the king and his circle were then seeking an agreement with the Communists so that with their help they could replace the Antonescu government, avoid the responsibility of drawing the country into a war against the USSR, and put on the mask of saviors of the masses. Under these circumstances the Communists considered it expedient and necessary to involve the king and the court circles in the overthrow of the fascist regime.

The major progress achieved by the CPR in the spring of 1944 in uniting the forces of the nation made it possible to place the question of an armed uprising on an active path. On the night of July 14 on the initative of the Communist Party at an illegal CC CPR apartment, a conference was called of representatives of the Communists, the patriotic officer cadres and court circles.**

The latter entered the conference with a plan to replace Antonescu with another pro-Hitler political figure, I. Dzhigurtu [transliterated from Russian], and to name persons from the royal circles to leading ministerial

---

* The Anti-Hitler Patriotic Front included, in addition to the Communist Party, the following democratic anti-fascist organizations: the Agricultural Worker's Front, a mass social political organization of the working peasantry of Rumania; the Union of Patriots, a mass democratic organization of the intelligentsia; Mados, a democratic union of Hungarian workers living in Rumania; the Peasants Socialist Party; and a part of the local organizations of the Social Democratic Party.

** See lessons to help those who study history. P.M.R. Bucuresti, 1960, pag. 458.

posts. Furthermore, they proposed to obtain Hitler's approval of these changes. Then the new government, continuing the war on Germany's side, should take measures behind Dzhigurtu's back to conclude a peace. This was a plan for a palace revolt completely cut off from the actual situation, aimed at preserving the power of the antinational forces.

The representative of the Communist Party of Rumania showed the complete groundlessness of this plan. To counterbalance the proposal of the court circles a plan was advanced for an armed rebellion with the purpose of overthrowing the military-fascist dictatorship, withdrawing from the war and turning their arms against Germany. The plan of the Communists, which was based on consideration of the actual situation and convincing in its proofs, was finally accepted by the conference. To prepare the military units for /257
and to detail the plan a Military Committee was selected, in which the leading role was played by Col. D. Damachanu [transl. from Russian], the chief of staff of the troops of the Bucharest garrison. On the demand of the court circles the Committee included a reactionary who opposed Antonescu, Gen. G. Mihail.*

Finally on June 20, 1944 the representatives of the Communist, Social Democratic, National Tsaranist and National Liberal Parties signed an agreement on the formation of the National Democratic Bloc.** The basis for joint actions by the four parties were the following requirements: immediate conclusion of a truce, withdrawal from the war on Germany's side and shifting to the side of the antifascist coalition, expulsion of the occupiers, restoration of national independence and sovereignty, liquidation of the dictatorship of Antonescu and its replacement by a democratic system.*** However, after the

---

* The CPR, which directed the work of the Military Committee, essentially removed Mihail from activity as an opponent of turning arms against Germany.

** The leaders of the bourgeois-landholding parties gave their agreement on the condition that the bloc would not include other parties of the Anti-Hitler Patriotic Front. The Communists reserved the right to maintain contact with the parties and organizations not included in the National Democratic Bloc.

*** See "Rominia liberă," August 10, 1944.

formation of the National Democratic Bloc the leaders of the National Tsaranist and National Liberal Parties, Yu. Maniu and D. Bratianu, essentially sabotaged execution of the accepted platform, and continued to maintain connections with Antonescu. It is therefore not surprising that the leaders of the bourgeois landholding parties were not involved in the preparations for the armed uprising.

Uniting the forces of the nation under the flag of the anti-fascist struggle, the Communist Party of Rumania did not form any illusions about the true purposes of the bourgeois-landholder parties and the court circles. It was well known that by their participation in the overthrow of the fascist government the bourgeoisie and the landholders, the king and his circle were attempting only to preserve their power and privileges, and were counting on the "Balkan variant" of Churchill, that is on the occupation of Rumania by Anglo-American forces. Nonetheless the Communists resorted to establishing temporary contact with the ruling classes, considering that the unification of all of the forces of the country was essential to complete the main task of the moment - the overthrow of the military-fascist dictatorship, and withdrawal from the war on the side of Germany.

An extremely essential aspect of the Communist Party's activity in the spring and summer of 1944 was the development of the partisan struggle, the organization of military patriotic detachments and their preparation for an armed uprising. In the area between the cities of Ploesti and Fagaras the "Carpathian" group operated. In June-August it conducted several daring operations, and specifically destroyed 16 railroad trains with gasoline tanks. Detachments and groups of partisans fought in the mountains of Vranca, in Oltenia, Banat, in the regions of Maramures, in the Danube delta. In the spring of 1944, according to a resolution of the CC of the Communist Party of Rumania, military patriotic detachments, which were to become the core of the uprising's armed forces, began to form in the cities. Such detachments were formed in Bucharest, Ploesti, Constanta, Turnu-Severin and in other cities and inhabited areas. In Bucharest alone from June 20 to August 23 their numbers grew to 50. In certain regions of the country depots of arms and ammunition were created for the military patriotic detachments. The

detachments blocked the operation of autotransportation, organizing diversions in garages and on the roads, disrupted communications between German fascist establishments, and so forth.*

However, the growing anti-fascist movement in Rumania was opposed by still very powerful enemy forces. In the spring of 1944 Antonescu's clique, in spite of the rapidly developing process of its political isolation, enjoyed the support of certain segments of the bourgeoisie, landholders and /258
military circles. The undecided, vacillating position of the National Tsaranist and National Liberal parties, the king and his circle helped the fascist government to keep power in its hands. But the main force supporting Antonescu was the German fascist troops - army group "South Ukraine," units and formations deployed in Bucharest, Constants, and other cities. Therefore I. Antonescu's clique considered it possible to refuse to negotiate for a truce on the basis of the six conditions proposed by the Soviet government on April 12, 1944.** This decision postponed the ruin of the fascist regime in the country for only a short time.

The Soviet command group was not aware of the armed uprising being prepared in Rumania. However, the favorable situation that had developed on the Soviet-German front permitted them to advance the task of defeating the German and Rumanian forces and removing Rumania from the war as its immediate mission.

The plan of the Soviet Supreme High Command for the summer-fall campaign of 1944 was executed more than successfully. The troops of our five fronts, which advanced in June and July in Belorussia and the western regions of the Ukraine, broke through in the first days of August to the border of East Prussia and the line of the Vistula, having progressed 400-600 kilometers in a month and a half. They needed a long pause to bring up the rear services and prepare new strategic operations in the Warsaw-Berlin direction. For this,

---

* See "Rumania's Contribution in the Defeat of Fascist Germany," p. 33, 34.

** See Chapter 3, pp. 83-84.

as experience had shown, three or four months would be required. At the end of August the fronts went over to the defense on the orders of Headquarters.

However, the matter involved not only the time needed to prepare the new operations. Before beginning an advance in the Warsaw-Berlin direction, the major German fascist groupings in the Northwestern and Southwestern theaters of military operations, where the line of the front projected strongly in our direction (map 4), should be destroyed. With this very purpose, in July, when the Belorussian operation was in full swing and the L'vov-Sandomierz operation was beginning, the 2nd and 3rd Baltic fronts went over to the offensive against the enemy army group "North" and jointly with the 1st Baltic front began to liberate the Baltic Soviet Republics. At that time Headquarters made the decision to prepare an advance against army group "South Ukraine."

In the Southwestern theater of military operations the troops of the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts, having broken through to the approaches to Iasi and Kishinyev, had occupied the defense for over three months. The defeat of the enemy in the Crimea sharply altered the conditions for the operations of the Soviet fleet in the western part of the Black Sea, in the approaches to the Rumanian and Bulgarian ports. The success of the Red Army in the central sector of the Soviet-German front had a strong influence on the position of army group "South Ukraine" which occupied the defense in Rumania and Soviet Moldavia. The German command group was forced to transfer 12 divisions from this army group, including 6 tank and 1 motorized division, to the central sector of the front from this group. Army group "North Ukraine," which had suffered considerable losses in the second half of July, could not assist army group "South Ukraine." In addition, the breakthrough of the forces of the 1st Ukrainian front to the Carpathian foothills southwest of L'vov and the formation of the 4th Ukrainian front improved the operative and strategic situation for the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts. The 15 enemy divisions operating against the left wing of the 1st Ukrainian front and the 4th Ukrainian front found themselves trapped in the Carpathians. The opportunity arose for coordinated actions by the 4th and 2nd Ukrainian fronts in overcoming the

Carpathian mountain-mass. In the rear of the German forces, in Slovakia, a national anti-fascist revolt was imminent. The peoples of Slovakia and the Carpathian Ukraine awaited the arrival of the Red Army from day to day.

By the start of the advance of our forces near Iasi and Kishinyev, the front formed a bulge curved in our direction (map 8). By August 1944 the /259
Germans had formed a deep defense with widely developed fortified works. The tactical zone of defense consisted of two zones. In the area between the Sereth and the Prut the depth of the zone reached 8-15, and in some place 19 kilometers. Beyond it at a remove of 15-20 kilometers from the forward edge the second zone of defense, the so-called "Trajan" position, ran along the Mare ridge. Before the Dnestr beachhead of the 3rd Ukrainian front in the area of Bendery the depth of the enemy's tactical zone of defense, which also consisted of two zones, was 8-12 kilometers.

At operative depth, on the west banks of the Prut and Sereth rivers, the enemy constructed two main defensive lines (the line along the Prut River was called the "Ferdinand" position) and several intermediate lines. The enemy attached particular importance to the defensive line running along the Sereth in the sector from Adzhud Nou [transl. from Russian] to the Danube. This was a key position covering the Focsani Gate.* Almost all cities, including Iasi, Romar, Bacău, Tirgu-Frumos, Focşani had strong fortifications.

Army group "South Ukraine," occupying the defense here under the command of Col.-Gen. Friesner, consisted of two army groups, the "Veler" and the "Dumitrescu." Army group "Veler" included the 8th German and the 4th Rumanian Armies and the 17th detached corps of the Germans, and held the defense on a 270 kilometers from the inhabited area of Straşa to the Prut. The group numbered 14 Rumanian and 7 German divisions and 4 Rumanian brigades. Two-thirds of these forces were positioned in the area between the Sereth and the Prut rivers. The "Dumitrescu" group, consisting of the 6th German and the 3rd Rumanian Armies, occupied the defense on a 310-kilometer front in a sector between the Prut and the Black Sea. It had 24 divisions and 1 brigade, of

* The Focşani Gate was a very convenient level passageway between the East Carpathians and the lower reaches of the Danube, through which routes passed from the Southern Ukraine to the Danube plain. The length of the passage from the city of Tekuch to Buzeu is 100 kilometers, the width 80 kilometers.

which 7 divisions and brigades were Rumanian. One of the divisions of the "Dumitrescu" group stood in Constanta and did not take part in the battles. In the reserve of army group "South Ukraine" were two divisions, one German and one Rumanian. The army group was supported by a German air corps from the 4th Air Force and a Rumanian air corps. In all, army group "South Ukraine" consisted of 47 divisions, including 3 Panzer and 1 motorized division, and also 5 infantry brigades.* The German-Rumanian forces' fighting strength was 643,000 men. The army group had 7,618 guns and mortars 75 mm caliber and greater (not including rockets and anti-aircraft), 404 tanks and assault guns, and 810 airplanes.**

In addition, on Rumanian territory troops were stationed that were not included in the makeup of the army group: German police units, SS troops, air defense units, marine infantry numbering about 57,000 men in all,*** and the 1st Rumanian Army consisting of four infantry divisions. To this army were subordinated training points for new recruits, military schools, gendarmery, and border guards. The troops in Bucharest were subordinated to the military command group of the garrison and were not included in the 1st Army.

The tactical order of army group "South Ukraine" was single-echelon. The tip of the bulge of the front was occupied by the 6th German fascist army, which included only one Rumanian division. To the left of this army fought army group "Veler" where Rumanian divisions predominated, and which covered an extremely strategic direction, the Focsani direction. To the right of the 6th German Army in the lower reaches of the Dnestr and beyond the Dnestr estuary the 3rd Rumanian Army occupied the defense, in which out of eight divisions and brigades there was only one German division. The distribution /260
of the 14 German divisions at the tip of the bulge in the line of the front indicated that the enemy attached great importance to the Kishinyev direction. The German command group considered that having the strongest, 6th German Army in the sector of a possible strike by the 3rd Ukrainian front on Kishinyev

---

* Collected materials on the composition of the forces of fascist Germany, 4th Ed., pp. 132-137.

** IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #17936, p. 708.

*** Rumania's Contribution to the Defeat of Fascist Germany, p. 28.

and the reserves positioned behind the flanks of the 6th Army, it would be able to repel both that strike and a strike by the Ukrainian front if such should follow from the region north of Iaşi. The enemy had formed very solid troop dispositions before our beachhead south of Tiraspol' since he expected a strike there as well.

The German command group took into consideration the growing dissatisfaction in the Rumanian army provoked by defeats and the condescending attitude of the Germans toward the Rumanians, the increase in national dissension between them, and also the growing concern of the Rumanian soldiers for the fate of their homeland and their families. Not trusting the Rumanians, it distributed the Rumanian formations (especially in the "Veler" group) among the Germans, included German divisions in Rumanian corps, and subordinated the Rumanian corps to the commanders of German corps. Such a mixing of German and Rumanian formations and such an organization of command should act, as one captured German general declared arrogantly, as "corset stays for the Rumanians."

Consequently, although army group "South Ukraine" occupied a convenient position for defending the region and was supported on its left wing by the almost impassible Carpathians and on its right wing by the Black Sea, the deployment of a considerable and most battleworthy part of its forces at the tip of the bulge in the front was unadvantageous for the German-Rumanian defense. The divisions located here were flanked on both sides by the troops of the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts. In addition, on the flanks of the enemy grouping positioned in the tip of the bulge less battleworthy troops occupied the defense. This circumstance was exploited by the Soviet command group.

The 2nd Ukrainian front consisting of 6 combined-arms, 1 tank and 1 airborne army and 3 detached corps - 1 tank, 1 mechanized and 1 cavalry - occupied the defense before the beginning of the operation on a 330-kilometer front from Krasnoil'sk to Dubossary. (Before the advance the left boundary of the 2nd Ukrainian front was moved to the northwest and ran through Orgeyev and Kotu-Morey.) It was opposed by 27 divisions and 4 brigades of the enemy.

The 3rd Ukrainian front, numbering 4 combined-arms and 1 airborne army and 1 mechanized corps, occupied the defense on a 210-kilometer front from Dubossary to the Black Sea. Against it were positioned 18 enemy divisions and 1 brigade. The outer flanks of the fronts were supported from the northwest by the troops of the 4th Ukrainian front and from the southeast by ships and aircraft of the Black Sea fleet.

In all the strength of the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts was 90 divisions (3 of them cavalry), 1 motor-rifle brigade and 2 brigades of marine infantry, 3 fortified areas, 6 tank and mechanized corps, a large number of artillery, engineer and other special formations and units. In the 2nd Ukrainian front, furthermore, there were the 1st Rumanian volunteer infantry named for Tudor Vladimirescu and a Yugoslav brigade. There were 16,079 guns and mortars 76 mm caliber and greater (not including anti-aircraft) in all, 1,404 tanks and assault guns, and 1,759 airplanes (not including fleet aircraft). The total fighting strength of the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts was 929,000 men.*

The situation in the air was generally favorable for the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts. Our air force had more than a 2.5-fold advantage over the German fascist air force. The operations of the enemy air force at the time were limited to reconnaissance of our troops and their communications. The /261
network of airfields of both enemy air corps was largely located in the area between the Prut and Sereth Rivers.

The situation at sea also favored the Soviet naval forces. After the expulsion of the enemy from the Crimea and Odessa his fleet could only be based at the ports of Rumania and Bulgaria. The enemy's main base was at Constanta. Although the enemy did not have significant naval forces at his disposal his mine obstacles made operations by the Soviet fleet near the enemy shores difficult. Our above-water vessels were based at Odessa, the ports of the Crimea and the shore of the Caucasus. Several submarines were located at positions along the shore of Rumania and Bulgaria.

---

* IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, No. 17936, pp. 708

In July 1944 the commanders of the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts were called to Headquarters. After their reports on the upcoming advance in Soviet Moldavia and Rumania the plan of operation was approved. Its content was set forth in a directive from Headquarters of the Supreme High Command on August 2.* The commanders were ordered to prepare and conduct an operation with the purpose of defeating, using the forces of both fronts, "the enemy grouping in the region of Iaşi, Kishinyev and Bendery, and to seize the line of Bacău, Leovo, Tarutino, and Moldavka, having in view a future advance on Focşani, Galati, and Izmail.

For the performance of this mission the 2nd Ukrainian front, which was commanded by Gen. R. Yu. Malinovskiy - Military Council member Lt. Gen. of tank forces I.Z. Susaykov, Chief of Staff Col.-Gen. M.V. Zakharov - was to strike a blow with the forces of three combined-arms and one tank army from the region northwest of Iasi in the general direction of Iasi - Vaslui - Fălçiu, to rout the enemy grouping in the area of Iasi and Kishinyev in cooperation with the 3rd Ukrainian front, preventing it from retreating to Focsani. The front was to seize the line of Bacău - Falçiu and develop the advance on Focşani, supporting the right flank of the strike group from the Carpathian side to the south of Piatra Neamt.

The 3rd Ukrainian front - commander Gen. F.I. Tolbukhin, Military Council member Lt. Gen. A.S. Zheltov, Chief of Staff Col.-Gen. S.S. Biryuzov - was ordered to strike a blow with three combined-arms armies from the beachhead south of Tiraspol' in the general direction of Opach - Selemet - Huşi, to destroy the Kishinyev grouping of the enemy in cooperation with the 2nd Ukrainian front, seize the line of Leovo - Tarutino - Moldavka and then, not allowing the enemy to retreat beyond the Prut and the Danube, to develop the advance on Reni and Izmail.

The Black Sea fleet received the assignment to support the troops of the 3rd Ukrainian front in the liberation of Soviet Moldavia and during the advance in Rumania.

---

* IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, No. 9493, pp. 47-48.

Thus the concept of the operation called for the troops of the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts to breach the enemy defenses in two widely separate sectors (northwest of Iasi and south of Tiraspol') and develop the advance in the directions meeting at the area of Husi - Vaslui in order to surround and destroy the main forces of army group "South Ukraine." The troops of the fronts were to seize the region of the Focsani Gate and the sector of the mouth of the Danube, and break through to the line of approximately the eastern spurs of the Eastern Carpathians and the Danube delta, that is, to progress to a depth of 220-230 kilometers. To coordinate the operations of both fronts Headquarters designated Marshal of the Soviet Union S.K. Timoshenko as their representative. Headquarters' directive indicated that the Supreme High Command proceeded from the possibility of exploiting the advantageous configuration of the front line and weak support of the flanks of the central German grouping. The political goal of the operation of the two fronts was to complete the liberation of Soviet Moldavia and remove Rumania from the war on the side of Germany. This would sharply change the military-political situation not only in Rumania but in all of Southeast Europe.

In accordance with the orders of Headquarters the commander of the 2nd /262
Ukrainian front decided to strike the main blow on the German-Rumanian group in the direction of Larga-Vaslui with the forces of the 27th, 52nd, and 53rd combined-arms and the 6th Tank Army, and the 18th tank corps, and in cooperation with the 3rd Ukrainian front surround and destroy the Iasi-Kishinyev enemy grouping. The front was also to strike an auxiliary blow with the 7th Guards Army and a mounted-mechanized group* along the Sereth River to the south. The greater part of the forces was designated for actions on the outer perimeter of envelopment of the Kishinyev enemy grouping and support of the strike group from the right, the smaller for formation of the inner perimeter of envelopment. The combined-arms armies, following the mobile troops, were to progress 120-125 kilometers in the first five days of the operation. The commander of the 3rd Ukrainian front planned to strike the main blow with the 57th and 37th Armies and the main forces of the 46th Army,

* The mounted-mechanized group commanded by Maj.-Gen. S.I. Gorshkov included the 5th Guards cavalry and the 23rd tank corps.

and also with the forces of the 7th and 4th Guards mechanized corps.* from the beachhead south of Tiraspol' in the boundary of the 6th German and 3rd Rumanian Armies of army group "Dumitrescu." It was planned to split it into two parts, encircle and destroy them separately, the 6th German Army in cooperation with the 2nd Ukrainian front and the 3rd Rumanian Army in cooperation with the Black Sea Fleet. The front was also to strike an auxiliary blow with the troops of the left flank of the 46th Army, jointly with the Danube military flotilla, across the Dnestr estuary in the direction of Akkerman [transl. from Russian]. In the 6-7 days of the operation the troops of the front were to progress 100-120 kilometers in depth.

The commanders of the fronts decisively massed considerable forces in the narrow breakthrough sectors (16 and 18 kilometers). Thus, for instance, 240-243 guns and mortars 76 mm caliber and greater were allotted to each kilometer of the breakthrough sector. Artillery density during the breach of the enemy defenses was very high even for the 1944 operations. This was caused by the need to strike the initial blow with enough force to breach the enemy's powerful defenses in a very short period and ensure our troops' rapid breakthrough deep into Rumania. The front commander had direct orders from Headquarters on the formation of such great artillery densities. In the breakthrough sectors on both fronts there were approximately 6 times more guns and mortars than the enemy possessed, although the general superiority was only twofold. The commanders of the fronts massed other forces and equipment just as skilfully. The general superiority in manpower on both fronts was 1.4 times, but in the breakthrough sectors it was 3.9 times on the 2nd Ukrainian front and 8 times on the 3rd Ukrainian front. We had 3.4 times more tanks and assault guns than the enemy, and 6 times more in the breakthrough sectors on both fronts.

In the concept of Headquarters and the decisions of the front commanders a very important role in the operation was assigned to the tank army and detached tank and mechanized corps. After entering the breach they were to complete the encirclement of the main forces of the enemy grouping with

---

* The 7th mechanized corps was transferred to the 3rd Ukrainian front on August 9.

decisive actions, and develop the advance deep into Rumania. The 6th Tank Army received the assignment to strike a deep blow through the Focsani Gate, and the 18th tank, 4th Guards and 7th mechanized corps to advance in converging directions and meet at the Prut River in the area of Husi - Leovo.

The 5th and 17th Airborne Armies participated actively in the operation. All formations of the 5th Airborne Army of the 2nd Ukrainian front were to operate from the start of the operation in the interests of the troops of the 27th and 52nd Armies. After that the main forces of the air force were to support the entrance into the breach of the 6th Tank Army and its operations at depth. In the 3rd Ukrainian front it was planned that the main forces of the 17th Airborne Army would be used to support the troops of the 37th and 46th Armies. In the breakthrough sectors of these armies air preparation was /263 planned. It was planned that the advance of the main grouping of the front would be supported further by echeloned operations of ground attack aircraft. On both fronts very great attention was devoted to organizing the cooperation of the air force and the mobile forces. Soviet Il-2 ground attack planes conducted oblique aerial photography of all routes of movement by tank and mechanized formations at depth of the enemy defenses. The commander of the tank and mechanized forces received aerial photographic maps of the routes, which were important to successfully conduct military operations.

The commander of the Black Sea Fleet, Admiral F.S. Oktyabr'skiy, made the decision to cut off the marine communications of army group "South Ukraine" between the Black Sea and Danube ports of Rumania and Bulgaria with air force, submarine and motor torpedo boats, destroy the enemy's military vessels with massed air attacks and destroy his port installations in Constanța and Sulina. With an assault landing and fire from naval artillery the fleet was to support the forces of the 3rd Ukrainian front in encircling and destroying the Akkerman grouping of the enemy.

In the forces of both fronts a great deal of work was carried out in equipping the starting areas, regrouping and combat training of the troops, and reconnaissance of the enemy. "The commanders of the armies, commanders of corps, divisions, regiments, and I, as the commander of the front," recalled

Marshal Malinovskiy,"conducted exercises with our subordinates to establish how and from where it would be best to attack the enemy, where to strike the main blow, with what forces and equipment, how much fire to concentrate on the enemy's central, key defensive positions, at what time and with what pauses to attack, so that it would truly stun the enemy."* In addition, measures were also taken to disorient the enemy.

In connection with the breakthrough of the Red Army into the territory of Rumania, the rear echelons were faced with new tasks. Now the rear establishments and units had to operate railroads with a Western European gauge, and effect reloading of the troops, equipment and material resources onto them from the Soviet railroads. By the start of the operation the railroad forces of the 2nd Ukrainian front had restored the Feresti - Dorohoi - Larga sector of the railroad, 170 kilometers in length, on Rumanian territory, and organized a transloading base at the Feresti station.** During preparations for the operation the road troops serviced 2,758 kilometers of military automobile roads. To restore and construct roads reserve units were also used. The fronts were well supplied with automobile transportation. Thus, for example, in the automobile units of the 2nd Ukrainian front and its armies there were 2,900 automobiles with a total load capacity of 6,160 tons.*** Finally, the fronts had a sufficient number of hospitals with 212,500 cots.**** As a result of the great work of rear establishments and units the troops received everything necessary to conduct a major offensive operation.

The Red Army was faced with operating in the territory of a fascist state, the army of which, used in the aims of an unjust war, together with the Hitlerite invaders, had for three years robbed and tortured the peaceful citizens of the Soviet Union. The soldiers and officers of the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts, who had come a long way from the Volga to the Prut and the Dnestr, had seen ravaged Russian, Ukrainian and Moldavian towns and cities and terrible pictures of the crimes of the fascist occupiers. More than one

---

* "Voyenno-istoricheskiy zhurnal," 1959, No. 2, p. 29.

** Archives of MD USSR, col. 240, inv. 357158, div. 1, pp. 1-3.

*** Ibid, pp. 3-5.

**** IML. Documents and Materials of the Division of the History of the Great Patriotic War, inv. No. 17368, p. 21.

soldier had come across the ashes of his own home on the way. The soldiers burned with the desire to take revenge on the fascists. The political organs insistently elucidated to the personnel the new missions facing the /264
Armed Forces of the USSR. In their work they relied on the huge army of communists. By the start of the advance the party organs of the 2nd Ukrainian front had in their composition 164,943 communists,* and those of the 3rd Ukrainian front had 119,659.** Talking with their comrades at arms, showing their personal example, the communists led with them masses of soldiers.

Only an army educated in the spirit of respect for the peoples of other countries, in the spirit of internationalism, could, upon entering the territory of a hostile state, draw a precise line between the workers and those at fault in the war. Only the Communist Party, which enjoyed the boundless respect of the Soviet people, was capable of instilling in hundreds of thousands of soldiers and officers the awareness that they had come to Rumania not as conquerors but as liberators, as defenders of the working people.

The command group and political organs of the forces of the 2nd Ukrainian front located in the territory of Rumania after the spring of 1944 already had some experience in working among the population of a foreign state. At the basis of this work was the announcement by the government of the USSR of April 2, and also the declaration by the State Defense Committee of April 10 on the line of behavior of Soviet soldiers in Rumanian territory.*** The policy of our government in relation to Rumania was determined not by a feeling of revenge for the three years of crimes by Rumanian fascists on Soviet soil, but by the necessity to execute the fundamental task of the war - to totally defeat German fascism. To the fulfillment of this mission the Soviet government wished to draw the Rumanian people as well. The government of the USSR pursued the goal of liberating the people from the fascist yoke and offering them the opportunity to decide for themselves the fate of their country.

---

* Archives of the MD USSR, col. 240, inv. 352061, div. 2, p. 1.

** Ibid, col. 243, inv. 32277, div. 9, p. 2.

*** Ibid, inv. 63942, div. 31, pp. 209-211.

Carrying out these basic ideas throughout all of their party political work, the commanders, political organs and party organizations elucidated to the soldiers the goal of the Red Army's entrance into the territory of Rumania, and exposed the criminal activities of Antonescu's clique, which had practically turned the country into a colony of German imperialism. The political workers told the soldiers about the grievous situation of the Rumanian workers, deprived of rights, groaning under the yoke of the Hitlerite occupiers and their own landholders and capitalists.

Before the advance the Military Council of the 2nd Ukrainian front sent the Military Councils of the armies a directive on political work in the impending operation. In the directive, in addition to the usual tasks special mention was made of the need "to explain to the entire personnel of the forces that we are now fighting in alien territory, and that from each soldier and officer great vigilance, personal neatness and organization is required." The directive demanded that they "treat the Rumanian civil population with Soviet dignity and not commit any illegal or willful acts;" that they elucidate to economic officials that "in alien territory a soldier can and must only feed himself with his own rations."* Similar orders were also issued during the days of preparing for the advance by the political directorate of the 3rd Ukrainian front.

In accordance with the statement of the State Defense Committee of April 10, the practical realization of the USSR government's orders on the behavior of Soviet troops in Rumania was entrusted to the Military Councils of the fronts and armies. The Military Councils effected in the territory of the country only general guidance of the civil administration and monitoring of it through the Soviet military administration. The obligation of designating Soviet military commandants in the districts, volosts and large inhabited areas was made the duty of the commanders of the rifle units. However, in their activity the commandants were not to substitute for the local organs of power.

---

* Archives of MD USSR, col. 240, inv. 16362, div. 26, pp. 35-36.

In organizing political work in the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts it was taken into account that new reinforcements had been poured into their composition. In the troops of the 2nd Ukrainian front alone in March - May /265 of 1944 over 265,000 men arrived, mobilized in the recently liberated regions of the Ukraine.* From March 1 to May 20 the four armies of the 3rd Ukrainian front received over 79,000 men into their ranks.** In certain formations the reinforcements constituted over half of the personnel. These people had lived under the occupation for over two years. Therefore the command group and political organs were faced with the difficult task of their education. For three to four months the commanders, political workers, and party organizers carried on tireless work directed at teaching the new recruits military matters, sharing the experience accumulated by the army in three years of war, giving them a full conception of the real power of the Red Army, of its superiorities over the troops of the enemy.

The command groups of both fronts attached great significance to the study of the political state and morale of the enemy forces. Long before the advance work among the enemy forces was intensifed. The political organs of the fronts and the armies desired that the truth of the situation at the fronts, of the catastrophic summer defeats of the Hitlerite army, reached the German fascist and particularly the Rumanian forces. With these aims loudspeaker radio installations and megaphones were used, and leaflets were scattered from airplanes. In the 3rd Ukrainian front in May, June and the first days of July 88 broadcasts of speeches, communiques and slogans through powerful loudspeaker devices were organized, as well as 684 broadcasts through medium public address stations and 925 megaphone broadcasts, directed at the Rumanian troops.*** On the 2nd Ukrainian front, in August alone the air force dropped approximately 1.5 million leaflets and brochures in enemy territory.**** Addressing the soldiers and officers of the Rumanian army, the Soviet command group called upon them: "Break away from the Hitlerite army! Join the Red

---

* Archives of MD USSR, col. 240, inv. 73765, div. 41/1, p. 54.

** IML. Docs. and Maters. of Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #11635, p. 169.

*** Archives of MD USSR, col. 243, inv. 265390, div. 1, p. 171.

**** Ibid, col. 240, inv. 16362, div. 26, p. 118.

Army, we will beat the common enemy!" "Surrender!" "Leave the front and go home!" Under the conditions of the growing antifascist and antiwar mood both in the army and among Rumanian workers, these appeals found a response in the soldiers. Cases of their desertion to our side became considerably more common. In response to this the Rumanian command group resorted to cruel repressions, even up to execution by firing squad. A large number of soldiers who were natives of Bessarabia and Bakovina were transferred to the rear. However, by now this could not stop the growth of the antifascist mood among the soldiers and officers, who understood more and more clearly that they were fighting for an unjust, anti-national cause.

The partisan brigades undermined the stability of the enemy's rear, fighting in the occupied territory of Soviet Moldavia, primarily in the area of Kishinyev. The activity of the partisans was particularly stirred in the period of preparation for the Iasi-Kishinyev operation. In July-August partisan detachments under the command of I.Yu. Nuzhin, I.V. Anisimov and others operated there. They disrupted extremely important enemy communications in the area between the Prut and the Dnestr, made unexpected attacks on the enemy and kept him in a constant state of tension. Several days before the start of the advance of the Soviet forces, partisans derailed 8 enemy military trains with manpower and fighting equipment, blew up a railroad bridge, destroyed 1 light tank and 2 armed transports with mines, wrecked over 100 automobiles and 73 wagons of ammunition, blew up 1 ammunition dump and eliminated approximately 2,000 fascist soldiers and officers. The partisan detachments maintained constant radio contact with the headquarters of the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts, and informed them about the movements of the Hitlerite forces.*

Entries in the German war diaries of army group "South Ukraine" and its /266
6th Army testify to the fact that the Ukrainian and Moldavian partisans caused the German command group a great deal of "trouble." One of the entries even states that in spite of all of the measures taken by the Rumanian authorities the partisans of Bessarabia continued to remain masters of the situation. It is possible that the frightened staff officers somewhat overestimated the

* IML. Docs. and Maters. of Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #3057, pp. 44, 57, 139, 158, 182, 191.

scope of the partisan struggle in this area, but it is true that on July 12 the command group of the 6th Army broke up the entire territory of the operative area into military sectors to fight the partisans and parachutists. The sectors were headed by special headquarters with special rifle teams at their disposal.* In the Kotovskiy, Nisporenskiy, Chimishliyskiy, Kagul'skiy and other areas the occupants kept garrisons numbering up to 1,000 men.**

Did the German fascist command group know about the advance of the forces of the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts being prepared? During the short pause after the completion of the winter campaign of 1944 they granted the possibility that the Red Army would conduct two strategic operations, in the Baltic and in the Balkans, and presumed that the Soviet command group would "decide on the Balkan operation."*** In determining the possible directions of strikes by the Soviet forces in the so-called "Balkan operation" the German command group named two directions: toward Beskida**** and toward Focşani Gate, considering the latter the most likely direction. In connection with the advance of the Red Army in Belorussia the German command group began to be inclined toward the belief that the Soviet command group would draw its forces off to the central sector of the front, and this "could be regarded as a very clear sign of rejection of a Balkan operation."*****

But with the start of the Belorussian operation the composition of the forces of the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts changed hardly at all. Furthermore, the enemy withdrew considerable forces from army group "South Ukraine" assuming that the Red Army's "Balkan operation" had been laid aside. This erroneous assumption by the enemy can be seen from the following entry in the war diary of the 6th German Army from July 7, 1944: "The summer offensive of the Red Army against army group 'Centre' and the completed concentration of enemy forces against army group 'North Ukraine'... confirmed that the enemy

---

* IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #13514, pp. 14-15.

** See "History of Moldavian SSR," Vol. II. Kishinyev, Izd-vo. "Shkoala sovyetike," 1955, p. 350.

*** Op cit., Inv. #13625, p. 291.

**** Beskidy is a band of the northern ridges of the West and East Carpathians from the Morava River to the mouth of the San River.

***** Op cit., Inv. 13625, p. 322.

had put off plans for an advance on the Balkans."* The German generals were so certain of the correctness of this evaluation of the Soviet command group's plans that even five days before the start of the advance in Rumania they considered a large offensive operation in the zones of the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts "unlikely."**

On August 16 in the war diary of army group "South Ukraine" this entry appeared for the first time: "One can now quite correctly presume that the Russians are forming the direction of their main attack between the Prut River and the Garlau (Hirlau - Ed.) - Tirgu-Frumos road."***On August 8 the diary already said that they expected "a large-scale enemy advance against the front of army group 'Veler' with the direction of the main blow in the region northwest of Iaşi and an auxiliary attack (parallel) against the front of army group 'Dumitrescu' in the area south of Tiraspol'." Thus only a day /267 and a half before the start of our advance did the German fascist command group on the whole correctly judge the directions of the strikes by the Soviet forces. However, they erroneously appraised the forthcoming blow by the force of the 3rd Ukrainian front from the Dnestr beachhead as auxiliary in the operation by the group of the two fronts, believing that this front would strike its main blow from the area southeast of Dubossary in the general direction of Kishinyev. Partial regrouping carried out after these conclusions were reached could not now significantly affect the course of the Red Army's advance. Reconnaissance in force conducted by the Soviet troops of both fronts before the advance showed that the enemy was defending his main zone in the previous grouping.

---

* IML. Docs. and Maters. of Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #13514, p. 206.

** Ibid, Inv. #13625, p. 341.

*** Ibid, Inv. #13633, p. 107.

CHAPTER 9

THE ROUT OF ARMY GROUP "SOUTH UKRAINE." THE EXPULSION OF THE FASCIST OCCUPIERS FROM SOVIET MOLDAVIA.

2. Encirclement of the enemy grouping in the area of Kishinyev and in the coastal sector. The complete liberation of Soviet Moldavia.

On the morning of August 20 heavy artillery preparation began. The 3rd Ukrainian front conducted air as well as artillery preparation of the advance.

This had very good results. The enemy suffered heavy losses in manpower and equipment, and lost administration in subunits and units. The fire plan of his defense was disorganized to a considerable degree, trenches were destroyed and personnel lost morale. Prisoners captured in the zone of the advance by the forces of the 2nd Ukrainian front stated that in the first day of battle some divisions lost over 50 percent of their personnel.

On the first day the strike group of the 2nd Ukrainian front breached the enemy defense northwest of Iasi to a great depth. The troops of the 27th Army under the command of Lt. Gen. S.G. Trofimenko and the 52nd Army under the command of Lt. Gen. K. A. Koroteyev, overcoming the resistance of five enemy divisions, progressed with the active support of the air force on a 30-kilometer sector of the front to a depth of 16 kilometers. The 6th Tank Army commanded by Lt. Gen. of tank forces A.G. Kravchenko, which was brought into the breach in the second half of the day, before the planned time, broke through to the enemy's third zone of defense which ran along the Mare range. With the goal of localizing the breach the enemy threw three divisions from the reserves into the battle. Stunned by the force of our attack, the German command group did not even assign the tactical reserve to restore the main zone of defense, but demanded only that they immediately throw the Russians back beyond the Bahlui River,* that is beyond the second zone of defense. However, the Hitlerites did not succeed in doing this. The Soviet soldiers acted bravely and capably. Their mass heroism in breaching the enemy defense was noted by the command group. The Military Council of the 2nd Ukrainian front called upon the personnel: "Comrade warriors, sergeants, officers and and generals! You have acted in model fashion and breached the strong and deep defense of the Rumanians and Germans. I declare to you our gratitude. Gather more strength and energy to fulfill your assigned tasks..."**

The following day the strike group of the 2nd Ukrainian front deepend the breach to 25 kilometers, the troops of its left flank seized a large administrative center of Rumania, the powerful strong point of Iasi, and the 7th Guards Army under the command of Col.-Gen. M.S. Shumilov, striking an auxiliary blow, seized the city of Tirgu-Frumos. A part of the 27th and /268
6th Tank Armies broke through to strategic scope. Attempting to stop our advance, the enemy frequently went over to counterattacks, but without results. On this day he had already completely expended the tactical reserves of army group "Veler."

---

* IML. Docs. and Maters. of Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #13632, p. 9.

** Archives MD USSR, col. 906, inv. 218345, div. 10, p. 21.

The breach of the tactical zone of the enemy's defense by the 3rd Ukrainian front was no less successful. The attack of the enemy's first position went very successfully (with the exception of the zone of the 57th Army.) In one of the reports of the front's political directorate this evaluation of the attack was given:"Never, we believe, in all of the front's military operations was there an attack as rapid as the one on August 20. As soon as the signal for the attack was given, as one man everyone, all at once, many fully upright, with exceptional rapidity and cries of 'hoorah' rushed to the enemy's forward trenches and seized them."* The 37th Army under the command of Lt. Gen. M.N. Sharokhin and the 46th Army commanded by Lt. Gen. I.T. Shlemin progressed 10-11 kilometers in the direction of the main blow. By evening the width of the breach reached 40 kilometers. In the war diary of the 6th German Army on this day was entered: "By evening... it was as if both Rumanian divisions (occupying the defense in the zone of advance of the 3rd Ukrainian front's strike group - Ed.) did not exist."**

The enemy judged the attack of the 3rd Ukrainian front as auxiliary, assuming as before that its main blow should be anticipated in the Kishinyev sector. The fascist command group held to this erroneous appraisal because it had been confused by the strategic surprise and deception measures undertaken by the Soviet command group. A concentration of forces for a main blow had been demonstrated in the Kishinyev sector of the front. In addition, the 5th strike army commanded by Lt. Gen. N.E. Berzarin conducted reconnaissance in force on August 20 in this sector of the front on a wide front and thereby disoriented the German command force still more.

On the second day of the advance the strike group of the 3rd Ukrainian front achieved new success. At the boundary of the 37th and 46th Armies the depth of the breach had been extended by the end of the day to 25-30 kilometers. The 4th Guards mechanized corps, which had been brought into the breach in the zone of the 46th Army, progressed 50 kilometers, but the 7th mechanized corps, which was brought into the breach in the zone of the 37th

---

* IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #11635, p. 178.

** Ibid, Inv. #13501, p. 20.

Army, progressed hardly at all. The enemy offered the greatest resistance in the zone of advance of the 57th Army commanded by Lt. Gen. N.A. Gagen, fearings its breakthrough to the flank and rear of his 6th Army. The tactical reserves of the "Dumitrescu" group had been completely exhausted on that day. The troops of the 3rd Ukrainian front broke through to operative depth of the enemy defense at the boundary of the 6th German and 3rd Russian Armies, threatening to isolate them from one another.

In the first two days of the operation the 5th Airborne Army under the command of Col.-Gen. of the Air Force S. K. Goryunov and the 17th Airborne Army commanded by Col.-Gen. of the Air Force V.A. Sudets concentrated their main efforts on the support of the rifle formations that breached the enemy defense, and also on the support of the mobile troops that were brought into the breach. In two days the pilots of both fronts completed approximately 6,350 flights. The attempts of the German fascist air force to counter the breach were quickly neutralized. On August 21 the command group of army group "South Ukraine" evaluated the combat activity of our air force thus: "The enemy air force is of unprecedented strength. It does everything it wishes."* The aircraft of the Black Sea fleet struck blows on the enemy's ships and bases. The attack on Constanta conducted August 20 was particularly powerful.

Thus in the first two days of the advance the Soviet troops achieved /269 great success. A decisive role in this was played by the high morale of our soldiers and the personal example in battle of the communists and Komsomol members. Seized by the surge of the advance, the officers and soldiers were models of courage and bravery, military skill and initiative. Thus, for example, the soldiers of the 7th company of the 1116th rifle regiment, 333rd rifle division, 37th Army, having moved out in front, seized a tactically important height, destroyed the headquarters of the enemy's 81st infantry regiment and took the chief of staff and several officers prisoner.** The party organizer of a subunit of the 2nd rifle regiment of the 50th rifle

---

* IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #13632, p. 31.

** Archive of MD USSR, col. 392, inv. 8900, div. 105, p. 203.

division, replacing the platoon commander, who had been put out of action, organized the seizure of the second enemy trench.* In one sector, the advancing units of the 93rd rifle division of the 57th Army met strong resistance from the enemy, who had entrenched in positions along the railroad. A group of soldiers led by Komsomol organizer Sr. Sgt. A.P. Starushko attacked the positions. With the red flag in his hand the Sr. Sgt. threw himself toward the embankment of the railroad, drawing the soldiers after him. Even when wounded he continued to run forward. Inspired by the courage of their Komsomol organizer, the soldiers of the company rose to the attack and crushed the enemy.**

In two days of the advance the troops of the Red Army smashed the enemy defense in the direction of the main blows. The strategic situation became sharply worse for the enemy. The encirclement of his main forces in the Kishinyev salient in a very short time, over two or three days, became possible. Having exhausted all of his tactical reserves as early as the end of August 21, the enemy could no longer significantly affect the course of the operation. Furthermore, by this time the commanders of the fronts had 25 rifle divisions in the direction of the strikes which had not yet been brought into the battle.

In the situation that had developed, the commander of army group "South Ukraine", Gen. Friesner, requested of the High Command of ground forces that army group "Dumitrescu" be allowed to retreat along the Prut River. The High Command hesitated, fearing new political complications in Rumania. Gen. Friesner received the order to withdraw the troops only on the morning of August 22,*** after Hitler's sanction for this had been received.**** The withdrawal of the troops was to begin with the onset of darkness. The idea of the command group of army group "South Ukraine" was to conduct an orderly retreat on the line of the Mare range and the Prut River ("Trajan" and "Ferdinand" positions) and halt the advance of the Soviet troops here for a time. However, they did not succeed in effecting this plan.

---

* Archives of MD USSR, col. 906, inv. 202156, div. 2, p. 165.

** Ibid, col. 243, inv. 32283, div. 18, p. 92.

*** IML. Docs. & Maters. Dept. of Hist. of Great Patriotic War, Inv. #13632, p. 48

**** Ibid, p. 39.

On the evening of August 21 the commanders of both Soviet fronts had already received a new directive from Headquarters. In it was stated: "... now the main mission of the forces of the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts is to close the ring of encirclement of the enemy in the area of Husi with the combined forces of the two fronts, then tighten the ring with the goal of eliminating or capturing the enemy's Kishinyev grouping. Headquarters requires that the main forces and equipment of both fronts be drawn upon for the fulfillment of this extremely important mission, without diverting forces to complete other missions. The successful completion of the mission of defeating the enemy's Kishinyev grouping will open for us the road to the main economic and political centers of Rumania... You have every opportunity to successfully complete this mission, and you must complete this mission."*

Fulfilling Headquarters' demands, the fronts wrecked the plans of the German command group with their successful operations. On August 22 the /270
troops of the 2nd Ukrainian front breached the enemy defense at operative depth between the Sereth and the Prut and deepened the breach to 60 kilometers. The strike group broke through to a depth where the enemy no longer had either reserves or prepared defensive lines. The tank and mechanized formations, pursuing the enemy and overcoming his resistance in separate centers, reached the important road junction of Vaslui and the city of Husi. The 3rd Ukrainian front, having begun to pursue the enemy on August 22, flanked the Kishinyev group from the southwest. The breach was deepened to 70 kilometers. Both mechanized corps, having progressed 75-90 kilometers and broken through to the line of Gura-Galbena - Komrat, isolated the 6th German Army from the 3rd Rumanian.

On the same day the troops of the left flank of the 46th Army under the command of Lt. Gen. A.N. Bakhtin, the second in command of the army, went over to the offensive. With the support of artillery, aircraft and the ships of the Danube military flotilla commanded by Rear Admiral S.G. Gorshkov, our troops forced the Dnestr estuary. The forcing of the estuary was effected suddenly, without artillery preparation. The transfer of troops to beachheads

* IML. Docs. and Maters. of Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #9493, pp. 72-73.

seized by assault detachments of the marine infantry began. In two days the flotilla transferred approximately 8,000 men and a large quantity of military equipment to the right bank of the estuary. The troops that had crossed over routed the opposing forces of the enemy, seized the city of Akkerman, and continued to develop the attack to the southwest. The situation in the zone of the 46th Army had changed sharply. Its right flank and central corps began to outflank the Akkerman group from the north and the northwest. Toward the end of the day a part of the mobile formations of the front broke through to the line of Kogil'nik River, into the area of the main forces of the 3rd Rumanian Army, and cut off its main lines of retreat.

The measures taken by the enemy on that day could not prevent a catastrophe. As was already indicated, he proposed to retreat on the line of the Mare range and the Prut River. However, the 6th Army could begin its retreat only with the onset of darkness, 13-14 hours after the order was received. In that time the tank formations of the 2nd Ukrainian front, putting on a spurt of 25-30 kilometers, moved south of that line on which the "Veler" group was to retreat. Two mechanized corps of the 3rd Ukrainian front, also putting on a 50-kilometer spurt, seized the region 35-40 kilometers from the crossing on the Prut. Thus the Soviet tanks broke through into the rear of the three army corps of the 6th German Army, and the command group of the "Dumitrescu" army group lost contact with it. Retreat could no longer save the enemy's forces since their main segment was 80-90 kilometers from the Prut River, while the Soviet mobile forces were two to three times closer to it.

The fourth day of the advance was characterized by the retreat of the enemy forces, before the four armies of the 2nd and all of the armies of the 3rd Ukrainian front. Improvised enemy detachments occupied the crossings at Leusheny [transl. from Russian] Leovo and Falçiu and formed there slapdash bridgeheads. However, this did not help the enemy. The command group of both fronts did everything possible to close the inner perimeter of envelopment of the Kishinyev grouping. With the forces of the 27th Army, the main forces of the 6th Tank Army and also a mounted-mechanized group, the 2nd Ukrainian front made a deep strike to the south with the goal

of securing the encirclement and rapidly breaking through to the central regions of Rumania. The 3rd Ukrainian front formed a powerful covering detachment from the southwest and completed the encirclement of the 3rd Rumanian Army in the area to the southwest of Akkerman. On this day the troops of the 3rd Ukrainian front broke through to the crossings on the Prut south of the inhabited area of Leusheny. The enemy offered desperate resistance on the right bank of the river to the troops of the 52nd Army and the 18th tank corps of the 2nd Ukrainian front. There he still held a narrow zone 8-10 kilometers in width. This "corridor" was his last hope. Along this corridor the enemy attempted to bring the 6th Army out of the encirclement. German operations documents testify that the command group wished to stabilize the line of the front on one or the other line. But the /271
blows of the Soviet forces compelled the enemy to leave these lines and roll back to the south and southwest.

At 2030 on August 23 the command group of army group "South Ukraine" learned of great political changes in Rumania, of the overthrow of I. Antonescu's government. Three days later a resolution was made, sanctioned by Hitler, on the necessity to "retreat by the shortest route to the Carpathian semi-covered positions."* But the main forces of the German armies could no longer do this. On August 23 and 24 the Soviet tank drivers of both fronts reached the Prut. The first to reach the east bank of the river in the zone of the 3rd Ukrainian front was the 16th mechanized brigade under the command of Col. M.F. Marshyev on August 23, and a little later the 64th mechanized brigade commanded by Col. A.T. Shutov. Both brigades included in the 7th mechanized corps (commander Maj.-Gen. of tank forces F.G. Katkov) broke through to the river in the area of Leusheny and to the south of it. On the same day the 36th Guards tank brigade (commander Col. P.S. Zhukov) of the 4th Guards mechanized corps commanded by Maj.-Gen. of tank forces V.I. Zhdanov seized the crossing on the Prut north of Leovo.** In the zone of the 2nd Ukrainian front formations of the 18th tank corps broke through to the

---

* IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #13632, p. 85.

** Archive of MD USSR, col. 612, inv. 81128, div. 1, p. 9; col. 607, inv. 382836 div. 4, p. 38.

west bank of the Prut on August 24: the 110th tank brigade (commander Col. I.F. Reshetnikov) and the 170th tank brigade (commander Col. N.P. Chupikhin). They established contact with the tank crews of the 3rd Ukrainian front located in the area of Leovo. Thereby the ring of encirclement was closed on August 24.*

Five German army corps found themselves in a gigantic ring, the larger part on the east bank of the river, the smaller part on the west bank. Only the remnants of the enemy units that had not been caught in the "pocket" retreated under the blows of the troops operating on the outer perimeter of envelopment. On the evening before, in the coastal sector the troops of the 3rd Ukrainian front had completed the encirclement of the main forces of the 3rd Rumanian Army. The attempts of the German units operating in its composition to break through along a narrow spit to the west were cut off. On the morning of August 24 the ships of the Danube flotilla made an assault landing in the area of Zhibrieni [transl. from Russian]; part of the ships entered the Danube delta and began to move upstream. The troops of the 3rd Rumanian Army laid down their arms.

In five days of coordinated attacks by the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts with the support of the ships, marine infantry and fleet air force, the defense of army group "South Ukraine" was breached and its main forces were encircled. The southern sector of the German front collapsed completely. The mobile forces on the outer perimeter of envelopment progressed to 150 kilometers. At the moment when the encirclement of the enemy was being completed they were in the areas of Bacau and Tekucha [transl. from Russian].

Without a pause, the troops of the fronts began to liquidate the encircled enemy grouping: the troops of the 3rd Ukrainian front on the east and those of the 2nd Ukrainian front on the west bank of the Prut. A large part of the armies of the 2nd Ukrainian front, meanwhile, continued to progress rapidly on the outer front to the southwest and the south, and the 46th Army of the 3rd Ukrainian front moved out to the cities of Galaţi, Reni, and Izmail - points of crossings downstream on the Danube.

---

* Archive of MD USSR, col. 680, inv. 349345, div. 1, p. 6; inv. 216072, div. 1, p. 374.

On August 24 in connection with the changes that had occurred in Rumania, Headquarters ordered the Military Councils of the fronts and their representative Marshal of the Soviet Union S.K. Timoshenko to continue the advance on the outer front, to elucidate to the Rumanian troops, who had ceased to offer resistance, that the "Red Army cannot cease military operations before the armed forces of the Germans who are continuing to remain in Rumania are liquidated." Headquarters further proposed not to disarm the Rumanian units and formations that surrendered in orderly fashion and agreed to carry on /272
a joint battle against the German or Hungarian forces.*

During August 25-27 on the east bank and August 25-29 on the west bank of the Prut a fierce battle went on between the Soviet and surrounded German forces. On the east bank the defense was occupied by the main forces of the 6th Army, and on the west bank by part of the forces of the 8th Army as well as detached units from the 6th Army that had crossed the river.

The enemy, who until August 23 had offered organized resistance, lost his administration after the encirclement. The command group of the 6th Army, which had fled into the Carpathians, could not control the troops from there. A truce envoy from the 3rd Ukrainian front who arrived with an ultimatun for capitulation in the territory occupied by the encircled forces, found neither the headquarters of the 6th Army nor a representative who could accept the ultimatum and order the troops to cease resistance. The German fascist invaders, finding themselves in a "pocket," resisted with the desperation of doomed. Several times they attempted to break out of the encirclement.

Our forces were able to overcome the enemy's resistance, displaying great fortitude and heroism, military skill and initiative. In the sector of one of the battalions of the 204th Guards regiment, 69th Guards rifle division, 52nd Army, a group of German soldiers came out of the forest with a white flag and raised hands. It seemed that they were surrendering. However, the commander of the battalion, Capt. M.A. Chikin, ordered the machine gunners to be on the alert. Their caution turned out to be justified. Coming closer,

---

* IML. Docs. and Maters. of Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #9493, pp. 78-79.

the fascist soldiers opened fire with submachine guns. In answer the Soviet machine guns started shooting. The majority of the enemy soldiers were killed and some were taken prisoner.* The commander of a company from the 373rd rifle division of the same army, Lt. V. Ye. Smolyakov, observing that the enemy was preparing to attack a neighboring company, warned its commanders, and covertly brought his company into the enemy's rear. Suddenly attacking, the Soviet soldiers destroyed or captured 156 enemy soldiers and officers in all.** The commander of a detachment from the 656th regiment of the 116th rifle division, 52nd Army, R.Yu. Kobelyevskiy blocked with machine gun fire the road of German armored transports attempting to break out of the encirclement. When one of the armored transports headed toward the bold machine gunner and was on the verge of crushing him, Kobelyevskiy, with grenades tied about him, threw himself under the machine. Our troops, arriving at the battle site in time, found dozens of enemy corpses.***

The level of morale in the Soviet troops involved in the liquidation of the encircled enemy was so high that many recovered wounded attempted to return to action ahead of schedule from the medical battalions. Thus, for example, on August 25 out of 97 wounded soldiers of the 50th rifle division of the 52nd Army 63 requested that they be returned to action or at least not be evacuated to a hospital.****

During August 25 and 26 the ring of encirclement on the east bank continued to tighten. With air support our ground forces exterminated the enemy's manpower, which was still offering resistance. The contents of the Soviet command force's ultimatum were transmitted several times by radio and through powerful loudspeakers. Above the enemy's position the air force dropped a large quantity of leaflets with the text of the ultimatum. German prisoners of war were sent to the enemy's dispositions; many of them returned and brought groups of soldiers with them. Thus, for example, in the 37th Army on the night of August 26 ten prisoners of war were sent to the encirclement. On the same day four of them returned, bringing 72 soldiers.

---

* Archive of MD USSR, col. 945, inv. 297782, div. 1, p. 57.

** Ibid, col. 1431, inv. 161771, div. 14, p. 281.

*** Ibid, col. 1163, inv. 150380, div. 3, p. 12.

**** Ibid, col. 906, inv. 202156, div. 2, p. 178.

By mid-day of August 27 the German fascist forces operating east of the Prut ceased resistance. On the west bank the enemy held out until August 29. Large enemy groups were able to cross over to it from the east bank. The measures taken by the command group of the 2nd Ukrainian front to form tighter battle orders on the inner perimeter of envelopment were found to be inadequate. Considerable groups of Germans with tanks, assault guns and artillery broke out of the encirclement in the area to the south of Husi, and broke through to the rear of the front with the intention of crossing the Carpathians to Hungary. To destroy them the commander of the front used two rifle corps from the front reserves, a part of the formations taken out of the reserves of the 4th Guards Army, one rifle corps of the 7th Guards Army and the 23rd tank corps. The Soviet soldiers, including those from rear units and subunits, filled with a lofty feeling of their military duty, did all they could to destroy the enemy that had broken through. Marshal of the Soviet Union Malinovskiy, in his recollections of the Iasi - Kishinyev operation, regards the heroic actions of the Soviet soldiers highly. "These were truly heroic actions," he writes. "I admired the way our drivers and artillerymen fought without any help on the part of the infantry. They boldly engaged in battle with the enemy and beat off his attacks."* The remnants of the group that had broken through, numbering about 7,000 men, crossed the Sereth and broke through to the Adzhud Nou. With coordinated actions by our forces they were destroyed by September 4. /273

Thus out of 24 German divisions from army group "South Ukraine" 18 were surrounded and liquidated. Not one combat unit, not one formation of the German 6th Army was able to break out of the encirclement. The command force of army group "South Ukraine" also acknowledged this, noting in their war diary of September 5, "The encircled corps and divisions of the 6th Army must be regarded as conclusively lost. There is no longer any hope that any of the encircled formations will break out. This is the greatest catastrophe that this army group has ever suffered."**

---

* "Voyenno-istoricheskiy zhurnal," 1959, No. 2, p. 33.

** IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War. Inv. #13632, p. 235. In the war diary of army group "South Ukraine" for that day is noted, "Five corps staffs (4, 7, 30, 44, and 52 army corps)... and 18 divisions (9, 15, 62, 79, 106, 161, 257, 258, 282, 294, 302, 306, 320, 335, 370, 376 and 384 infantry divisions and 153rd field artillery division) lost."

Tiraspol' and other cities concentration camps were created in which tens of thousands of Soviet citizens languished. The fascists drove 25,000 persons into only one of the Kishinyev camps. Of these 3,000 perished from starvation and torture, and the rest were shot or taken away to a foreign land.*

The Moldavian people did not reconcile themselves to their enslaved position. They rose to the struggle for liberation, which did not cease throughout the entire occupation. The partisan movement and the activities of underground communist organizations provoked the furious anger of the fascist invaders. They behaved with particular brutality in the spring and summer of 1944 when the Red Army began the liberation of Soviet Moldavia. Retreating from Moldavia the fascists destroyed plants, factories, schools, theaters, hospitals, museums, and residences. The cities of Kishinyev, Orgeyev, Bendery, Tiraspol' and many towns were transformed into ruins. According to official data, in the Moldavian SSR the occupiers destroyed or wrecked 1,037 industrial enterprises. They destroyed almost half of the state housing resources. The direct losses inflicted on Moldavia were over 16 billion rubles. The fascist butchers "tortured and killed tens of thousands of Soviet people. In April 1944 alone in Tiraspol'... the Hitlerites shot /275 over 2,000 people. In Rybnitsa they burned hundreds of Soviet patriots in a prison..."** Many Rumanian communists and antifascists also perished there.

The workers of Soviet Moldavia awaited the arrival of the Red Army with impatience. On August 24 the troops of the 3rd Ukrainian front liberated Kishinyev. The 89th Guards rifle division of the 5th strike army was the first to enter the city. The soldiers of the battalion commanded by Capt. A.I. Bel'skiy raised the Red Banner on the highest building in the city. On August 27 the last shots rang out on the east bank of the Prut.

Workers, kolkhozniks and intelligentsia joyfully greeted the dear Red Army. A busy season began. The workers set about healing the wounds inflicted by the occupiers on the state economy. As early as the spring after

---

* "History of the Moldavian SSR," p. 314.

** Ibid, Vol. II, p. 341.

the liberation of the part of Moldavia on the left bank of the Dnestr, the CC of the Communist Party and the government of the Moldavian republic returned from evacuation to the city of Soroki and began work to bring life back to normal. On June 24, 1944 the CPC (Council of People's Commissariats) of the USSR passed a declaration on rendering assistance to the liberated regions of Moldavia. The CC AUCP(b) and the government sent 4,800 party and Soviet workers to Moldavia. With the support of the workers, the party and Soviet organs began an energetic struggle to restore the state economy.

CHAPTER 9

THE ROUT OF ARMY GROUP "SOUTH UKRAINE." THE EXPULSION OF THE FASCIST OCCUPIERS FROM SOVIET MOLDAVIA.

3. The August anti-fascist uprising of the Rumanian people.

The powerful blows of the Red Army in the area of Iasi and Kishinyev, and the rapid advance of the Soviet forces deep into Rumania, hastened the armed action of the Rumanian people against the fascist dictatorship, and decided in advance the fate of the government of I. Antonescu. Events at the front unfolded with such rapidity that by evening of August 22 it was already clear that army group "South Ukraine" was suffering a catastrophic defeat. In

Bucharest extraordinary excitement reigned. On August 23 an armed uprising broke out in the capital, which became the beginning of a people's democratic revolution.

The uprising occurred under the conditions of an acute political crisis in the country. The people and the masses of the soldiery no longer wanted to tolerate the fascist regime. The attack of the Red Army near Iasi and Kishinyev bred panic in the fascist state apparatus and among the ruling classes. Nevertheless Antonescu's clique decided to continue the war, in this way pushing the country toward a national catastrophe. At this threatening time in Rumania the political forces appeared to overthrow Antonescu's government and turn their arms against Hitler's Germany.

In its goals and character the August uprising was anti-fascist. It was the result of the agitation and anger of the workers, peasants and the masses of the soldiers, plunged by Antonescu's clique and the ruling classes into an unjust war against the USSR. Throughout the war the Communist Party had called on the workers to fight for both national and social liberation. Its measures found support among the peasants, who were vitally concerned in the solution of the agrarian question. The main moving forces of the uprising were the working class and the masses of the soldiers.

Direct control of preparations for the uprising was concentrated in the hands of the Communist Party. Members of the CPR leadership E. Bodnaras, I. /276
Rangets and K. Pyrvulescu [transl. from Russian] who were located in Bucharest continued to maintain contact with G. Gheorghiu-Dej and other leading party workers who were confined in the Tirgu-Jiu concentration camp. While the king and his circle fearfully watched Antonescu and the German fascist forces, and the Tsaranists and Liberals bided their time, the Communists acted decisively and boldly. Their ideological conviction, organization and ability to carry on conspiratorial work made a very strong impression on the patriotic segment of the officer cadres.

At conferences and meetings that occurred in June-August between the representatives of the Communist Party, patriotic officer cadres and court circles questions of the composition of the government, of the basic documents

which it was planned to issue after the arrest of Antonescu's clique, on the liberation of anti-fascists from prisons and concentration camps, on withdrawal from the war, turning their arms against Hitlerite Germany and joining with the anti-fascist coalition were discussed. The details of the strategic plan of the uprising were also discussed.* Specifically, the time of the uprising was set in dependence on the beginning of the Soviet troops' advance deep into Rumania. The arrest of Antonescu would serve as a signal for the uprising; his arrest in the royal palace was acknowledged the best of several variations that were worked out. The participants of the conferences defined the targets that were to be seized and a list of persons who were subject to arrest, and designated the armed detachments necessary for this. On August 20, when the Red Army went over to the offensive, a conference took place at which it was decided that the uprising would take place on August 24-26.

The armed uprising began with the arrest of Antonescu's clique a day earlier than had been planned. Circumstances dictated that the action take place on August 23. On that day a special meeting of the government was called to discuss the situation at the front. I. Antonescu, who had recently returned from the Hitlerite headquarters where he had promised to fight to the last soldier, proposed that a defense be organized along the line of Focsani--Nemoloasa - Galat, and that "all of the forces of the nation" be mobilized to continue the war. To confer greater weight for the resolution that was passed, which in no way accorded with the political and military situation that had developed, I. Antonescu wished to enlist the support of the king and obtain from him an appeal to the people. For this he set out with his deputy, M. Antonescu, for the palace.

The appearance of I. Antonescu in the palace was the convenient event for his arrest, which was called for by the plan. The king and his retainers, bearing in mind the situation that had been created in connection with the defeat of army group "South Ukraine," arrested both Antonescus. Then several ministers went to the palace under the pretense of a meeting and also

---

* See Lectures to Help Those Who Study History P.M.R., p. 458-459.

taken into custody. On the evening of the same day a combat patriotic detachment under the command of Bodnarash [transl. from Russian] took I. Antonescu and his ministers to the conspiratorial house of the CC CPR located in the outskirts of Bucharest. There the arrested men were kept until they were handed over to the Soviet command group.*

Following the arrest of Antonescu's clique, in connection with the plan of the armed uprising units of the Bucharest garrison were given the order of military command of the city, which had been worked out earlier by the Military Committee, the activities of which were directed by the Communist Party. This order demanded that the most important targets in the city be seized immediately; that the buildings occupied by the German establishment and military units be taken and all communication between them cut off; that German automobiles be detained; and that Hitlerites appearing on the streets be forced to surrender.**

The commander of military units, officers and soldiers of the Bucharest garrison, having learned of Antonescu's arrest, immediately set about fulfilling the order. By 24.00 hours the units of the garrison and military /277
patriotic detachments had seized the central telephone station, telegraph, radio station and other major objects.

At this time, against the demands of the CPR to form a government of representatives of all anti-fascist parties and organizations, the court circles, tsaranists and liberals formed a new government headed by Gen. Sanatescu, the head of the king's military cabinet. In its majority it consisted of reactionary military figures and officials. One representative from each of the parties in the National Democratic bloc was included in the government in the capacity of state ministers without portfolio.

At the end of the day on August 23 a declaration by the king was broadcast on the radio which spoke of the liquidation of the fascist dictatorship and the cessation of military operations against the states of the anti-fascist coalition, of the acceptance of the truce terms proposed by the Soviet government on April 12, 1944, and of Rumania's readiness to carry on

FOOTNOTES FOR PAGE 521.

---

* Archive MO CCCP, col 240, inv. 73765, div, 41, p. 10-11.

** Archive M.F.A.- M.St.M., file 242/2, p/ 21-22.

the war against Hitlerite Germany to liberate the country. Thus the Communist Party, which was the soul and organizer of the armed anti-fascist uprising, broadly exploited the king's power for the arrest of Antonescu's clique and the overthrow of the fascist government.

The court circles and the bourgeois landholder parties, having formed a government with a reactionary majority, wanted the uprising to end with that. They counted on reaching agreement on the free withdrawal of Hitler's troops from Rumania. On the evening of August 23 the king received the German ambassador to Rumania, M. Killinger, and Sanatescu received the German generals E. Hansen and A. Herstenberg, to whom it was declared that the German troops might withdraw from the country's borders without hindrance and that the Rumanian government would not place any interference in their way. Santanescu actually gave the order not to begin military operations. The Hitlerite generals pledged to withdraw their forces from the territory of Rumania, and were released on their "word of honor" to Benyasu [transl. from Russian], where the German military units were disposed.* Gen. Mihail, who had been designated chief of the General Staff, promised the German command group that he would "ensure the free withdrawal of the German units from the territory of Rumania." He informed them in so doing that he "wishes to avoid any armed encounters between German and Rumanian forces..."**

The activities of the king and his supporters, although they created certain difficulties in developing the armed uprising, could not, however, change the course of events and stop the struggle that had begun against the occupiers. From the morning of August 25 the military units and combat patriotic detachments attacked objects held by the Hitlerites. Under these circumstances the reactionary forces could not prevent the Rumanian government from declaring war on Germany, which was done on the same day.

From the very beginning the Communist Party considered the battle against the German forces unavoidable and essential. Early on the morning of August

---

* See Lectures to Help Those Who Study History PMR, p. 463.

** IML. Docs. and Maters. of Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #11635, p. 189.

24 in the first legal issue of the newspaper "Rominia libera" issued by the Communist Party a declaration by the CC CPR was published containing a fiery military call to the masses. "In the inevitable clash with the Hitlerite forces," read the declaration, "the Communist Party of Rumania calls workers, peasants intelligentsia, all citizens of Rumania to rise to the merciless battle against the deadly enemy of the Rumanian people to ensure their future."* Thousands of workers responded to the call of the Communist Party and enlisted in the fighting patriotic detachments.

As soon as the Soviet government learned of the events in Rumania a declaration by the People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs was broadcast over the radio. In it the declaration of the government of the USSR made April 2, 1944 was confirmed, and it was emphasized that the Red Army would not only /278
not disarm the Rumanian army, but that it would assist the Rumanian troops if the latter would conduct a joint war against the Germans for the independence of Rumania or against Hortist Hungary for the liberation of the northern part of Transylvania. Further in the declaration it was stated that "assistance from the Rumanian forces to the forces of the Red Army in the matter of liquidating the German forces is the only means of quickly ending military operations in the territory of Rumania and of Rumania's conclusion of a truce with the Allied coalition."** This declaration by the Soviet government was greeted by the Rumanian people with great approval.

The fascist government of Germany reacted to the altered political situation in Rumania rapidly and nervously. On August 24 an address was broadcast by radio from Berlin, ostensibly by the "national Rumanian government" formed in Germany, headed by the double-dyed fascist Kh. Sima, who was kept by the Hitlerites. This appeal, fabricated by the Gestapo, called upon the Rumanian people to continue the war on the side of Germany. Hitler, naming Gen. Friesner the commander of all German armed forces in Rumania, gave the

---

* "Rominialibera," 24 august 1944.

** "Foreign Policy of the Soviet Union During the Great Patriotic War," Vol. II, p. 172.

order to liquidate the putsch, arrest the king and the court nobility, and form a new government headed by a general with a friendly attitude toward Germany. When he was informed that "our own forces are entirely inadequate to seize Bucharest and form a new government" the response followed that "the order given by the Fuhrer remains in force."*

On August 24, after bombing the city from the air, the German fascist forces located in Bucharest undertook a counterattack, attempting to seize important strategic points. Simultaneously the Germans began an offensive in the area of Benyasu and Otopeni** [transl. from Russian]. Fierce battles broke out lasting from August 24 through 28. The military units of the Bucharest garrison and the people's patriotic detachments bravely fought with the German forces. The soldiers of the patriotic detachments inspired their brothers in combat, the soldiers of the military units, by word and deed. In the course of the battles the Hitlerites were routed. The armed forces of the insurgents totally cleared Bucharest of the occupiers, surrounded and liquidated the enemy grouping in the northern outskirts of the city, and captured its commander, Gen. Herstenberg.

From August 24-29 armed clashes also occurred in other areas of the country. Formations of the Rumanian army occupied the defensive on the northwest and west boundary to prevent the advance of the German fascist and Hungarian forces from there, as well as the retreat from the country of the remnants of the routed Hitlerite units. Stubborn battles were conducted in Ploesti up until the arrival of the tank units of the Red Army and the troops of the 4th Rumanian Army. Fierce clashes occurred in Brasov, the Danube ports, the industrial regions of Banat, in Arad and Alba-Yulii transl. from Russian . Rumanian units liquidated or disarmed and captured Hitlerites in the areas of the cities of Oltenita, Roshioriy-de-Vede, Dzhurdzhu transl. from Russian , Lugoj and others. In Dobrugea 4,000 soldiers and 1,000 officers were taken

---

* IML. Docs. and Maters. of Dept. of Hist. of the Grea. Patriotic War, Inv. #13632, pp. 90, 92-93,94.

** Having arrived in Benyasu Hansen and Herstenberg "forgot" about their "word of honor" given to the king. The Rumanian officers accompanying them were arrested. The troops were given the order to prepare for an advance on Bucharest.

prisoner, in Kelerasi 2,500 Hitlerites, including a general and 130 officers. The German fascist units and subunits were destroyed in the areas of Turnu-Severin, Zimnicea, Orsova. During August 27-30 the Rumanian units conducted heavy battles, attempting to destroy the columns of Germans retreating to Bulgaria and Hungary as well as the convoys of vessels attempting to break through along the Danube. Armed worker's detachments operated together with the military units. In stubborn battles the oil workers in Ploesti held their enterprises. The metallurgical workers of Barasov, who used artillery weapons located in the plant, fought bravely.* After the workers, the city and town populations of the central and southern regions of the country rose to the struggle. /279

The joint actions of the units of the Rumanian Army, the patriotic detachments and the population, under the conditions of the victorious advance of the Red Army into the depths of Rumania, ensured the rout of the German fascist forces and the liberation of the central and southern regions of the country. During the battles in Bucharest and in other regions the Rumanian forces and patriotic detachments took 53,159 German prisoners, including 14 generals and over 1,200 officers.**

At the height of the armed uprising, after Rumania had declared war on fascist Germany and the Rumanian forces had begun military operations against the German forces, the king and his supporters again undertook efforts to prevent Rumania's active participation in the war. On August 24 the chief of the Rumanian General Staff ordered the formations of the 3rd and 4th Rumanian armies to withdraw to the line of Focsani - Nemoloasa-Sat - Braila - the mouth of the Danube, offering "resistance to any attempts at disarmament."*** On August 25 the Rumanian command group gave instructions not to set obstacles in the way of the free withdrawal of the German fleet from Constanta.[4] The following day it demanded the evacuation from the district where Soviet power

---

* See Lessons to Help Those Who Study History, P.M.R. p. 467-468.

** Ibid, p. 468.

*** IML. Docs. and Maters. of Dept. of Hist. of Great Patriotic War, Inv. #11632, p. 101.

[4] Ibid, Inv. #11635, p. 192.

would soon be arriving of all youths of pre-conscription age "with maximum speed... so you will not be forestalled by the Russians."* On August 29 and 30 in various sectors in the zones of both fronts representatives of Sanatescu's government appealed to the Soviet generals with a proposal to cease military operations on the line of the Carpathians and the Danube.**

This meant in fact to allow the Hitlerite command group the opportunity to peacefully withdraw their troops to the Carpathians and bring them into order to continue the battle, and also not to allow the Red Army into the depths of Rumania and the Balkans. It was characteristic that at this time, during the last days of August, the government of Sanatescu discussed the question of bringing American and English troops into the country,*** and addressed the American and English command group with a request to land airborne assault units in the area of the capital. The plan of the king and the government, which depended on the occupation of Rumania by the USA and England, was unrealizable. It was not possible to land American and English paratroop forces in Bucharest in a situation when the Red Army was progressing rapidly toward the city. The hopes of the ruling classes and their government of achieving the agreement of the Soviet Union to halt the advance on the lines that had been gained were also not realized.

The antifascist uprising ended in the victory of the Rumanian people. Victory was achieved thanks to the efforts of the Communist Party of Rumania, which consistently conducted a policy of uniting all of the forces of the nation to overthrow the fascist dictatorship, and the powerful movement of the masses of the people against the anti-Soviet war and fascim. The king, the bourgeois-landholder parties and their representatives in the government found themselves helpless to decisively influence the course of events. The Communist Party cut off all attempts to grant the German fascist troops a "golden bridge," and raised the masses of the people for the struggle against

---

* IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #11635, p. 192.

** Archive of MD USSR, col. 240, inv. 16362, div. 26, p. 108; col. 243, inv. 17963, div. 14, p. 570.

*** See "Analele Institutului de istorie a partidului de pe linga C.C. al P.M.R." 1957, Nr. 4, pag. 57.

them. The Rumanian Army turned its weapons against Hitlerite Germany. The Communist Party of Rumania, against the desires and actions of the government, thereby led the anti-fascist uprising to a victorious end, and saved the country from a national catastrophe. In the course of the uprising, workers, peasants, soldiers and the patriotic officer cadres were convinced in fact that the Communist Party was the true representative and protector of the /280
national interests. This to a great degree strengthened the influence of the Communist Party among the masses and created conditions for the development of the people's democratic revolution.

On the morning of August 31 the formations of the 6th Tank and 53rd Armies, as well as the 1st Rumanian volunteer division named for Tudor Vladimirescu, entered Bucharest, which had been liberated by the Rumanian patriotic forces.* They proceeded through the capital of Rumania in model order and set out toward the west. In a long train the tanks, assault guns, vehicles with motor infantry and artillery moved through the streets; above the city flew formations of the Soviet air force. The entry of our forces into Bucharest was of great military and political significance. It consolidated the victory of the anti-fascist uprising and exerted a great influence on further change in the strategic situation. The reactionary majority of the Rumanian government could no longer take any effective measures to bring American and English troops into the capital. Tens of thousands of inhabitants ecstatically greeted the soldier-liberators. Numerous demonstrations and meetings took place in the city at which the workers welcomed the Red Army and expressed their firm resolution to fight for freedom and democracy.

*The motorized detachment of the 46th Army of the 3rd Ukrainian front, which entered Bucharest on August 30, was removed from the city on the orders of Headquarters and sent to the region of Dzhurdzhu.

CHAPTER 9

THE ROUT OF ARMY GROUP "SOUTH UKRAINE." THE EXPULSION OF THE FASCIST OCCUPIERS FROM SOVIET MOLDAVIA.

4. The military operations of the Soviet forces in the central and western regions of Rumania.

After August 23 in Rumania general favorable political and military /280
conditions were created for the operations of the Red Army. The overthrow of Antonescu's dictatorship and the victory of the anti-fascist uprising evoked a patriotic upsurge in the masses. The situation also changed in neighboring countries. Under the influence of the defeat of the German troops in Rumania the ruling circles of Bulgaria and Hungary suffered an acute crisis. On August 26 the Bulgarian government made a declaration of

complete neutrality; on August 29 a new government was formed in Hungary. On the same day a people's uprising flared up in Slovakia.*

By this time the following situation had developed at the front.

Before the right wing and center of the 2nd Ukrainian front by the end of August operated up to 6 divisions, and before the left wing there were no German troops. On the Rumanian-Hungarian border established by the Vienna "arbitration" were approximately 30 border battalions of Hungarians; in Transylvania in the area of Bistrita and Cluj there were up to 8 Hungarian divisions and brigades.** The 1st Hungarian Army operating in the Carpathians against the 4th Ukrainian front, and also 9 Hungarian divisions positioned in Hungary, could render assistance to the Hitlerites in Rumania. Before the neighbor to the left, the 3rd Ukrainian front, there were no German forces. Small groups retreating from Moldavia hurried to take cover in Bulgaria. The possibility of directly employing the Bulgarian armed forces against the Soviet forces was unlikely. Finally, it is important to note that to the north and northwest of the Southern Carpathians, in the zone along the Hungarian border, there were up to 10 divisions of Rumanians*** who under the new conditions had received the mission of resisting the German and Hungarian forces if they attempred to make an incursion into their country.

Considering the situation, on August 25 Headquarters ordered the 2nd /281
Ukrainian front, using the forces of the 27th, 53rd and 6th Tank Armies, to advance in the general direction of Slatin - Turnu-Severin, to reach the line of Kympulung - Pitesti - Dzhurdzhu by Sept. 7-8, and then to break through south of the Southern Carpathians (from Turnu-Severin to Dzhurdzhu). The 40th and 7th Guards Armies and the mounted-mechanized group of the front received the assignment of breaking through by mid-September to the line of Bistrita - Cluj - Ayud-Sibiu. Further, covering themselves from the south,

---

* The Slovakian uprising is elucidated in Chapter 11.

** These Hungarian formations were united into the 2nd Hungarian Army, which was included in the composition of army group "South Ukraine" on Sept. 2.

*** Archives M.F.A. - M.St. M. file 1/73, page 17.

it was essential that the forces of the right wing of the front strike in the general direction of Satu-Mare "with the purpose of supporting the troops of the 4th Ukrainian front in crossing the Carpathians and breaking through in the area of Uzhgorod, Mukachevo."*

In the directive from Headquarters of the same day the troops of the 3rd Ukrainian front were ordered to cross the Danube in the lower reaches and break through by September 5-6 to the Rumanian-Bulgarian border from Dzhurdzhu to the Black Sea.**

Thus the fronts were to advance in diverging directions. The 2nd Ukrainian front was assigned the mission of breaking through across the central and western regions of Rumania to the border with Hungary, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria south of Dzhurdzhu. The troops of the 3rd Ukrainian front were ordered to progress along the coastal regions of Rumania and break through to the Bulgarian-Rumanian border east of Dzhurdzhu.

After the catastrophe at Iasi and Kishinyev the German command group, as the orders of Generals Guderian and Friesner of August 29-September 1 testify,*** did not reject the idea of holding out in Hungary, Yugoslavia and Greece. They decided to lengthen their Eastern Front, closing up the southern flank of army group "South Ukraine" with army group "F" and to create a strong defense along the line of the Eastern and Southern Carpathians - Western Balkans. The Hitlerite command group planned to begin the advance with the forces of the 2nd Hungarian Army from the area of Cluj - Turda in the southern direction "with the goal of seizing and strongly occupying the passes through the Southern Carpathians."**** The advance was scheduled for September 4-5. In order to execute these plans it was essential to overcome the resistance of the Rumanian forces located north and northwest of the Southern Carpathians.

---

* IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #9493, p. 94.

** Ibid, pp. 96-97.

*** Ibid, Inv. #11635, p. 215.

**** Ibid.

Meanwhile the troops of the 2nd Ukrainian front, performing the assignment given them by the Soviet Supreme High Command, on September 5 reached the line of Kympulung - Pitesti - Karakal - Zimnich [transl. from Russian] in the direction of the main strike, having progressed 80-140 kilometers in depth. The forward units of the 6th Tank Army broke through on the Danube, to the border of Yugoslavia near the city of Turnu-Severin 165 kilometers east of Belgrade. By this time the troops of the 3rd Ukrainian front, having completely fulfilled their mission, approached the Rumanian-Bulgarian border. The 40th and 7th Guards Army, operating on the right wing of the 2nd Ukrainian front, encountered a strong enemy defense in the Carpathians, and in 5-6 days progressed only 15-20 kilometers. In addition, on the morning of September 5 six Hungarian divisions struck a blow on the forces of the 4th Rumanian Army from the area of Turda in the southern direction and by the end of September 6 had progressed 20-30 kilometers. A blow was also struck with a small force in the area of Bela-Tsrkvy [transl. from Russian].

For correct understanding of the further events it must be noted that after August 23 certain units and formations, then the entire Rumanian army together with the Soviet forces carried on the battle against the German-Hungarian forces. At the end of August the 4th Rumanian Army was concentrated west of Ploesti, and on September 2 the Rumanian command group assigned it the task of defending the border with Hungary that had been established by the Vienna "arbitration" in the sector from Brasov to Djlieu and prevent the progress of the German-Hungarian forces from the area of Cluj-Turda in the southeastern direction; the 1st Army, covering the western and northwestern borders, /282
was ordered to defend the sector from Djileu to the Danube. From the morning of September 6 the 1st and 4th Rumanian Armies, 4th army and 1st airborne corps with total numerical strength over 138,000 men* were transferred to operative subordination to the commander of the 2nd Ukrainian front. The 4th Army, consisting of 11 divisions and having its main forces in the second echelon, was at that moment conducting defensive battles to the south of the Mures River in the sector of Targu-Mures - Ayud; the 1st Army, consisting of five divisions, was located on a line south of Oradea - Arad - Temesoara, and

* Archive of MD USSR, col. 240, inv. 73765, div. 41/1, pp. 50-51. The numerical strength of the forces is given according to materials of the Rumanian General Staff for September 15, 1944.

the 4th corps (four divisions) was disposed in the area southeast of Turnu-Severin.

In this situation the commander of the 2nd Ukrainian front assigned new objectives to the troops of the left wing. The 6th Tank Army was to turn sharply to the north, and by September 12 liberate the region of Dej - Cluj - Shermeshal [transl. from Russian]; the 27th Army was to advance to the north and break through into the region of Cluj by September 15; and the 53rd Army, turning to the northwest, was to break through by the end of September 19 to the line of Brad - Lugoj. The commanders of the combined-arms armies, upon reaching the lines occupied by the Rumanian armies, were to subordinate them to themselves. The operations of both armies were supported by the 5th Airborne Army.*

In the period from September 6 through 15 the troops of the front completed their missions. The 40th and 7th Guards Armies and the mounted-mechanized group, breaking the stubborn resistance of two corps and five to six border groups of the enemy, overcame the Eastern Carpathians in 10 days, progressed on a wide front 30-130 kilometers and broke through to the line of Vatra-Dorney - Toplitsa - Targu-Mures [former transl. from Russian]. The movement of the troops of the center of the front was more rapid. They progressed up to 250 kilometers. On September 7 the tank army crossed the Southern Carpathians, and by the evening of September 11 reached the line occupied by the 4th Rumanian Army. Striking a blow in the direction of Cluj, in the following two days the tank army,** together with the 6th Rumanian army corps, threw the German and Hungarian forces back to their starting position in the area of Turda. By evening of September 15 the formations of the 27th Soviet and 4th Rumanian Armies broke through to the line of Targu-Mures and Turda. The battles on this line, particularly in the area of Turda, became drawn out. By this time on the left wing of the front the 53rd Army, meeting no resistance, overcame the Southern Carpathians, progressed 220 kilometers and broke through to the region of Karansebesha [transl. from Russian]. The 18th tank corps moved out to the region of Lipova toward the German forces that were beginning

---

* Archive of MD USSR, col. 240, inv. 73765, div. 41/1, p. 24.

** On September 12 the 6th Tank Army was awarded the designation "Guards."

their advance. Here approximately three Rumanian battalions and a heavy artillery battalion carried on intense defensive battles.*

Although by evening of September 15 the 2nd Ukrainian front had not totally seized the region of Dej - Cluj - Shermeshel, it had still progressed forward in the center and left wing to 250 kilometers, and in the sector from the Carpathians to the area of Turda had reached the Rumanian-Hungarian border established by the Vienna "arbitration." The Sekler [transl. from Russian] salient in Transylvania, occupied by Hortist Hungary, was cleared. However, in this time the enemy was able, after the catastrophe that had befallen him at Kishinyev and Iasi, to again form a solid defensive front against the troops of the 2nd Ukrainian front. Behind the front line he had inconsiderable reserves west of Turda and to the east of Oradi. The forces of the 2nd Ukrainian front were opposed by 27 German and Hungarian divisions and brigades including 6 tank and motorized divisions.

On September 15, when the enemy had intensified resistance on the right wing and in the center of the 2nd Ukrainian front and gone over to the offensive on the left wing, with the goal of preventing the breakthrough of our troops to the Mid-Danube plain, a new directive from Headquarters was received. The assignments to the front were given with consideration of the fact that its neighbor to the right, the 4th Ukrainian front, which had gone over to /283 the offensive on September 9 in the directions of Uzhgorod and Mukachevo, was progressing slowly, and its neighbor to the left, the 3rd Ukrainian front, having completed the liberation of Bulgaria, was transferring troops to the area of Sofia and northwest of it and consequently it had become possible to assign a part of its forces to the composition of the 2nd Ukrainian front.

Headquarters' plan was to strike a blow in the general direction of Cluj - Debrecen - Mishkol'ts transl. from Russian , not ceasing the advance in any of the sectors of the zone of the 2nd Ukrainian front, with the immediate task of completing the liberation of Rumania, breaking through to the pre-war

* Archives M.F.A. - M.St.M., file 732/1, p. 6.

Rumanian-Hungarian border, and further of crossing it, approaching the Tisa in the sector of Chop - Sol'nok [transl. from Russian] and helping the 4th Ukrainian front to overcome the Carpathians and seize the region of Uzhgorod. After that the troops of the front were to break through to the Tisa in the sector of Sol'nok - Szeged (map 13). Headquarters' instructions called for concentration of a strike group - the 46th Army and the mounted-mechanized group of Gen. Pliyev* - on the left wing of the front, simultaneously with the offensive. On the same day Marshal of the Soviet Union Malinovskiy assigned all armies the mission of fulfilling Headquarters' instructions.

From September 16 through 24 fierce battles went on on the right wing of the front and in the region of Cluj. The enemy reinforced his forces in the area of Cluj - Turda with four divisions, including two Panzer divisions. Frequent attacks altered with counterattacks from each side. However, the front line was not subjected to any essential changes here. On the left wing of the front on September 19 the 53rd Army reached the line occupied by the 1st Rumanian Army, and, having organized cooperative action with it, continued the advance. On September 21 it seized the city of Arad and on September 24 broke through to the Rumanian-Hungarian border in the area of the Hungarian city of Mako and northeast of it.

The situation that had developed by the end of September 24 was characterized by very stubborn enemy resistance of the troops of the right wing and center of the 2nd Ukrainian front. In order to temporarily halt the advance of the front, in September the enemy command group transferred 20 divisions, including 4 Panzer and 1 motorized division, and 2 Panzer brigades, to the zone of its operations.** Therefore the missions assigned to the front were not completely fulfilled. The need arose to change the direction of the main strike. The commander of the front made his decision on this on September 24; Headquarters' sanction was received the following day.*** The forces of the

---

* IML. Docs. and Maters. of Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #9493, pp. 159-160. Two cavalry corps of the mounted-mechanized group were transferred at this time from the western regions of the Ukraine to the western regions of Rumania.

** Collected Materials on the Composition of the Forces of Fascist Germany, 4th Ed., p. 157.

*** Archive of MD USSR, col. 240, inv. 73765, div. 41/1, p. 7.

front were to be regrouped from the left wing in the area of the city of Arad, which was connected with the preparations for a new, Debrecen operation.*

As a result of the rapid progress of the strike group of the front from the region of Arad to the north and the breakthrough of considerable of its forces on October 12 to the region southwest of Debrecen, and to the area of Oradia, the enemy began to withdraw the 8th German, 2nd and 1st Hungarian Armies from the northern part of Transylvania and also from the sector before the 4th Ukrainian front. The troops of the right wing of the 2nd Ukrainian front immediately went over to pursuit of the enemy. On October 12 the 27th Army seized Cluj. Conducting battles with enemy rear guards and progressing in the northwestern direction, on October 25 the 40th and 4th Rumanian Armies liberated the border cities of Satu-Mare and Karey [transl. from Russian] and entered the northeastern section of Hungary. Thus the liberation of the northern part of Transylvania was accomplished and thereby the entire territory of Rumania within its pre-war boundaries. Later October 25 was declared Rumanian People's Army Day.

In the expulsion of the occupiers from the central regions of Rumania /284
and also from the northern part of Transylvania, as has already been shown, Rumanian divisions participated with the Soviet forces. When in the first days of September the German-Hungarian forces attempted to go over to the offensive the Rumanian forces organized a defense on the line of Targu-Mures - Turda as well as in the region of Arad and for several days held off the enemy's onslaught. This gave the units of the Red Army the opportunity to overcome the Southern Carpathians under favorable conditions and arrive in time to help the Rumanians.

In the battle with the German-Hungarian forces for the liberation of their country the Rumanian Army suffered considerable losses. From August 23 through October 30 its losses were over 75,000 men.** In these battles the forms of joint operations by the Rumanian and Soviet troops that were perfected in subsequent operations were first worked out.

---

* The Debrecen operation began Oct. 6. It was largely conducted in the territory of Hungary. A detailed elucidation of the operation is given in Chapter 13. It is mentioned here because one of its origins was the completion of the liberation of the entire pre-war territory of Rumania.

** Archives M.F.A. - M.St.M., file 732/1, p. 6.

In the Debrecen operation the 4th Rumanian Army, fighting on the Transylvanian plateau, first in the zone of the 27th, then of the 40th Soviet Army, actively participated in clearing the northern part of Transylvania. At that time the 1st Rumanian Army, advancing east of the Western Rumanian mountains, took part in the liberation of the regions of Oradia and Salonta.

Together with the Soviet divisions, the 1st Rumanian volunteer division named for Tudor Vladimirescu carried on an heroic struggle in the territory of Rumania. Formed on the initiative of Rumanian patriots in the territory of the Soviet Union in 1943, it particularly distinguished itself by its feats of arms. Many other divisions also fought bravely. This is how the commander of the 2nd Ukrainian front evaluated their actions: "Certain Rumanian divisions simply carried us away by their military drive, their courage and self-sacrifice. They withstood heavy battles."*

The soldiers, officers and generals of the Red Army knew from experience in the war that in operations against our forces the Rumanian forces had not been distinguished by great military quality. This was connected with the fact that before August 23,1944 they were conducting an unjust war, fighting for the goals of German imperialism and the Rumanian capitalists and landholders, which were alien to them. After the political changes in Rumania the Rumanian soldier saw that he was fighting for his own genuine, national interests, for his democratic homeland. This very fact explains the high level of combat morale of the Rumanian forces in this period.

The Rumanian Army also continued to participate in the anti-fascist war after the liberation of Rumania. Together with Soviet corps the 7th army corps stormed Budapest. In the course of four months the 4th Rumanian Army conducted heavy battles in the northeastern sector of Hungary, forced the Tisa and other rivers. In December 1944 they entered the territory of Czechoslovakia along with the 40th Soviet Army. The losses of the Rumanian Army in the war against Germany were approximately 170,000 men.**

---

* "Voyenno-istoricheskiy zhurnal," 1959, No. 2, p. 32.

** See Ion Tutoveanu. Military Participation of Rumania in the Antifascist War. "Lupta de clasa". August 1957, Nr.8,p.24.

In connection with the successful operations of the Rumanian forces in crossing the Hungarian-Czechoslovak border and liberating the city of Turna, on December 27, 1944 Marshal Malinovskiy sent a telegram to the commander of the 4th Rumanian Army, in which he wrote: "I thank you and the troops of the 4th Army subordinate to you for the efforts in performing the combat assignments which were made by the army, fighting shoulder to shoulder with the Red Army."*

In five months 16 Rumanian divisions, together with the Soviet forces, liberated Rumania and fought bravely to rid the Czechoslovak people of fascist slavery. Seven times in the orders of Headquarters of the Supreme High Command of the Red Army the heroism of the Rumanian divisions was noted, and the 1st volunteer division named for Tudor Vladimirescu was awarded the order of the Red Banner. /285

Thus in joint combat actions Soviet-Rumanian military friendship was strengthened. For 260 days the Rumanian Army took part in the anti-fascist war, progressing with the Red Army almost a thousand kilometers.

* "Rumania's Contribution to the Defeat of Fascist Germany," p. 274.

CHAPTER 9

THE ROUT OF ARMY GROUP "SOUTH UKRAINE." THE EXPULSION OF THE FASCIST OCCUPIERS FROM SOVIET MOLDAVIA.

5. The struggle of the people under the guidance of the CPR to establish a democratic order in Rumania.

The armed uprising initiated the people's revolution in Rumania. Having /285 overthrown the fascist dictatorship it "opened a path to the Rumanian people to victory over the exploiting classes, giving them the opportunity to build a new, blooming, socialist Rumania."*

After the August uprising a new ratio of class powers and their political parties was formed in Rumania. The masses acquired rights and liberties they

* Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej. 20th Anniversary of the Liberation of Rumania from the Fascist Yoke. Bucuresti, 1959, p.15.

had never before enjoyed. The Communist Party came out of the underground and set about reorganizing and reinforcing its ranks in accordance with the new conditions. Tens of thousands of workers, working peasants and representatives of the progressive intelligentsia joined the Communist Party. The ruling classes and the National Tsaranist and National Liberal Parties representing their interests attempted, using the government with its reactionary majority, to preserve the old social-economic order, their rights and privileges. The struggle of these two opposing forces - the workers, peasants, progressive intelligentsia on one hand, and the reactionary forces headed by the leaders of the National Tsaranist and National Liberal parties on the other - lasted from August 23, 1944 to March 6, 1945.

The Communist Party of Rumania, leading the mass revolutionary movement, ensured the success of the people's revolution with its correct political and tactical line. The Communist Party considered the main tasks of the revolution to be the liquidation of the landholders' ownership and vestiges of feudalism, active participation in the joint war against Hitlerite Germany, complete democratization of the country and the restoration of the war-ruined economy. The revolution developing in the country was not only anti-fascist but anti-feudal and anti-imperialistic. The working class spoke out as the hegemonic force of the revolution and its main ally was the working peasantry.

On September 12 the governments of the Soviet Union, England and the United States of America signed a truce agreement with the government of Rumania in Moscow. In the agreement it was emphasized that as of 4:00 on August 24 Rumania ceased military operations against the USSR, withdrew from the war against the Allied Nations, broke off with Germany and its satellites and entered the war on the side of the anti-fascist coalition, taking upon itself the obligation to provide 12 divisions. Participation in the war after August 23 offered Rumania the opportunity to make a contribution to the defeat of fascist Germany, to restore its national independence, and establish a democratic order in the country.

The resolution of the question of reparations was of great and principal significance. The Soviet government did not demand compensation of all damage inflicted on our country by the Rumanian forces, although it had /286 extremely weighty bases to do so. Considering that Rumania had not simply withdrawn from the war, but had entered the war against Germany, the government of the USSR agreed to only partial compensation of the damage in the sum of 300 million dollars.

A large role in the democratization of Rumania was played by the articles of agreement on the dissolution of pro-Hitler organizations, the forbidding of propaganda against the anti-fascist coalition, the release of anti-fascists from prisons, the repeal of discriminatory laws, the handing over of war criminals for trial, and so forth.

The article calling for the restoration of Rumanian administration in the entire territory except a front zone 50-100 kilometers wide testified that the Soviet Union respected the national sovereignty of Rumania and did not wish to interfere in its internal affairs.

The agreement had in view the creation of an Allied Control Committee, which would be placed under the obligation of regulating and supervising the fulfillment of all of the terms of truce under the general direction and upon the instructions of the Soviet High Command. Thus the organs of the Soviet military command group were not only to direct the continuing military operations in the territory of Rumania, but also to supervise the execution of the agreement.

Supported by the principal position of this agreement, the progressive forces of Rumania undermined the position of the reaction in their country. In a special address to the people issued in connection with the completion of the truce, the CC CPR wrote: "Exact fulfillment of the truce conditions will place a boundary between the old anti-national policy of enmity to the Soviet Union and the new patriotic policy of friendship with the Soviet Union. For the good of the homeland and the people the duty of every Rumanian patriot

is to fight ruthlessly against all who try to interfere with the conscientious fulfillment of the terms of the truce."*

Meanwhile the reactionary majority in the government of Gen. Sanatescu resisted the conscientious fulfillment of the terms of the truce, taking all measures to prevent the people from establishing a truly democratic order. Thus the position remained until March, 1945 when the first democratic government, led by P. Groza, came to power.

After the anti-fascist uprising the question arose of the attitude toward Sanatescu's government. From the very start the Communist Party carried on a struggle both inside and outside the government for the establishment of truly democratic authority.

The conquests of the people, achieved as the result of the armed uprising, were threatened by internal enemies. In the first days after the overthrow of Antonescu's regime the National Tsaranist party of Yu. Maniu opened their ranks to the legionnaires and thereby created a real possibility of the legalization of fascist forces. The CPR mobilized the masses to fight to purge the state apparatus, arrest fascist elements, forbid the reception of the legionnaires into political parties and ban the Hitlerite press. The Central Committee of the party turned to the people with a call to eradicate the legionnaire fascist bands.

The Communist Party of Rumania conducted a broad campaign for national support of the war against Hitlerite Germany. Under the slogan "All for the front, all for victory!" it called on the masses to support the anti-fascist struggle and exposed the maneuvers of the reactionary circles and their representatives in the government of Sanatescu, which instead of mobilizing all of the country's military capabilities and strengthening the will of the army for victory, actually sabotaged the conduct of the war. In an appeal by the Central Committee of the Communist Party to the officers and soldiers of the Rumanian army, it was stressed that as opposed to Rumania's unjust war

* Central Archives of the Institute of History on the Party from the C.C. and P.M.R. resource 1, unit nr. AXXYIII-22.

against the Soviet Union, the war against Hitler's Germany was just. The workers and also the soldiers as a whole as well as the patriotic officer cadres warmly responded to the call of the Communist Party. They showed remarkable examples of heroism and selflessness in the struggle with fascism, in providing everything necessary for the front, in restoring enterprises and increasing the production of goods. A considerable number of workers, peasants and representatives of the intelligentsia joined the army voluntarily. /287

The interests of developing the revolution demanded the establishment of a close unity in the working class. A conference of delegates of the Communist and Social Democratic parties on the initiative of the CPR formed an organizational commission for the creation of united Rumanian labor unions. The resolution of the conference read: "The working class of our country must become a well organized force capable of playing a leading role in the matter of raising the level of life and culture, in the matter of the organization and struggle of the workers of city and country."* The resolution was directed toward overcoming the reformist views that had ruled in the old labor conference.

The creation of the National Democratic Front, which played a decisive role in the formation of the people's democratic government, was a major service of the Communist Party.

On September 6, 1944 on the initiative of the CPR a meeting was called of representatives of the party and of organizations included in the 1943 Anti-Hitler Patriotic Front. The goal of the conference was to expand the National Democratic bloc and create a National Democratic Front (NDF), that is, to combine all of the forces that fought consistently against fascism and for the full democratization of the country. The plan of the platform of the National Democratic Front of Rumania was published by the Communist Party. Its main positions came down to the following: the formation of a democratic government representing the broad masses of the people and wishing to carry

* "Rominia libera", 7 September 1944.

on the war against Germany to the end, the liberation of national territory, the effecting of agrarian reform, the expropriation of landholders' lands, true democratization of the country, the punishment of war criminals, a purge of the state apparatus and the conduct of a policy of sincere friendship with the Soviet Union.

This program of actions united all of the democratic parties. In the first days of October the National Council of the NDF was formed, in which were included representatives of the following parties and organizations: the CPR, SDP (Social Democratic Party), United Labor Unions, Agricultural Worker's Front, Union of Patriots, and Mados. The Tsaranists and Liberals did not join the NDR and took a hostile position in relation to it. On October 8, 1944 the National Democratic Front published a proclamation in which it was stated that the government of Sanatescu did not enjoy the trust of the people, since it was not taking measures for more active participation by Rumania in the war, refused to purge and state apparatus of fascists, and was not taking steps to improve the situation of the working class.*

The platform of the National Democratic Front was warmly supported by the working class, the clear testimony to which was the popular meeting attended by 100,000 in Bucharest. It was also approved by the peasantry. It was characteristic that immediately after the publishing of the NDF platform peasant committees began to appear, which made it their goal to carry out agrarian reform.

In the second half of October in the major cities of the country - Bucharest, Krayov [transl. from Russian], Constanţa, Brasov, Braila and others - mass demonstrations organized by the National Democratic Front took place demanding the resignation of Sanatescu's reactionary government. Under pressure from the masses guided by the CPR, in the first days of November the /288
government announced its resignation. In the new government formed November 4, again by Sanatescu, the post of Deputy Premier was given to the leader of the Agricultural Worker's Front, P. Groza, and eleven posts of ministers and

---

* See "Science", 8 October 1944.

their deputies were occupied by representatives of the parties included in the NDF, including two Communists. On the whole this composition of the new government testified to the strengthened and expanded position of the democratic forces. However, the controlling role in the government belonged as before to the reactionary parties of the National Tsaranists and the National Liberals. The National Tsaranists alone controlled five ministries.

The second government of Sanatescu continued essentially to conduct the same policy as the first. In the period of its existence the subversive work of the reactionaries was intensified still more, particularly in the northern part of Transylvania. The number of hostile acts against the Red Army and individual Soviet servicemen increased and the fulfillment of many of the terms of the truce agreement was sabotaged. In connection with this, at the beginning of December the Allied Control Commission lodged a strong written protest.

Meanwhile the wave of public demonstrations organized by the National Democratic Front continued to grow. The working masses demanded that democratic reforms be carried out, that the Minister of Internal Affairs, who had carried out repressions against the worker's and peasant's organizations and sponsored fascist elements,* resign. The ceremonial funeral of two workers who had been killed by legionnaires, which took place on November 28 in Bucharest, turned into a demonstration by 150,000 workers. Among the slogans carried by the demonstrators were such as "We want a government of the National Democratic Front!" "We demand land for peasants!" " Long live the Rumanian-Soviet brotherhood in arms!" "Fascists out of the army!"

Under these conditions the second government of Sanatescu was forced to resign on December 2. On December 7 the king formed a government headed by corps General M. Radescu, who was connected with American and English circles.** The reactionaries, who as before comprised the majority in the new government,

---

* The Minister of Internal Affairs was a representative of the National Tsaranist Party.

** See "Enemies of the Peace and Freedom of Peoples. Aggressive Policy and Intrigues of American Imperialism Against the Rumanian People's Republic," Bucharest, MID RNR, 1952, p. 27, 132.

still more decisively carried on the battle against the masses of the people, who were demanding the complete democratization of the country.

The government program of the National Democratic Front, published Jan. 28, 1945, read:"...due to the anti-national policy carried on both in the government and outside it by reactionary elements of the governing circles of the National Tsaranist and National Liberal Parties, which have hindered the democratization of the country, due to sabotage and procrastination in fulfillment of the truce conditions, due to obstacles on the part of those circles in effecting essential economic and social reforms, our country is now in a serious situation and is threatened by national and economic collapse. This anti-democratic policy conducted by the reactionary circles, and sabotage in the fulfillment of the truce conditions, are causing the growing mistrust of the USSR in relation to the Rumanian governments in which reactionary elements predominate."*

The government program of the National Democratic Front correctly judged the situation in Rumania. The country was indeed in a serious situation. During their retreat the Germans had put many railroad lines out of operation and disrupted telegraph and telephone communications. Locomotive rolling stock had decreased by one-half, train car stock by one-third. The number of active industrial machines after the liberation was 9 percent of the pre-war level. Oil production in 1944 had decreased by 36 percent in comparison with the previous year. Rumanian currency had become greatly devalued during the years of war.

Instead of developing activity to restore the national economy of the country, the reactionaries of the government delayed the start-up of enterprises, presented obstacles to their financing, concealed raw materials, attempted to hinder the harvesting of crops and the carrying out of a sowing campaign. They caused particularly great damage to the state economy in the field of trade. Through fradulent machinations they obtained an increase in retail prices on widely used goods; from September 1944 through February 1945 prices increased 245 percent.** /289

* Quoted from "Pravda," February 7, 1945.

** See "History of Rumania. Popular Outline." Moscow, Izd-vo Inostrannoy Literatury, 1950, p. 554.

The National Tsaranist and National Liberal Parties inspired and supported the policy of sabotage. Their central organs "Dreptatya" and "Viitorul" [transl. from Russian] daily printed articles calling for blocking of the execution of agrarian reform, and sabotage of the restoration of industry. They incited attacks on leaders of the democratic organizations, supported circles with anti-Soviet views, dreaming of American and English intervention, and encouraged the unification of the legionnaires into terrorist groups for operations in the rear of the Soviet forces fighting in Hungary.*

The National Democratic Fromt energetically exposed the ringleaders of the Rumanian reaction. Thus, in the first days of February 1945 at the district meeting in Bucharest G. Gheorghiu-Dej spoke. On the basis of the national character of the government program of the National Democratic Front he showed that the realization of its demands was being blocked by the reactionaries, above all by the leader of the National Tsaranists, Y. Maniu.

The reactionaries responded to the revealing statements of the Communists with terrorist acts. Assassination attempts were organized on leading workers of the party and press. Radescu, throwing off his mask of peacemaker of the parties of the National Democratic Front and the so-called "historical" parties made a "program" speech on February 12 in which he openly demanded that the workers be removed from participation in politics and spoke out against agrarian reform. His speech was a direct provocation to unleash a civil war. It was no accident that on this very day fascists, supported by the police, had beaten participants in a demonstration organized by supporters of the NDF. To the representatives of the workers who came to protest Radescu declared, "I will send troops into the streets. I will shoot you all... I will make it here as it was in Greece."** At a meeting of the Council of Ministers of February 16 an admission of preparations for a fascist coup escaped the Premiere. Radescu said that he was, "if necessary, ready to resort to a civil war..."***

---

* See "Enemies of the Peace and Liberty of the Peoples," p. 28.

** Ibid, p. 29.

*** Ibid, pp. 28, 29.

It was entirely obvious that the reaction led by the king and Radescu had it in mind to put down the democratic movement by force of arms. Radescu began to draw military units into the capital of Rumania and prepare them for armed actions against the people. At the same time the units located at the front were not reinforced. However, the plans of the reactionaries to achieve a victory by the "Greek method" failed. In Greece the reaction was victorious because it had the support of English bayonets. In Rumania this had been excluded. Here the Soviet forces stood, having come to Rumanian soil not as occupiers, but as liberators of the people from the fascist yoke. Furthermore, the Soviet command group could not permit activization of reactionary forces in the rear of our troops, which were then operating in Hungary.

The Communist Party of Rumania correctly assessed the situation that had developed in the country. Supported by the military forces of the people and their political activeness, the working class led by the Communist Party foiled all attempts by the reaction to push the country onto the road to civil war, and repulsed the foreign imperialist circles. At one of the last meetings of the government of Radescu, Gheorghiu-Dej declared,"We will take any means /290 to frustrate an attempt to transform the internal struggle into a civil war."*

This policy of the CPR was crowned with victory.

Under conditions when fascist bands had turned to suppression of peoples' demonstrations and open attacks on the leaders of the working class and workers' clubs, the Communist Party adopted new methods of fighting.

The peoples' masses led by the Communists began to expel fascists from enterprises and institutions, seize primars** and prefectures and place their representatives there as directors. In this way by March 6, 1945, 52 of 60 districts were headed by prefects who were representatives of the National

---

* Lessons to Help Those Who Study History P.M.R. p. 500.

** Primar - a head of a city of village commune; prefect - a district administration.

Democratic Front. In February 1945 the peasantry, with the help of the working class, began without preliminary permission to carry out the division of landholders' land according to norms established by the NDF. First of all land was allotted to the families of soldiers stationed at the front, which increased the morale of the troops. Throughout the country meetings and demonstrations were held and hundreds of thousands of people announced their readiness to continue the struggle until a democratic government should be formed.

The revolutionary struggle of the masses against the reactionary majority carried out under the guidance of the Communist Party was a great political school for the workers and peasants. This could not help but be reflected in the National Tsaranist and National Liberal parties, in which the process of breakdown increased.

On February 24, 1945 in Bucharest and other cities of Rumania great demonstrations of the National Democratic Front were held under the slogans "Down with the government of Radescu!" "We want a government of the National Democratic Front!" In the capital over 600,000 persons took part in the demonstration. Units previously prepared by the reaction opened fire, but this did not stop the demonstrators. They demanded the resignation of Radescu's government and the formation of a government of the NDF. Attempts by the reaction to suppress the people's action with the help of military units failed. In many cities soldiers and officers with democratic views joined the workers. On February 26 generals and officers Krestulescu, D. Damachanu, R. Rusescu [transl. from Russian] and others who had supported the Communists during preparations for the uprising made an announcement in which they dissassociated themselves from Radescu. For this they were discharged from the army. On February 28 the mass people's protest movement forced Radescu's government to resign. The ex-Premier took refuge in the British representation in Bucharest, and later left the country in an American airplane. This shows who Radescu's master was, who inspired him to fight against the workers.

The king and his circle decided to form a new government headed by Prince Shtirbei, but they were unable to execute this plan. Under pressure from the

mighty people's movement, on March 6 1945 a government was formed led by P. Groza, the leader of the Agricultural Worker's Front - a massive organization of working peasants which recognized the guiding role of the working class in the development of the revolution. The majority of ministerial posts were occupied by representatives of the parties and organizations included in the National Democratic Front. Communists received the posts of Minister of Internal Affairs, Justice and Means of Communication. On the whole the new government reflected the new ratio of power in the country.

In its class essence, the power in Rumania after March 6, 1945 was a revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry. Thus Rumania started on the road to major social changes without resorting to civil war. A great deal of credit in this belongs to the Communist Party of Rumania.

The Red Army exerted a great influence on the development of events in /291
Rumania. Its presence in the territory of Rumania deprived the American and English imperialists of the opportunity for armed interference in the internal affairs of Rumania, for which the Rumanian reaction had so hoped.

The battle of the Soviet Armed Forces to rid the Rumanian people of the fascist yoke was crowned with total success. As a result of the military operations of our troops from August 20 to September 24, 1944 army group "South Ukraine," one of four enemy strategic groupings on the Soviet-German front, was routed. Eighteen of its divisions were encircled and liquidated. The Rumanian army completely dropped out of the armed forces at the disposal of Hitler's Germany. In the battles from August 20 through September 20 the losses of the troops of the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts were something over 76,000 persons.*

As a result of the operation in Rumania the enemy's strategic front in the southern sector was breached for a distance of several hundred kilometers.

---

* Archives of MD USSR, col. 240, inv. 54452, div. 3, p. 290; col. 243, inv. 15937, div. 24, pp. 140-145.

In 36 days the Red Army progressed over 750 kilometers and, breaking through to the Rumanian-Hungarian and Rumanian-Yugoslavian borders, deeply flanked the enemy's Carpathian grouping and so complicated the situation that the enemy was able to restore the strategic front only toward mid-September. The enemy was forced to form a new sector of the front facing the east, using the forces of the troops disposed in the Balkans.

The political consequences of the victory of the Soviet forces were still more significant. Particularly favorable conditions were formed to intensify the anti-fascist struggle of the masses of the people in Rumania. The country, which for over three years had conducted an unjust war against the USSR as part of Hitler's forces, as the result of the August uprising not only withdrew from the war on the side of Germany, but began military operations against the German fascist forces together with the Red Army.

The withdrawal of Rumania from the Hitlerite bloc created all necessary conditions to achieve a second major political goal - the removal of Bulgaria from that bloc. The movement of the Soviet forces out to the western border of Rumania also sharply altered the external political situation of the third German satellite in Southeastern Europe, Hungary. Conditions also changed for direct assistance to our allies Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia, and also for the development of the struggle against the Nazi oppressors in Albania and Greece. In other words, the political situation in Southeastern Europe had changed fundamentally.

The Red Army, having routed the German forces in Rumania, played a decisive part in the liberation of that country from the fascist yoke. Under the guidance of the Communist Party the Rumanian people, taking advantage of the favorable situation, rebelled and overthrew the hated government of Antonescu. Rumania withdrew from the unjust aggressive war in which it had senselessly lost almost 600,000 dead, wounded and prisoners.* The Red Army and the Rumanian people foiled the American-English plan to enslave Rumania and establish there a humiliating regime of semi-colonial oppression on the "Greek model." They also frustrated the imperialist plan to turn Rumania into a

* Archives MFA - M.St.M., file 456/23, p. 82.

bridgehead for a new war against the USSR. The Red Army helped the Rumanian people to restore the genuine national independence of their country. Together with the Rumanian armies the Soviet forces liberated the northern part of Transylvania, which made it possible to resolve the question of reuniting the entire Rumanian people within the borders of their homeland. The presence of the Red Army in Rumania and the correct tactics of the CPR /292 made it impossible for the Rumanian and international reaction to unleash a civil war in the country, and created conditions for the free unfolding of the class struggle and the relatively peaceful development of the revolution. The workers established an order of people's democracy.

The Red Army upon entering the territory of Rumania found in the people of this country not an overthrown enemy but their ally and friend. The Rumanian people began to fight with the Red Army for the final liberation of their homeland and annexation to it of the northern part of Transylvania, which had been torn away by force. The August anti-fascist uprising and the liquidation of the Hitlerite forces located in Bucharest and in the rear areas of the country, and also the participation of Rumanian divisions in the military operations of the Soviet forces from September 1944 through May 1945, are the clearest expressions of their struggle. The Rumanian armed forces made a contribution to the common cause of the anti-fascist war at its final stage. Rumania also helped in the struggle against fascist Germany with its material resources.

The policy of the government of the USSR and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in relation to the Rumanian people, as has been shown, was determined not by a feeling of vengeance for the three years of crimes by the Rumanian occupiers on Soviet soil, but by the need to solve a basic problem of the war - how to totally defeat German fascism, and also by the need to draw Rumania into the solution of this problem, free it from the fascist yoke, and create conditions in which the Rumanian workers themselves might decide their fate. "Not as a conquerer, but as a liberator of the Rumanian people the Red Army came to Rumania"; this was one of the most important positions advanced by the Soviet government. Another very important position was that the Rumanian people should take part in the war

against fascist Germany in the aims of establishing the independence and sovereignty of their country.

This attitude of the Soviet Union toward Rumania helped the masses of the people, headed by the CPR, in the struggle for democratization of the country. The Rumanian Communist Party used the truce agreement between the Soviet Union and Rumania in the struggle of the country's progressive forces against the reaction. The Party won enormous authority among the people, and directed their efforts toward democratization of the state apparatus, and realization of agrarian reform. It stood out as the organizer of the organizer of the National Democratic Front. The struggle of the masses of the people rallied in this front was completed by the formation of a government of the National Democratic Front.*

The correct policy of the Soviet government and the Communist Party was a basic factor in ensuring the liberation of Rumania. A correct political line in itself, however, could not lead to victory in the war. It was necessary to properly use the armed forces. The latter was at the top of the tasks placed before them by the Party and the government.

If one speaks of the main factor that from the military point of view ensured our victory in Rumania, we must first of all point out the high degree of military art of the Soviet Armed Forces in the operations in the territory of Rumania, their fighting power, the remarkable organizational abilities of the officers and generals, skillful execution of the instructions of Headquarters, and the wholehearted devotion of the Soviet soldiers to their motherland, Communist Party and government. These qualities of our army were particularly clearly marked in the Iasi-Kishinyev operation, which predetermined the outcome of the military operations in Rumania. In an item on the results of the operation published in "Pravda" it was written that "this operation to surround the German troops is one of the largest operations, and among the most outstanding in strategic and military-political significance,

* The government included representatives of the liberal grouping of Tatarescu not included in the National Democratic Front.

of this war."* An article in "Krasnaya zvezda" on the events in the area of Iasi and Kishinyev also rated them highly. The newspaper noted that this success was "an indication of the steady growth in the high level of military qualities of the Red Army and the skill of its cadres."** The Communist Party and the Soviet government fittingly valued the success of our forces in the Iasi-Kishinyev operation. Many units and formations were honored with the designations "Kishinyev," "Iasi," "Izmail." The commander of the 20th tank brigade, Hero of the Soviet Union Col. S.F. Shutov was awarded his second "Gold Star" medal. The commander of the 3rd tank brigade, Lt. Col. I.D. Iviliyev, commander of the 56th motor-rifle brigade Col. F.F. Shtan'ko and many others were awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union.*** For combat services in August over 18,000 soldiers received orders and medals.**** /293

The goals and objectives of the fronts, the scope of the operations, the direction of the fronts' main strike, their cooperation, supplying them with forces and equipment, the assignment of new objectives in the course of the successful conduct of military operations - all this was determined by the Supreme High Command, based on the suggestions of the commanders of the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts.

In the operation in the territory of Rumania close cooperation was organized between the fronts and also between ground and air forces. The considerable superiority of our air force and its mastery in the air from the first day of combat operations provided freedom of maneuver for the ground forces. With their blows on the enemy's ships and bases and the landing of assault forces the Black Sea fleet supported the advance of the troops of the coastal flank of the 3rd Ukrainian front.

In this operation, to encircle the enemy the method was used of simultaneously breaching the enemy's front in widely separated sectors (in this

---

* "Pravda," Sept. 13, 1944.

** "Krasnaya zvezda," Sept. 17, 1944.

*** Archive of MD USSR, col. 33, inv. 686043, div. 96, p. 202; "Pravda," Sept. 15 and 16, 1944.

**** Ibid, inv. 43294, div. 85, p. 25; div. 86, p. 149.

approximately 200 kilometers), which had been tested in practice in the war, in order to deny the enemy the opportunity to collect his reserves into a striking force to repel the onslaught of the Soviet troops. The blows of the front were struck in advantageous directions, and the breakthrough sectors were chosen at the most vulnerable spots in the enemy defense.

In the directions of the main blows in the breakthrough sectors a large quantity of forces and equipment was concentrated: in the 2nd Ukrainian front half of the front's rifle divisions, artillery and mortars and over three-quarters of the tanks and assault guns; and in the 3rd Ukrainian front approximately one-third of the rifle divisions, artillery and mortars and almost all of the tanks. This made it possible to create artillery densities in the breakthrough sectors such as had never been used in any previous encirclement operation.

Another peculiarity of the encirclement of the enemy near Iasi and Kishinyev was that simultaneously with the closure of the ring of encirclement the troops operating in the inner direction did not form a more or less stable front as, for example, in the Korsun-Shevchenko operation, but began to move rapidly into operational depth of the enemy's defense, as in Belorussia.

The military operations of our forces in Rumania were characterized by maneuverability and the rapid speeds of the advance. In the first four to five days of the operation, which were decisive, the average daily rate of the advance reached 20-25 kilometers. The revolutionary changes in the country fundamentally improved conditions for the further operations of the Red Army. The troops broke through to Bucharest on the 11th day: i.e., they progressed 30 kilometers each 24 hours. Their maximum progress from August 20 to September 24 was approximately 750 kilometers.

Near Iaşi and Kishinyev the Soviet forces encircled the largest enemy grouping after the Stalingrad and Belorussian operations. The ring of encirclement was closed in an extremely short time, five days, and the liquidation of the enemy was on the whole also completed in five days. /294

Finally, an extremely important feature of the military operations of the Red Army in Rumania was that after the change in the political situation in Rumania and the country's declaration of war on Germany a joint struggle by Soviet and Rumanian forces against the common enemy began. In the battles in the territory of Rumania military cooperation of the armies of the two peoples began to form. Evaluating the historical significance of the cooperation, G. Gheorghiu-Dej says, "In the heat of war against fascism a Rumanian-Soviet brotherhood at arms was forged, the brotherly friendship of our people with the people of the country of socialism was strengthened, as well as warm gratitude toward the Soviet Army - the liberator, the soldiers of which spilled their blood in the name of the liberty of our country."* The fighting alliance of the Soviet and Rumanian peoples became one of the most important factors in the postwar development of Rumania on the path of the people's democracy and the construction of socialism.

* "Analele Institutului de istorie a partidului de pe linga C.C. al P.M.R." 1961, No. 3, pag.21.

CHAPTER 10

THE LIBERATION OF BULGARIA

1. Bulgaria before the arrival of the Red Army in its territory.

After the completion of the Iaşi-Kishinyev operation the troops of the 3rd Ukrainian front broke through to the border of Rumania and Bulgaria by September 6, meeting no resistance. The further operations of the Soviet forces took place in close connection with the events occurring in that country. /295

By that time a tense internal political situation had developed in Bulgaria. The country had undergone a deep economic and political crisis. The German imperialists mercilessly robbed the people. The German monopolies "Todt," "Herman Goering," "Balkantabak," "Reemstma," "Deutsche Bank,"

and others occupied command positions in the economy of Bulgaria. They controlled all of the most important branches of the national economy. On the basis of the clearing trade agreement Germany exported raw materials and foodstuffs, not supplying their goods in exchange. Such "foreign trade", in actuality open robbery, led to a German debt to Bulgaria of 75 billion levs.* This sum exceeded the annual state budget of Bulgaria. The large industry and trade bourgeoisie of Bulgaria received huge profits. Small merchant-speculators and kulaks also became rich. The serious economic situation was made more acute by exorbitant expenditures on the maintenance of the German fascist troops and by the growth of the military budget. In February 1944 one of the regents,** Filov, wrote in his journal that expenditures on the minimal maintenance of the German forces were becoming ever greater; "in the last three months they have grown to 900 million levs. which is 3,600,000,000 levs. per year".*** The increase in the Bulgarian army on the demand of the German command group to wartime staff led to where in 1944 military expenditures had a nearly ten-fold increase /296 in the state budget in relation to 1938. Fifty-nine percent of the total amount of the state budget fell to the share of the ministry of defense.****

With the complicity of the Bulgarian ruling circles the German imperialists had brought the state economy of the country to economic exhaustion. In 1944 the production of several branches of industry had fallen off sharply. Thus in comparison with 1939 in the metal-working industry it had decreased to 43.3, in the leather-dressing industry to 45.8, in the textile industry to 64.3 percent.***** In all other industries production was only 63.2 percent of the 1939 level.****** The situation

---

* "The Struggle of the Bulgarian People Against Hitlerite Fascism." Materials of the Institute of History of the Party at CC BCP. (IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. Of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #7043, p. 105).

** After the death of Czar Boris in August 1943 his young son succeeded to the throne. In his reign the council of regents was instituted, which included B. Filov, N. Mikhov and Prince Kirill.

*** "People's Court",3 March 1945

**** See Central Statistical Department, Statistical yearbook of the Kingdom of Bulgaria, Vol 34, Sofia, 1942, pages 664-665. Statistical yearbook of the People's Republic of Bulgaria, Vol 35-38, Sofia, 1943-1946, pgs 354-355.

***** Monthly proceedings of the Central Statistical Department, Vol 33, 1946, No. 1, January, page 22.

****** Materials of the Ministry of National Defense of the People's Republic of Bulgaria. (IML. Docs and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. No. 4389, P. 1).

in agriculture was no better. From 1940 through 1944 the total production of grain crops dropped by 40.6 percent and livestock population also decreased: horses by 27 percent, cattle by 16.4 percent, sheep by 30 percent, pigs by 24.8 percent and fowl by 41 percent.* Even without this the low level of agriculture during the war decreased on the whole by 30 percent.** Supplies of goods were exhausted. Inflation crowned the economic ruin, and this led to the further disorganization of the country's economy.

In the summer of 1944 the working masses were in a very difficult situation. In comparison with 1939 direct taxes had increased by over 5 times and indirect taxes by 2.4 times. The prices on rationed foodstuffs and goods had increased by 2-3.5 times while wages had increased only slightly.

In the cities the daily bread ration per person was decreased to 150 grams, and two days per week no bread at all was issued. Other products were released from time to time and then in miserly quantities. Speculators sold essential goods at ten times the normal price. It is not surprising that a considerable segment of the population lived in poverty, in semi-starvation. The draconian wartime laws introduced by the Czarist government, the requisition of bread and other agricultural products in the villages, made the life of the workers and peasants even more burdensome. Dissatisfaction with the monarchist-fascist powers and their Hitlerite masters was growing among the masses of the people. In cities and villages sabotage of government measures directed at increasing the output of industrial and agricultural products took on broad scope.

In the political sense Bulgaria was completely subordinate to Germany. Power in the country formally belonged to the Regents Council and the government; there was even a "democratic opposition" in Parliament. However, this was only an outward show. The regents and government were marionettes in the hands of Hitler. The bourgeois opposition, presented as so-called "democratic

---

* See V.N. Starodubrovskaya. Building the Economic Foundation of Socialism in the People's Republic of Bulgaria. Moscow, Izd-vo Academy of Sciences of USSR, 1953, p. 15.

** Materials of the Ministry of National Defense of the People's Republic of Bulgaria, p. 1.

parties," essentially supported the policy of the monarchist-fascist clique. The German ambassador in Sofia, Bekerle, took part in meetings of the cabinet of ministers and gave them instructions. The Gestapo totally controlled the police and military apparatus.*

However, the freedom-loving Bulgarian people did not resign themselves to the calamitous situation of their homeland. In the course of three years the patriots, under the guidance of the Bulgarian Worker's Party (BRP) and its Central Committee, carried on an heroic struggle under extremely difficult conditions for national and social liberation. /297

The breakthrough of the Red Army in the spring of 1944 to the northeast region of Rumania promoted the further intensification of the people's liberation movement in Bulgaria. In the summer the Patriotic Front had its committees in the majority of the regions of the country; in August 670 committees were operating.** They conducted anti-fascist propaganda, called upon the population not to submit to the orders of the powers, and helped the partisans in every way.

On instructions from the CC BRP the local party organization mobilized the working masses for an armed struggle. Teams of partisans which had grown in numerical strength were transformed into detachments, and detachments were transformed into brigades. The following brigades were formed: the Sofia named for Chavdar, commander Dobri Dzhurov; 1st Sofia, commander Slavcho Trynskiy; 2nd Sofia, commander Dencho Znepol'skiy; 1st Srednegorskaya named for Khristo Botev, commander Srebr'o Babakov-Morozov; 2nd Srednegorskaya named for Vasily Levskiy, commander Delcho Simov; Rodopskaya named for G. Dimitrov, commander Anton Shopov, and others.*** Many years of work by the party in the Bulgarian Army strengthened the process of its political breakdown. Many soldiers, deserting from the army, joined the partisan detachments. Some military subunits even deserted to the partisans' side. In the summer the

---

* Struggle of the Bulgarian Nation for Freedom from the Nazi Occupation and the Monarch-Fascist Dictatorship (1941-1944) Sofia, 1958, p. 188

Footnotes continued from previous page.

** "The Struggle of the Bulgarian People Against Hitlerite Fascism." Materials of the Inst. of Hist. of the Party CC BCP, p. 117. The Patriotic Fraont reached its final form in August 1943 when its National Committee was formed, including representatives of the Bulgarian Worker's Party, the left wing of the Bulgarian Agricultural Worker's People's Union, the organization of the bourgeois intelligentsia and the anti-monarchist officer cadres, the People's Union "Zveno", and the left wing of the Bulgarian Worker's Social Democratic Party.

*** "The Struggle of the Bulgarian People Against Hitlerite Fascism." Materials of the Inst. of Hist. of the Party CC BCP, p.87-88.

people's liberation army had 11 brigades and 37 detachments with total numerical strength over 18,000 persons. Over 12,000 persons operated in combat groups. The population supported the partisans. Their various missions were performed by helpers and concealers (the so-called yataki), of whom there were approximately 200,000 in the country.*

The armed struggle of the workers of Bulgaria took on a mass character. In June, according to far from complete police data, 294 armed actions took place, and in July 396.** Partisan brigades and detachments conducted raids and boldly engaged in open battles with police, gendarmes and regular troops. Their operations covered an ever greater territory in the country and became more effective in their results.

In July-August 1944 in certain regions partisan detachments began to establish the people's authority. It is true that sometimes under the onslaught of superior government forces the partisans were compelled to leave these areas. But the seizure of power, albeit still in isolated cases, meant a new step in the development of the Resistance movement. The establishment of the people's authority was not spontaneous in nature, but was effected on instructions from the CC BRP, the Main Headquarters of the People's Liberation Army and the National Committee of the Patriotic Front. Thus the masses of the people were actually being brought to a national uprising.

The intensifying struggle of the Bulgarian patriots shook the government administrative apparatus and imbued the Hitlerite servants with fear. The official authorities were forced to admit that the Bulgarian Worker's Party was acquiring ever greater influence, while the government was losing its authority and strength. "The Communist Party," it was stated in the reports of the military intelligence service for June 1944, "has recently developed aggressive activity in the cities and towns. In almost all towns one or several /298

---

* Materials of the Ministry of National Defense of the People's Republic of Bulgaria, p. 4.

** "The Struggle of the Bulgarian People Against Hitlerite Fascism." Maters. of the Inst. of Hist. of the Party CC BCP, p. 111.

groups have been organized...The struggle against illegal and Communist activity presents very many difficulties, since the population - village and city - does not help the administration and the troops... As regards the loyal population (supporters of the fascist government - Ed.), it is frightened and does not believe in the government's strength."*

With cruel repressions the rulers of Bulgaria attempted to suppress the growing people's liberation movement. Thousands of patricts were shot without trial or investigation. From January 1942 to the September uprising of 1944 64,345 persons were subjected to repressions. The fascist courts issued 1,590 death sentences, 31,540 persons were thrown into concentration camps, and thousands of anti-fascists sentenced to various prison terms.** In three and one-half years the partisans and yataki lost several thousand lives. In fascist dungeons and on the fields of battle many heroes of the Bulgarian people fell.

In spite of great sacrifices the Bulgarian Worker's Party numbered 25,000 persons. Its fighting helper, the Union of Working Youth, had 30,000 persons in its ranks. The party was headed by the outstanding revolutionary and major figure in the international worker's movement G. Dimitrov and other prominent party figures - V. Kolarov, B. Bolgaranov, D. Ganev, G. Damyanov, R. Damyanov, S. Dimitrov, Ts. Dragoycheva, T. Zhivkov, Kh. Mikhaylov, G. Tsankov, V. Chervenkov, A. Yugov and others. Ideologically trained, organized, strong in its contacts with the masses, the Bulgarian Worker's Party confidently led the people to decisive battles for the overthrow of the monarchist-fascist distatorship and the liberation of the country from the occupiers.

The rapid growth of the people's liberation movement and the victorious advance of the Red Army in the winter and spring of 1944 sharpened and deepened the political crisis in Bulgaria, which had already appeared distinctly after the defeat of the Hitlerites at Stalingrad. It was clear to the

---

* "The Struggle of the Bulgarian People Against Hitlerite Fascism." Maters. of the Inst. of Hist. of the Party CC BCP, p. 114.

** See Material on History of Bulgaria Communist Party. Sofia, 1958, p. 372

reactionary Bulgarian bourgeoisie that fascist Germany had lost the war. However, economically dependent on the German monopolies and politically tied hand and foot by the German government, the monarchist-fascist clique did not intend to change the course of their internal and external policy. They continued to help Germany in the war against the Soviet Union. The German command group had at their disposal 16 extremely important airfields, and the seaports of Varna and Burgas, and they were given the right to make military shipments by the railroads. In addition, Bulgarian troops bore occupation duty in Greece and Yugoslavia, thereby freeing several German divisions for the battle against the Soviet and Anglo-American armies.

Naturally the Soviet government could not remain indifferent to the hostile actions of the Bulgarian reactionary circles. On April 17, 1944 it directed to the Bulgarian government a note in which they lodged a sharp protest of the fact that the Bulgarian authorities were cooperating with Germany in the war against the Soviet Union. Such a situation, read the note, was "incompatible with the normal relations of the USSR and Bulgaria and can no longer be tolerated."* The Soviet government proposed that Bozhilov's government immediately forbid the use by fascist Germany of Bulgarian territory, airfields and seaports for operations against the USSR.

In connection with the fact that the government of Bozhilov attempted to deny these entirely obvious facts, on April 26 the Soviet government sent a new note to Bulgaria. Stating that the Black Sea and Danube ports of the country were bases for the German armed forces, the government of the USSR proposed that the previously closed Soviet Consulate in Varna be reopened and that Soviet Consulates be established in Burgas and Ruse (Rushchuke). However, the Bulgarian government did not accept this proposal.

This behavior by the ruling circles of Bulgaria testified to their desire to extend further assistance to Germany in the war against the anti-fascist coalition. On May 18 the Soviet government again declared that if Bulgaria did not break off with Germany, the USSR "will consider the maintenance of relations with Bulgaria, as a state which assists and intends to further assist Hitlerite Germany in the war against the Soviet Union, impossible."** /299

* "Foreign policy of the Soviet Union during the Patriotic War," Vol. II, p.186.
** Ibid, p. 195.

Seeing that the international and internal situation was become more complicated, the Bulgarian fascist clique took recourse to maneuver. At the end of May the Bulgarian government resigned. The new government of Bagryanov made a broadcast declaration of a change in the course of external policy and improvement of the situation within the country. In fact, however, it conducted a policy having nothing in common with this declaration, continued to support Hitler's Germany, and intensified fascist terror against the partisans, combat groups and yataki.

The maneuvers of the ruling circles did not confuse either the government of the USSR or the leaders of the Bulgarian people's liberation movement. Immediately after the formation of the new government the radio station "Khristo Botev" broadcast an article by G. Dimitrov in which it was stated, "The government of Bagryanov is a pro-German government... The Patriotic Front exposes illusions of any kind in relation to this government and with new strength calls for the utmost intensification of the people's liberation struggle against the Hitlerites."* At the beginning of August the National Committee of the Patriotic Front demanded that the Bagryanov government immediately change its external and internal policy and warned that in the event of refusal the Bulgarian people would find the strength and means to take the fate of the country into their own hands.

On August 12 the Soviet government sent the Bulgarian government a note in which it exposed its pro-Hitler policy and again proposed that cooperation with Germany be ceased. "If Bulgaria thinks that it will somehow find a way out of this impasse," read the note,"at the present time the question can be only of Bulgaria's break with Germany."** However, the government of Bulgaria continued to maneuver. On August 17 Bagryanov made a demagogic speech at the VIIth Session of Parliament. He set forth a program of internal reform and called upon the partisans to lay down their arms, promising that he would carry out the people's will. The next day Bagryanov made the Soviet charge d'affaires an evasive statement that Bulgaria would break with

---

* Georgiy Dimitrov. Collected Works. Vol. II (1941-1949). Moscow, Gospolitizdat, 1957, p. 25, 26.

** Foreign Policy of the Soviet Union during the Patriotic War, Vol. II, p. 198.

Germany at a convenient moment but in such a way as to avoid an armed conflict with them. It was clear that the Bulgarian ruling circles were attempting to confuse the democratic forces of the country and win time.

On August 23 the CC of the Bulgarian Worker's Party addressed the people with a proclamation in which the provocative speech by Bagryanov at the VIIth Session of Parliament was exposed. The Central Committee showed that this speech was pursuing the goal "by cunning and demagoguery" of striking a blow on the Patriotic Front and weakening the partisan movement. On August 24, the day after the fall of Antonescu's government in Rumania, on the initiative of the CC BRP a delegation from the National Committee of the Patriotic Front demanded that the Bagryanov government transfer power to the Patriotic Front. The government refused their demands and sent the delegation to the Regents Council. However, they declined to receive them. Wishing to reassure public opinion, on August 26 Bagryanov announced to the Soviet charge d'affaires that Bulgaria had made a resolution of full neutrality. However, the external policy of Bulgaria did not change significantly. The declaration of full neutrality obliged the internment of all German fascist troops located in the country. Meanwhile Gen. Schneckenburger, representing the German command group in Bulgaria, interpreted full neutrality as "fictitious internment, which is understood as internment for external effect."* The sea and river ports and airfields remained as before under the control of the Hitlerites. German troops crossing the Rumanian-Bulgarian border did not disarm, but went deep into the country.** Covering itself with phrases about full neutrality, the government of Bagryanov continued to provide Germany with the use of Bulgarian territory to conduct the war against the USSR.

/300

At the same time, recognizing that Germany's position was becoming hopeless, the rulers of Bulgaria decided to begin secret negotiations with the USA and England with the purpose of concluding a truce with them. Attempting by any means to preserve the bourgeoisie's mastery in the country, on August 12

---

* IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #11635, p. 277.

** Archives MD USSR, col. 243, inv. 62688, div. 12, p. 2.

1944 the monarchist-fascist government sent the anglophile S. Moshanov, the former chairman of the XXIVth People's Assembly, to Constantinople to establish contact with representatives of the western powers. The ruling circles of Bulgaria were willing to substitute Anglo-American occupation for German, if only they could prevent the victory of the people. The English and Americans insisted on hastening the negotiations in order to prevent the Red Army's entrance into Bulgaria.* Having returned to Sofia, Moshanov left with new plenipotentiaries to continue the negotiations in Cairo, where he arrived only at the end of August, that is when the forward units of the Soviet forces had already broken through to the Bulgarian-Rumanian border.

On August 26 the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Worker's Party, correctly assessing the situation, and particularly the significance of the time factor, sent circular No. 4 on an armed uprising to the party organizations. In it the task was set of overthrowing Bagryanov's government and forming a government of the Patriotic Front. The party declared: "The twelfth hour has struck for Bulgaria! The fate of Bulgaria now depends entirely on the people and on the patriotic army."** It was proposed that the party organization conduct political strikes at plants and factories and achieve their development into a general political strike. The partisans were assigned to begin offensive operations and start to form organs of the authority of the Patriotic Front in the provinces. "The main blows," read the order of the Main Headquarters of the People's Liberation Army, "are to be directed at the centers, particularly where the support of detached military units can be counted upon."*** The struggle of the Bulgarian people had reached the highest level of its development - the task of an armed uprising was on the agenda.

In the last days of August when the Soviet forces were approaching Bucharest, Bulgaria's external political position grew extremely acute. The monarchist-fascist clique spread rumors that the government of the USSR had

---

* "Struggle of the Bulgarian People against Hitlerite Fascism." Materials of the Inst. of Hist. of the Party CC BCP, p. 124.

** Quoted from G. Dimitrov. Collected Works. Vol. II, p. 610.

*** Ibid.

ostensibly recognized the full neutrality of Bulgaria. On August 30 TASS refuted these untrue fabrications. On the same day the Soviet government sent the government of Bulgaria a note with the demand that it end the use of its territory by the German forces. However, Bulgaria continued to conduct its previous line.

The internal situation in Bulgaria was becoming extremely heated. The people's rage grew. On September 1 the CC BRP called on the workers everywhere to organize meetings and assemblies, declare a general political strike, strengthen the Patriotic Front and its committees, ignite the people's liberation insurgent movement and consolidate the fighting alliance of the patriotic units of the army and the insurgents.* On the same day Bagryanov's /301
government resigned. On September 2 the Regents Council designated Muraviev as Prime Minister. To confuse the working masses, representatives of the "democratic opposition" were included in the new government.

On September 4 the government of Muraviev published a declaration from which it was clear that in the question of relations with Germany it remained in the position of the previous government. In the declaration it was stated that "Bulgaria is obliged to conduct strict, unconditional neutrality that is worthy of trust."** The abundance of epithets to the word "neutrality" did not alter the essence of the matter. The new government had given the remnants of the German forces the opportunity to freely withdraw from Rumania through Bulgarian territory up until September 9.***

In a note of September 5 the Soviet government appraised the announcement by Muraviev's government on neutrality as a continuation of the external policy conducted by the Bagryanov government. The USSR could not permit further use of Bulgarian territory by the German fascists in the aims of the war. In connection with this the Soviet Union announced that "not

---

* See Illegal leaflets of the Bulgarian Communist Party, Sofia, 1954, p. 294.

** Quoted from "Pravda," Sept. 6, 1944.

*** "The Struggle of the Bulgarian People Against Hitlerite Fascism," Maters. of the Inst. of Hist. of the Party CC BCP, p. 128.

only is Bulgaria in a state of war with the USSR, since in fact it was even before now in a state of war with the USSR, but the Soviet Union will henceforth also be in a state of war with Bulgaria."* The Soviet Union's declaration of war on Bulgaria was not an act directed against the Bulgarian people; on the contrary, it was, as the further development of the political life of that country showed, of enormous significance for the victory of the working class and the working peasantry.

In its internal policy the "democratic" government of Muraviev also continued the line of its predecessors. In six days of existence it had already shown itself to be an anti-national government. Muraviev hastened to prove to the Czarist clique and the bourgeoisie that he was capable of worse actions against the masses of the people than Bozhilov and Bagryanov. He announced that he would not allow any political activity by the democratic parties of the Patriotic Front.** The government did not call a single fascist leader to account. Even the director of police, who was guilty of violence against Bulgarian patriots, remained in his position.

The revolutionary crisis that Bulgaria had undergond in the summer of 1944 grew into a revolutionary situation. A political situation was created in the country analogous to that of which V.I. Lenin wrote that the "lows" no longer wished to live as before and the "highs" could not control the country by the previous methods.*** The Bulgarian Worker's Party headed the struggle of the working masses against national and social oppression, led them to the necessity of an armed uprising and the seizure of power. Even in mid-August the question of preparations for an armed uprising was comprehsnively discussed in the Main Headquarters of the People's Liberation Army, which met almost daily. At these meetings the subject was drawing to the side of the uprising the commanders of military units of the garrisons in Sofia, Pleven, and Plovdiv and staff and administrative officers, and also political work

---

* "Foreign Policy of the Soviet Union During the Patriotic War," Vol. II, P.183.

** See Illegal leaflets of Bulgarian Communist Party p. 350-351.

*** See V.I. Lenin. Works, Vol. 21, p. 189.

among the soldiers. On September 7, that is two days after the declaration of war against Bulgaria by the government of the USSR, it became clear to the CC BRP and Main Headquarters that Soviet forces would enter Bulgaria in the very near future. Taking this into consideration they set the uprising to begin in Sofia at 2:00 a.m. on September 9.*

* The Plan for Infliction of a Blow on September 9, 1944. Document of the Inst. of Hist. of the Party CC BCP (IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #4823, pp. 10-12.)

CHAPTER 10

THE LIBERATION OF BULGARIA

2. The entrance of the Soviet forces into Bulgaria. The September uprising of the Bulgarian people.

The forces of the 3rd Ukrainian front, having broken through to the /302
Rumanian-Bulgarian border, there awaited orders from Headquarters of the Supreme High Command on further operations. The 46th Army was disposed on the right wing of the front, the 57th in the center, and the 37th on the left, coastal wing (map 9). The front's composition also included two mechanized corps and the 17th Airborne Army. The Black Sea fleet and the Danube military flotilla were in operative subordination to the 3rd Ukrainian fleet. On September 5, two and one-half days after the declaration of war on Bulgaria, the command group of the front ordered the commanders of the armies and the mechanized corps to be in readiness for the advance.

The operative-strategic situation was very favorable for the offensive operations of the 3rd Ukrainian front. The troops of the 2nd Ukrainian front, the boundary line with which ran along the line Vidra - Dzhurdzhu and further along the Danube, moved rapidly through the Valkhskiy plain. On September 5 the troops of the left wing of this front reached the line of Karakal - Zimnicha and continued to move westward without obstacle; the forward detachments of the 6th Tank Army broke through to the area of Turnu-Severin. The German army groups "F" and "E", located in Yugoslavia, Albania and Greece, found themselves cut off from the grouping of forces occupying the defense in the Eastern Carpathians and Transylvania. On the sea the Soviet Black Sea fleet had complete dominion, and our air force ruled in the air.

At this time Bulgaria had 5 combined-arms armies and 2 detached corps, comprised of 23 divisions, including 1 tank and 1 cavalry division, and also 7 brigades (1 armored, 1 cavalry and 5 border). The total numerical strength of the Bulgarian army was 450,000 persons.* The Air Force of Bulgaria included 5 airborne regiments, numbering 410 airplanes. In Varna and Burgas over 30 combat and auxiliary vessels of the German and Bulgarian fleets were concentrated. The larger part of the Bulgarian armed forces was deployed in the central and western regions of the country. The troops of the 3rd Ukrainian army were directly opposed by only two border brigades and 2 infantry divisions of the first line, positioned the areas of Ruse and Dobridha, and two infantry divisions of the second line located in Shumen and Burgas. They could not offer serious resistance to the experienced, battle-hardened Soviet forces.

On September 6 the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command ordered the troops of the 3rd Ukrainian front and the Black Sea fleet to begin military operations against Bulgaria. The forward units were to go over to the offensive on September 8, and the main forces on September 9. By evening of Sept. 12 the troops were to have broken through to the line of Ruse - Palatitsa - Karnobat - Burgas and there temporarily halt military operations. The command group left the resolution of the question of the further advance in dependence on the course of the armed uprising of the Bulgarian people.

---

*Archive MD USSR, col. 240, inv. 52495, div. 90, pp. 269-271; col. 243, inv. 20371, div. 61, pp. 44-45, 59-60.

The strike group of the front was concentrated on the right flank and the center of the sector of the front from the Danube to the Black Sea. The 46th Army was to advance with its main forces on its left flank in the direction of Yesekey - Kubrat; the 57th Army in the center of its zone on Kochman - Shumen; the 37th Army on its right flank, on Dobrich - Provadiya. The 7th and 4th Guards mechanized corps, operating in accordance with the zones of the 57th and 37th Armies, were to break through on the second day of the advance to the line of Karnobat - Burgas.* The naval and air-mobile assault troops of the Black Sea fleet was assigned the task of seizing Varna /303 and Burgas in cooperation with the mechanized formations of the 3rd Ukrainian front.

The troops began in advance to prepare for the operation, and when the instructions of the front commander followed on September 7, the headquarters of the armies had already completed the development of plans for the operations. There was a lull at the front at this time. The Soviet forces conducted partial regroupings and completed the final preparations for the attack.

In the political work of the troops during preparations for the operation particular attention was devoted to the elucidation of the relations between the Soviet Union and Bulgaria. Along with exposing the hypocritical, double-dealing position of the Bagryanov and Muraviev governments, the goals and tasks of the struggle of the Bulgarian people against the Czarist clique and the bourgeoisie were also revealed. In the Army press, lectures and talks the traditions of friendship between the Russian and Bulgarian peoples were discussed. Political workers conducted lectures and talks on the Russian-Turkish war of 1877-1878 during which the Russian forces liberated Bulgaria from the Turkish yoke, earning the deep gratitude of the Bulgarian people. The activity of the advanced people of Russia and Bulgaria was elucidated: Chernyakovskiy, Dobrolyubov, Levskiy, Botev, Blagoyev. In the lectures and talks it was emphasized that the friendship of the Soviet and Bulgarian peoples had risen to a new, qualitatively higher level in the post-October period. The significance of the victories of the Soviet Union for the liberation of Bulgaria from

* Archives MD USSR, col. 392, inv. 8972, div. 27, p. 172.

fascist oppression was discussed in detail, as was the struggle carried on by the Bulgarian people during the war under the leadership of the Communist Party.

A large place in political work was occupied by the elucidation of the causes and goals of the war with Bulgaria. The note from the Soviet government of September 5 was published in all army newspapers and printed as a special leaflet. In the formations, units and subunits meetings and assemblies were held on September 5-7. The wide elucidation of the liberating mission being accomplished in Bulgaria by the Red Army promoted the subsequent establishment of friendly relations between the Soviet soldiers and the Bulgarian population.

On September 8 the troops of the 3rd Ukrainian front entered Bulgaria. In the morning the mobile forward detachments of the corps crossed the Rumanian-Bulgarian border and rapidly moved deep into the country. Behind them the vanguard regiments of the first echelon divisions began to move. Meeting no resistance, by the end of the day the mobile forward detachments had progressed 65-70 kilometers and broken through to the line of Tutrakan - Sakalli - Krasen-Dol - Yemirkey. The vanguard regiments, and in some cases the main forces as well, progressed to a depth of 25-30 kilometers that day. The 4th Guards mechanized corps and the 5th detached motor-rifle brigade were ordered to begin operations not on the 8th, but on the 9th of September. On the same day the brigade and corps liberated Varna. By evening of September 8 the forward detachments of the 7th mechanized corps began to move out in the southwestern direction. At the same time the marine infantry assault landing troops, landed from airplanes, seized the naval airfield and on the night of September 9 seized the port of Varna; somewhat later three motor torpedo boats made an amphibious assault landing there.

The following day, September 9, the troops of the front continued to progress, meeting no resistance as before. In spite of the exhausting heat the mobile units progressed 100-120 kilometers and the main forces up to 45 kilometers. The forward detachments of the armies reached the line of the Malki-Lom River - Shumen - south of Provadiya - Varna, the 7th mechanized corps broke through in the area of Shumen and Karnobat, the 4th Guards

mechanized corps entered Burgas, and a part of its forces entered Aytos. That day the ships of the Black Sea fleet made an assault landing numbering approximately 400 men in Burgas, where an air assault landing had been dropped earlier. The ships of the Bulgarian military fleet which had remained in the port offered no resistance. The entire German fleet operating in the Black Sea had been scuttled before the Soviet troops entered Varna on the order of the German command group. As captured sailors indicated, both combat and auxiliary vessels had been sunk, including several submarines. /304

Thus by the evening of September 9 the forces of the 3rd Ukrainian front, in cooperation with the Black Sea fleet, had reached the lines they were assigned. In the evening of that day the commanders of the 3rd Ukrainian front and the Black Sea fleet received a new directive. In accordance with the instructions of the State Defense Committee, Headquarters of the Supreme High Command ordered them to complete by 21.00 hours on September 9 the operation to seize the inhabited areas mentioned in the plan, consolidate strongly in the section of the country occupied by the Soviet forces, and cease military operations by 22.00 hours on September 9.* The actions of our Armed Forces in the territory of Bulgaria had not ended in an operation in the direct meaning of the word. The Bulgarian operation had become a liberating march by the Soviet forces.

The people of Bulgaria ecstatically greeted the Red Army, the liberator-army. In the villages, as a rule, the peasants met our troops with bread and salt. The populations of the cities also arranged an exceptionally warm reception for the Red Army. "During the passage of our units," it says in one of the reports by the political directorate of the front, "the inhabitants gathered in crowds in the streets and threw bouquets of flowers to our soldiers. On the facades of the houses Soviet and Bulgarian flags fluttered."** In these days many salutatory telegrams arrived at the Soviet embassy from social organizations and individual citizens. One of them read: "Accept our joy,

---

* IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #9493, p. 148.

**Archive of MD USSR, col. 243, inv. 32283, div. 12, p. 364.

which is inexpressible in words, on the event of the arrival on Bulgarian soil of the Red Army, the greatest in the world, which we meet with open arms and tears of joy... Chairman of the commune of the village of Klementino."*
In friendly conversations the Bulgarians said to the Soviet soldiers that they had never harbored enmity toward the Russian people, had not wanted to fight them, and recalled with hatred the unceremonious way the German fascist occupiers had exercised their sway in Bulgaria.

The breakthrough of the Soviet forces into Bulgarian territory was a powerful internal factor, which hastened the revolutionary action of the workers. The wave of the mass people's movement had risen high in the country. On September 6 the workers on the Sofia trolleys, on instructions from the CC BRP, announced a strike. The trolley drivers were supported by the workers at the city's plants and factories. After noon of the day a meeting was held near the "Slavyanskaya beseda" hotel, at which the police opened fire on the participants. This provoked a violent protest by the population of the city. Everywhere in Sofia large meetings and demonstrations took place. On September 7 the heroic miners of Pernik declared a strike. The working ranks of the country's coal and ore mines, plants and factories followed their example.

The news of the struggle of the workers of Sofia and Pernik, and of the progress of the Soviet forces deep into Bulgaria, flew rapidly around the country. On September 8 mass actions began in all corners of the country. Almost everywhere the insurgents liberated political prisoners from prisons and concentration camps. In many cities and towns during these days the power of the Patriotic Front was established. The Communists were in the vanguard of the popular masses that had risen to the struggle.

On the order of the Main Headquarters the partisan detachments came down from the mountains and began the uprising with an armed strike force. On September 8 the Gabrovskiy partisan detachment engaged in battle with units of the Tyrnovskiy garrison, which had been sent by the government to put down the

---

* Archives of MD USSR, col. 243, inv. 63941, div. 3, p. 91.

uprising in the city of Gabrovo. The Srednegorskaya brigade named for Khristo Botev, having seized the town of Rozovets on September 7, began to move toward Plovdiv. The Sevliyevskiy partisan detachment and a battalion /305
from the brigade named for Chavdar liberated several inhabited areas.*

The entrance of the Soviet forces into Bulgaria and the intensifying anti-fascist movement in the country moved forward the pressing task of striking a decisive blow on the now-confused monarchist-fascist government. On September 8 the Politbureau of the CC BRP jointly with the Main Headquarters of the People's Liberation Army and representatives of the patriotic officer cadres held a meeting at which the tasks of the armed insurgent force in Sofia were conclusively determined and questions of widely drawing the city's population into the battle were also resolved. A favorable ratio of forces for the uprising had been created. Beside the partisans and combat groups, military units were also to participate in it, including the assault battalion of an engineering regiment, a battalion of the 1st infantry division, and a sapper-assault battalion of the High Command. On the evening of September 8 a tank brigade went over to the people's side. The 1st Sofia Army as well as the capital's police were neutralized.**

The German fascist forces located west of Sofia and the government troops deployed in the area of Pleven posed a serious threat to the uprising. The Central Committee of the BRP took steps to prevent them from entering the capital. For this the newly formed 1st Sofia partisan division (commander S. Tryunskiy, commissar Z. Georgiev) was to seize Tsaribrod, Pernik, Radomir and Kyustendil. The CC BRP sent its plenipotentiaries to the Mezdra and Boychinovtsi stations in order to establish there the power of the Patriotic Front and prevent the transfer of government troops to Sofia.

The uprising in the capital began on the night of September 8. First of all the insurgents seized the War Ministry. This was facilitated by the fact that the officer of the guard on duty in the Ministry that night was a member

---

* "The Struggle of the Bulgarian People Against Hitlerite Fascism." Maters. of the Inst. of Hist. of the Party CC BRP, p. 140.

** Ibid, pp. 141-143.

of the Patriotic Front. Caught unawares, the War Minister, after some hesitation, gave the order to the army to submit to the government of the Patriotic Front. Without any particular difficulty the detachments of insurgents seized the post office, telephone station, central depot, and ministries. The ministers, regents, director of police and other representatives of monarchist-fascist power were arrested. Power was handed over to the Patriotic Front.

On September 9 Sofia radio announced the formation of a new government led by K. Georgiev. It included representatives of all political parties of the Patriotic Front. On the same day the government published a declaration, the basis of which was the program of the Patriotic Front. In the delcaration the break with Germany, the taking of energetic measures to expel the Hitlerites from Bulgarian territory as quickly as possible, friendship with the Soviet Union, the immediate restoration of political liberties, and so forth were announced.*

On September 9 the power of the government of the Patriotic Front was established throughout the country. Workers, peasants and national intelligentsia rallied under the leadership of the Bulgarian Worker's Party (Communists)** into a single fighting union took the fate of the country into their own hands. The new government declared war on fascist Germany. The BRP(k) took all measures to raise the people to the patriotic war against the German fascist occupiers.

The entry of the Soviet forces into the territory of Bulgaria and the fundamental changes that occurred in the country as a result of the armed uprising exerted a significant effect on the operative-strategic situation on the southern flank of the Soviet-German front. Communications of the Hitlerite forces, located in Greece and the southeastern regions of Yugoslavia, were threatened by serious danger. /306

---

* Central Party Archive, Sofia, col. 65, inv. 1, ed. 21.

** After Sept. 9, 1944 the Bulgarian Worker's Party (BRP) began to be called the Bulgarian Worker's Party (Communists)- BRP(k).

The German command group ordered their troops located in Serbia to begin to disarm the Bulgarian formations bearing occupation duty in Yugoslavia. As a result of this the western regions of Bulgaria, especially the area of the capital, were unprotected. It was to be presumed that the German fascist troops would attempt to seize Sofia with the purpose of preserving the Saloniki - Nish - Belgrade communications (Map 15). In addition, the Turkish forces concentrated in Frakia presented a certain danger. It was not excluded that on the order of the American-English command group these troops could be brought into Bulgaria on some pretense. Under these conditions the Bulgarian government transferred their troops to operative subordination to the commander of the 3rd Ukrainian front, Marshal of the Soviet Union F.I. Tolbukhin.

Headquarters of the Supreme High Command, considering the situation that had developed, on September 13-14 ordered that the 34th rifle corps of the 57th Army be transferred to the area of Sofia. On September 20 Headquarters issued a directive to conduct regrouping of the forces. The concept of the regrouping was the following. The 57th Army moved out to the northwest borders of Bulgaria in order to begin military operations in the future, in cooperation with the People's Liberation Army of Yugoslavia and the Bulgarian Army of the Patriotic Front, to liberate the eastern regions of Yugoslavia and Belgrade. The 37th Army and the 4th Guards mechanized corps were to reliably cover the south flank of the 3rd Ukrainian front and the Bulgarian armies and defend them from any unexpected actions on the part of Turkey. The Bulgarian troops were to be deployed along the Bulgarian-Yugoslavian border, concentrating their main forces in the direction of Sofia-Nish. The 34th rifle corps, the 5th detached motor-rifle brigade and units of the reinforcements located in the area of Sofia were combined into the Sofia operative group.

The regrouping of the forces began at once. The forward mobile units of the 68th rifle corps of the 57th Army had by September 27 already come into contact with the German fascist forces on the Bulgarian-Yugoslavian border west of the city of Vidin. By evening of September 28 the formations of the 68th corps broke out to the area of Kobishnitsa, the forward detachmentsof of the 64th corps to the area of Chuprene and the main forces in the area of

Brats.* At this time the 75th detached rifle corps of the 2nd Ukrainian front was located on the line of Doni-Milanovats - Brza-Palanka. Consequently with the breakthrough of the 68th corps to Kobishnitsa the breach between the inner flanks of the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts was almost liquidated.

On the same day, September 28, the 37th Army conprised of three rifle corps completed concentration in the assigned area of Kazanlyk - Karnobat - Yelkhovo. In the center of its disposition, in the region of Yambol, the 4th Guards mechanized corps had been located since September 23. The divisions of the 37th Army that had moved farthest to the south stood 40-50 kilometers from the Turkish border.**

By evening of September 28, along the Bulgarian-Yugoslavian border, in the sector from the area of Pirot to the Greek border, the 2nd, 1st and 4th Bulgarian Armies, comprised of nine infantry divisions and four brigades, were deployed. Of these six divisions and two brigades constituted a strike group which was to operate in the general direction of Nish.

In the middle and the second half of September regrouping of the 17th Airborne Army was also carried out. By the end of September all of the forces of the airborne army were redeployed to airfields in the areas of Sofia, Plovdiv and Lom.

The regrouping of the Soviet and Bulgarian forces was of great significance; the western borders of Bulgaria were guaranteed against a possible incursion into the area of Sofia by the German forces located in Serbia. The troops of the 3rd Ukrainian front in cooperation with the Bulgarian and Yugoslavian units could begin to prepare and carry out operations for the liberation of Yugoslavia. /307

The entrance of the Red Army into Bulgaria overturned Churchill's calculations for its occupation. This became obvious when the Soviet forces routed the German army group "South Ukraine" and began to progress toward the

*Archives of MD USSR, col. 243, inv. 20371, div. 61, p. 70.
** Ibid.

Rumanian-Bulgarian border in an unstoppable avalanche. Nonetheless, the head of the English government clutched at any possibility of preventing the entrance of the Soviet forces into Bulgaria. Churchill assigned an important role in this task to the Turkish forces. In September 18-19 infantry and 1 motorized division, 3 cavalry and 1 armored brigade were concentrated in a relatively small territory in the European part of Turkey. Finally, when the Soviet forces entered Bulgaria, over 20 American and English officers, the majority of whom had worked up until that time in Istanbul, immediately arrived in Sofia. It was characteristic that the American group arrived as early as September 8, the first day of the advance of the Soviet forces, the English group somewhat later.* The English and American officers arrived in Sofia without the permission of the government of the USSR. They were met by officers of the Bulgarian army and conducted negotiations with the War Ministry. The Soviet Union proposed that they leave the borders of Bulgaria, stating that foreign officers could be permitted into the zone of operations of the Red Army only upon agreement with the government of the USSR.**

All of the hopes of the ruling circles of England and the USA of occupying Bulgaria were unrealized. The uprising of September 9 and the declaration by the government of the Patriotic Front of war on Germany placed Bulgaria in the ranks of the anti-fascist coalition. This deprived the Anglo-American imperialists of the opportunity to arrange for the occupation of the country with the government of Bulgaria. As regards the Turkish government, it did not risk bringing its forces into Bulgaria. The prospects of encountering the Soviet forces there did not bode well. Thus the march of the Red Army into Bulgaria played a decisive role in the liberation of the Bulgarian people from the fascist yoke.

---

* Archive of MD USSR, col. 243, inv. 280325, div. 1, p. 14.

** Ibid, p. 44.

CHAPTER 10

THE LIBERATION OF BULGARIA

3. The establishment of a people's democratic order. Bulgaria's participation in the anti-fascist war.

"The combination of the people's uprising of September 9, 1944 and the victorious progress of the Soviet army in the Balkans," said G. Dimitrov at the Vth Congress of the Bulgarian Worker's Party (Communists), "not only ensured the victory of the uprising, but also gave it great strength and scope."*

* G. Dimitrov. "Selected Works." Vol. II, p. 612.

As a result of the uprising and the coming to power of the government of the Patriotic Front a new political situation was created in Bulgaria. The ratio of class power changed and the power of the workers of city and village was established, under the guiding role of the working class led by the BRP(k).

In the first government of the Patriotic Front the 16 ministry positions were distributed as follows: the Bulgarian Workers's Party (Communists), the Bulgarian Agricultural Worker's People's Union and the People's Union "Zveno" each received four ministerial portfolios; the Worker's Social-Democratic Party received two. The government included two non-party ministers. In fact, however, the policies of the government were determined by the Communists. The BRP(k) exerted a decisive influence on the development of the internal life /308 of the country, and drew representatives of the working class and working peasantry into the administration of the government. Power in the provinces was in the hands of committees of the Patriotic Front, in which the Communists' influence was predominant.

The government immediately set about realizing the program of the Patriotic Front, effecting several extremely important measures in less than a month from the day of its formation. It dissolved the police-fascist Parliament, granted political rights and liberties to the people, and began a purge of the state apparatus and a reorganization of the army. Fascist organizations were banned and their newspapers closed. The government disbanded the police and began to form a people's militia. The Sofia people's court called 600 persons to account for fascist activities, including the regents and 126 former officers and members of Parliament.

The important external political acts by the government in this period were the breaking off of diplomatic relations with Hungary and the evacuation of Bulgarian troops from the occupied regions of Greece.

The truce agreement completed on October 28, 1944 between the USSR, the USA and Great Britain on one hand and Bulgaria on the other was an important event in the life of the Bulgarian people. The agreement was based on Bulgaria's cessation of military operations against the Allied Nations. It

obliged Bulgaria to take part in the struggle against Germany under the leadership of the United (Soviet) High Command. The Bulgarian government took it upon itself to assist with all available means the movement of Soviet troops through the territory of the country, to free Soviet prisoners of war and internees, annul all legislative and administrative statutes on the annexation or inclusion into Bulgaria of Greek or Yugoslavian territory. The agreement called for immediate dissolution and banning of fascist political, military or para-military organizations and the repeal of all discriminatory laws.*

This agreement responded to the fundamental interests of the Bulgarian people. Bulgaria's central external political task became participation in the war of freedom-loving peoples against fascist Germany.

In those days G. Dimitrov wrote: "... The future of our country will depend above all on the actual contribution that we as a people and a state now make in the common military efforts directed toward the rapid defeat of fascist Germany... 'All for the front, all to quickly win a final victory over fascism...' This is the main slogan around which the forces of the Worker's Party, the youth of the nation, the Patriotic Front and its government, the entire people and their army, and all of the country's resources must be mobilized."** This was a call to the Bulgarian people to carry on a patriotic war against Hitler's Germany with the greatest gathering of strength. In a short period over 40,000 volunteers entered the army.*** The committees of the Patriotic Front helped to carry out mobilization into the army, organized shipments of parcels to the front, the collection of clothing and provisions for the soldiers and officers.

At the center of the attention of the Bulgarian Worker's Party (Communists) was the task of ensuring the army's battle-readiness, its high level of morale. The backbone of the new, people's army was the partisans and volunteers poured into its ranks. A considerable part of the officers from the former Czarist army were loyal. The reactionary officers had been replaced

---

* See "Foreign Policy of the Soviet Union during the Patriotic War," Vol. II, p. 286-291.

** G. Dimitrov. "Selected Works." Vol. II, p. 38.

*** See "Krasnaya zvezda," Sept. 23, 1944.

by the command personnel of the People's Liberation Army. A great part in strengthening its battleworthiness was played by the institution of political unit assistants to the commanders. To this position were sent 10 members and candidates of the CC BRP (k) as well as many former partisans. With the agreement of the Bulgarian government the Soviet command group sent officers /309 of the Red Army possessing great combat experience to all formations of the active army in an advisorial capacity. Taken together, all of this increased the combat readiness of the Bulgarian forces.

The Bulgarian army, conducting military operations against fascist Germany from mid-September 1944 through May 1945, participated in the Belgrade operation, in the defensive operation in the region of Lake Balaton, and also in the Vienna offensive operation. All this time the Bulgarian troops were in operative subordination to the commander of the 3rd Ukrainian front.

During the Belgrade operation of the Soviet forces the Bulgarian army operated in the direction of Nish and Skoplje. It covered the southern flank of the Soviet troops in the Balkans, and in operative cooperation with the Yugoslavian People's Liberation Army deprived the German fascist divisions disposed in Greece and the southern part of Yugoslavia of the opportunity to break through to the area of Belgrade, where the troops of the 3rd Ukrainian front and the Yugoslavian People's Liberation Army rushed in October 1944. Fighting along with the Red Army for the liberation of the brother Yugoslav people, the Bulgarian army washed from its country the shameful stain of three years' participation in the occupation of Yugoslavia, which it had carried out on the orders of the monarchist-fascist government.

After the completion of the military operations of the Bulgarian forces in the eastern regions of Yugoslavia, on the proposal of the Soviet government the Bulgarian government assigned the 1st Bulgarian Army, comprised of six infantry divisions, to participate in the subsequent operations in the territory of Hungary.* The numerical strength of the army by the end of November was approximately 84,000 persons.** General V. Stoychev commanded the army.

---

* "The Struggle of the Bulgarian People Against Hitlerite Fascism." Maters. of the Inst. of Hist. of the Party CC BCP, p. 202.

** Archive of MD USSR, col. 243, inv. 20371, div. 45, p. 25.

In the last third of March 1945 this army, in cooperation with Yugoslavian and Soviet troops, routed the German fascist formations that had crossed to the north bank of the Drava River and had attempted to form a beachhead there. At the end of March and the beginning of April, the period of Hungary's final liberation, the Bulgarian divisions, advancing to the west, conducted military operations in Yugoslavian territory in the area where the national boundaries of Hungary, Austria and Yugoslavia met. Jointly with the forces of the 3rd Ukrainian front, on April 4, 1945 they completed the liberation of the southwestern regions of Hungary and seized several inhabited areas in northern Yugoslavia (in Croatia and Slovenia). By the time that the Second World War ended the 1st Bulgarian Army as a part of the forces of the 3rd Ukrainian front had reached the foothills of the Austrian Alps.

Thus after September 9 the Bulgarian Army made a significant contribution to the matter of defeating fascist Germany and won the sympathy and support of world democratic society. In the peace treaty completed in 1947 it was recognized that Bulgaria "took active part in the war against Germany."* According to official data provided by the Bulgarian government to the peace conference, of the 450,000-strong Bulgarian army 339,760 had participated in the war against the German fascist invaders, of these 195,932 directly at the front; 32,000 Bulgarian soldiers were killed, wounded or missing without trace. Direct war expenditures were 95 billion levs.**

The Soviet Union played an important part in seeing that the Bulgarian people were given the opportunity to participate in the rout of Garman fascism. Without the firm position taken by the USSR the Bulgarian army would not have been able to take part in an operation such as the Hungarian operation. In September 1944 the English government announced that it did not wish to see Bulgarian troops on Yugoslavian soil.*** It even raised the question at the completion of the truce agreement at the end of October 1944. The Soviet government then decisively declared to the English government that /310

---

* "Foreign Policy of the Soviet Union. 1947." Part One. (January-June 1947.) Moscow, Gospolitizdat, 1952, p. 291.

** IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #11635, p. 308.

*** See W. Churchill. "Report to the People." Moscow, Izd. Press Dept. of the Embassy of Great Britain, 1944, p. 13.

the Bulgarian troops were in Yugoslavia not as occupiers but as allies fighting under the leadership of the Soviet command group.

The September revolution in Bulgaria was the start of a new period in the history of the country. Evaluating the revolution, the VIIth Congress of the BRP(k)* observed, "A Marxist-Leninist analysis of the people's democratic revolution in our country shows that in its class nature, content and significance it was a socialist revolution from the beginning. Its victory was a natural result of the revolutionary struggle of the Bulgarian working class in alliance with the workers of city and village under the guidance of the Bulgarian Communist Party against fascism and capitalism with the decisive assistance of the Soviet Army."**

The unique feature of the September revolution was that the revolutionary struggle to overthrow the bourgeoisie and establish a proletarian dictatorship merged with the liberation movement against foreign rule, for national independence. The September uprising in Bulgaria resolved a number of democratic problems in a relatively short time: the rout of fascism; liquidation of the country's imperialistic dependence; the giving of democratic rights to the people; the punishment of the criminals who had drawn Bulgaria into the war on the side of fascist Germany; bringing the country into the anti-fascist coalition, and so on. In the process of executing these tasks the foundations of the capitalist order in Bulgaria could not but be shaken loose. Concerning this important feature of the revolution, at the Vth Congress of the BRP(k) G. Dimitrov said, "It is impossible to radically and totally liquidate fascism without encroaching on the rule of big capitalism; it is impossible to provide democratic rights for the workers if big capital retains its political and economic omnipotence."*** While the war with Germany continued the international task of the Bulgarian people's active participa-

---

* At the end of December 1948 the Bulgarian Worker's Party (Communists) was renamed the Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP).

** VII Congress of Bulgarian Communist Party. 2 June-7 June 1958. Stenographic Protocol. Sofia, 1958, p. 616.

*** G. Dimitrov. "Selected Works." Vol. II, pp. 613-614.

tion in this war was foremost. With the end of the war the situation changed sharply. Social reorganizations were planned. The measures effected by the government of the Patriotic Front - the establishment of labor's control of production, introducing a tax on war profit, a progressive income tax, state regulation of production, the granting of broad rights to professional labor unions, etc. - considerably limited the influence of the capitalists. A strong blow to the foundations of the old order was struck by the judicial proceedings conducted in 1944-1945 of the main perpetrators in drawing Bulgaria into the criminal war, and their severe punishment. However, the Bulgarian bourgeoisie made attempts to pressure the capitalist order in the country and began to resist the government enactments.

The Bulgarian reaction was supported by the ruling circles of the USA and England. Moreover, the imperialist bosses of these countries were the ideological inspirers of all acts of the Bulgarian counterrevolution. Thus, for example, the Anglo-American protege Gemeto, who led the Bulgarian Agricultural Worker's Union, opened the doors of the union wide to fascist elements and tried to set it in opposition to the Bulgarian Worker's Party (Communists). Instead of the slogan "All for the front," Gemeto advanced his own slogans: "Peace, Bread and the People's Power," and a demagogic slogan about independent peasant power. Such appeals pursued the goal of undermining the people's democratic authority. The BRP(k) exposed the class essence of Gemeto's policy. The masses of the people spoke out against Gemeto's movement. Seeing the /311
inevitability of defeat, this servant of the imperialists overseas took refuge in the American embassy and with the help of ambassador Barnes left the country illegally for the United States.

As the authority and influence of the BRP(k) grew the resistance of the reaction, with the active support of the Anglo-American imperialists, intensified. The class struggle in the country became more acute. In the summer of 1945, not without the interference of the embassies of the USA and England, the right wing of the Bulgarian Agricultural Worker's People's Union led by N.Petkov and the right wing of the Social Democratic Party led by K. Lulchev broke off from the Patriotic Front. Both groups took up opposition to the

Patriotic Front and carried out subversive work against the enactments of the people's government in the areas of internal and external policy.

At the same time the reaction began to scrape together all types of underground organizations to prepare for a revolution. The conspiratorial socieities "Military Alliance" and "Neutral Officer" were formed by officers of a reactionary mind close to the Minister of War, D. Velchev. In 1945 an illegal legionnaire's center arose. The illegal organizations "Peasant Army of Liberty", "Bulgarian Liberation Movement," "Freedom Front," and others* also appeared, which consisted of officers dismissed from the army and members of the fascist organizations dissolved after September 9. These organizations pursued counterrevolutionary goals, attempted to prevent the democratization of the army and undermine in it the authority of the Bulgarian Worker's Party (Communists).

TheBRP(k) carried on a decisive struggle against the reactionary opposition that had formed. With the help of the people the party was able to discover all of the underground organizations, liquidate the conspiracy of D. Velchev's supporter's, and purge the army of his followers. It was established that threads from the underground groups ran to the official opposition. This made it possible to isolate the leaders of the opposition, which had essentially turned into a conspiratorial organization fulfilling the assignment of foreign imperialists.

The attempts of the internal and external reaction to restore the bourgeois order in Bulgaria suffered failure. Against all of the reaction's intrigues, the influence of the Communist Party and consequently of the Patriotic Front steadily grew. The rapid increase in the party ranks testified to this. Six months after September 9 the numerical strength of the BRP(k) had increased from 25,000 to 254,000 persons.** The finest sons and daughters

---

* See Judicial proceedings of American spies in Bulgaria. Sofia, 1950, pp. 89-92.

** See G. Dimitrov. "Selected Works." Vol. II, p. 654.

of the Bulgarian people, united in the Patriotic Front, upheld the victories of the September revolution and set out on the path to the building of the foundations of socialism.

Having entered Bulgaria, the Soviet forces helped the Bulgarian people to withdraw from the unjust, criminal war, take part in the anti-fascist war and begin to build a people's democratic state. By breaking with Hitler's Germany and declaring war on it, Bulgaria decisively ended the Great Bulgarian chauvinism of the bourgeoisie, refused to occupy the land of neighboring states and created the prerequisites for the establishment of normal relations with them.

After the expulsion of the German fascist invader from the territory of Bulgaria favorable conditions arose for the development of the class struggle, which led to the strengthening of a new, people's democratic order. The Red Army's presence in Bulgaria paralyzed the activities of the Bulgarian reaction and its foreign inspirers, prevented a civil war in the country and promoted the establishment of a social economic order under which not only was national independence ensured, but social oppression was eliminated.

The direct military result of Bulgaria's removal from the Hitlerite /312
coalition was Germany's deprivation of the opportunity to command Bulgaria's armed forces. Germany could no longer make use of the ports on the Black Sea and was forced to sink the ships located there. The strategic position of the German fascist army groups "F" and "E" worsened sharply. The German command group was faced with the necessity of evacuating its forces from Greece and the southern part of Yugoslavia. In addition, the military and political conditions improved for the further development of the national liberation struggle in Yugoslavia, Greece and Albania.

The distinguishing feature of the Red Army's operations in the territory of Bulgaria was that no encounters or battles took place there. The Bulgarian ruling circles found themselves in no position to organize armed resistance to the Soviet forces, and the people promoted the actions of the Red

Army in every possible way. In none of the countries previously included in the fascist bloc, satellites of Germany, had there been such a mass partisan struggle, up to the breakthrough of the Soviet forces to their border, as that organized by the People's Liberation Insurgent Army. This made an imprint on the nature of the operations of the Armed Forces of the USSR in Bulgaria.

A most important factor ensuring the success of the Red Army in Bulgaria was the correct policy of our government and the Communist Party concerning the Bulgarian people, both throughout the entire war and during the period of the Soviet forces' presence in the territory of Bulgaria. The program of liberating peoples oppressed by fascist Germany promoted by the Soviet Union and the foreign policy announced by the government of the USSR helped the Bulgarian people to recognize the true face of their country's rulers and the Bulgarian Worker's Party (Communists) to raise the masses to the liberation struggle. The active participation of the Bulgarian Army in the operations at the final stage of the war considerably softened the conditions of the peace treaty for Bulgaria.

Another decisive factor in the Red Army's success in Bulgaria was the correct political line and great organizational activity of the Bulgarian Worker's Party (Communists) throughout the war, and particularly during the period of the direct struggle to rid the country of fascist oppression. In the first days of the war the BRP(k) took a consistent internationalist position, and took a course directed at preparing the people for armed battle against the Hitlerites and their servants. It set itself the task of preventing Bulgaria from being drawn into the war against the USSR and, supported by the Bulgaria people's age-old feeling of love for the Russian people, achieved this goal. Emerging as the organizer of the national partisan war, the party formed the 30,000 People's Liberation Insurgent Army, which enjoyed the support of the people.

Under the difficult conditions of the fascist underground the BRP(k) was the organizer of the Patriotic Front of the Bulgarian people. In spite of great sacrifices borne in the vigorous struggle, the party achieved the

transformation of the Patriotic Front into a powerful political force capable of leading a revolution.

The rapid progress of the Soviet forces through the territory of Rumania and their breakthrough to the borders of Bulgaria served as a signal to the Bulgarian Worker's Party (Communists) for an uprising to which the party had capably led the masses. Organizational and ideological work in the army was carried out in model fashion, thanks to which the BRP(k) was able, essentially, to wrest the army out of the hands of the old government and include it in the anti-fascist war.

The liberation of the Bulgarian people was a brilliant example of the skillful combination of the Red Army's operations with the mass people's liberation, anti-fascist struggle, which ended under the guidance of the Communist Party in a national revolution.

CHAPTER 11

THE SLOVAKIAN PEOPLE'S UPRISING AND THE ADVANCE OF THE SOVIET AND CZECHOSLOVAK FORCES IN THE EAST CARPATHIANS

1. The situation in Slovakia and the beginning of the Slovakian people's uprising

In the spring of 1944 the Soviet Armed Forces broke through to the /313
immediate approaches to the USSR's national border with the Czechoslovakian Republic west of the line of Kolomyya - Chernovitsy (Map 1). The day of the Red Army's entrance into the territory of our ally Czechoslovakia and the liberation of our brother Czech and Slovak peoples from the Hitlerite yoke was drawing near.

The agreement signed on May 8, 1944 in London on the relations between the Soviet Supreme High Command and the Czechoslovak administration after the

entrance of the Soviet forces into the territory of Czechoslovakia proposed that the power of the Supreme High Commander of the Soviet forces in all matters concerning the conduct of the war would spread only to the zone of military operations and only for the time necessary to execute them. In the agreement it was stated that as soon as any part of the liberated territory should cease to be a zone of direct military operations the Czechoslovak government would take control fully into its hands and would render the Soviet command group full cooperation and assistance through its civil and military organs.*

This agreement had for the Czechoslovak people not only great internal significance, but internal significance as well. It was a serious obstacle in the path of the ruling circles of the USA and England, who were attempting to replace the German fascist occupation regime in the liberated countries of Europe with a regime of American - English occupation. The Soviet-Czechoslovak agreement established entirely different principles. As K. Gottwald said, it resolved the question of the relations of the Soviet troops and the Czechoslovak people"on the basis of full recognition of the state sovereignty of Czechoslovakia by our great ally on the basis of the principle of a peer among peers and in the spirit of friendship and alliance..."** /314

Even before the start of the Second World War the German fascists had split up the Czechoslovak republic and in March 1939 it had ceased to exist as an independent state. Annexing Czechia and Moravia to Germany as a protectorate and transferring the Trans-Carpathian Ukraine and southern border regions of Slovakia to the composition of Hungary, they declared the remaining part of Slovakia an "independent state." The Hitlerites totally controlled its political and economic life and its internal and external policy. Thus the "Slovakian state"*** arose. It was headed by a puppet government

---

*. See "Foreign Policy of the Soviet Union during the Patriotic War," Vol. II, pp. 123-125.

** Klement Gottwald. Ten Years. Collected Articles and Speeches. 1936-1946. Prague, 1949, p. 323-324.

*** This question is elucidated in more detail in the first volume of this edition, pp. 155-158.

including such traitors to the Slovakian people as Tiso, Makh, Tuka and others. It sowed enmity between the Slovaks and Czechs and conducted broad anti-communist and anti-Soviet propaganda. The rulers of Slovakia formed an army, one of the main assignments of which was to participate in the war on the side of Germany. However, an attempt to use this army against the USSR was without success. Slovak soldiers and officers sent to the Soviet-German front systematically deserted in whole subunits and units to the side of the Red Army or to Soviet partisan detachments.

From the beginning of 1944 antifascist groups began to operate more actively in Slovakia. Disorder in the ruling circles of the country increased. The process of disintegration involved the Slovakian army more and more. The majority of its high command staff sought a way to evade responsibility for collaboration with the Hitlerites. Many officers and soldiers wished to take active part in the liberation of their homeland.

The force that united all true anti-fascists in the struggle against the occupiers and their servants was the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (CPCz). In the underground the party was able to preserve its central leadership, local party organs and primary party organizations. Its successful activity was determined to a considerable degree by the correct policy and great organizational work of the directing center of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia led by K. Gottwald, which was located in Moscow. This center included the most leading figures of the party, who had emigrated to the capital of the USSR upon the resolution of the CC CPCz: R. Appel't, B. Kyoler, V. Kopetskiy, Y. Krosnarzh, V. Shirokiy, B. Shermal', Ya. Shverma and others [transliterated from Russian]. In connection with the special conditions that hadarisen in Slovakia, the CC of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia had passed a resolution as early as 1939 on the organizational independence of the Slovakian part of the CPCz. In May of the same year the illegal directorship of the Communist Party of Slovakia (CPS) was formed, which was led by L. Benada, Yu. Dyurish, and Ya. Osoga [transl. from Russ.]. The CPS did not become a new section of the Comintern: its formation was caused by the practical demands of party work. The unity of the CPCz, the unity of political line and general leadership on the part of the Moscow center, were preserved. In spite of the fact that the Gestapo and Slovakian fascist

okhranka frequently struck heavy blows on the underground Central Committees of the CPCz and CPS, until the end of the war the directing center maintained contact with the underground organizations of Czechia and Slovakia and constantly directed their activity.

For six years of German fascist occupation the underground CC in the Czech and Slovak regions received from the directing party center directives and instructions on all of the most important questions of party activity, and in turn informed it in detail on the work of the underground party organizations, on the situation in the country. The sometimes disrupted /315
radio contact with the underground CC CPCz and CPS was maintained with the use of several secret transmitters. Furthermore, regular radio transmissions were conducted in the USSR for Czechoslovakia through Soviet radio stations and through two special Czechoslovak radio stations: "For National Liberation" (for the Czech regions) and "For the Freedom of Slovakia" (for the Slovak regions). The leading workers of the CPCz collaborated to edit the Czechoslovak broadcasts. To assist the local party organizations, representatives of the directing center of the party went to Czechia and Slovakia.

The victories of the Red Army, the selfless work of the underground party organizations, the tireless activity of the CPCz leadership and the support of the Soviet Union created a favorable situation for an armed uprising by the masses of the people of Czechoslovakia against the Hitlerites and their accomplices. Upon a call from the directing center and local party organizations of the CPCz, in many cities and towns of the country national committees, revolutionary organs of the national liberation struggle closely linked with the partisan movement, began to be formed. Around them rallied all of the forces of the Resistance movement.

The approach of the Soviet forces to the borders of the Czechoslovak republic and the rapid development of the national liberation struggle pushed to the forefront the task of preparing and conducting an antifascist uprising, first in the territory of Slovakia, since in that place the most suitable conditions had developed. Unlike the Czech lands, Slovakia had still not been occupied by German troops. It had its own armed forces, a considerable part of which could be drawn into the struggle against the

Hitlerites. The total numerical strength of the Slovakian army exceeded 100,000 persons. The most battleworthy and best-armed formation of the army was the one located in the area of Prešov (map 10), the so-called East Slovak corps, which consisted of two divisions and numbered over 24,000 soldiers and officers. It had 15,000 rifles, 1,000 light machine guns, 250 heavy machine guns, 50 antitank and 70 field guns, and 150 mortars.*

A very important advantageous factor for preparing the uprising was the Resistance movement that had developed in Slovakia. Local party organizations and the illegal national committees they directed drew broad masses of people into the antifascist struggle, above all workers. In spite of cruel persecution, the communists were able to organize strikes at industrial enterprises, which took place under economic and political slogans.**

In 1944, particularly in the last weeks before the uprising, workers of the most important military factories in Dubnica and Povazska Bystrica held strikes. Strikes also enveloped Southern and Eastern Slovakia.*** On the initiative of communists and the national committees the workers began to arm themselves. Thus, for example, on August 24 on a call from the national committee the workers of a metallurgical plant in Podbrezova and a machine construction plant in P'yesha [transl. from Russ.] (not far from Podbrezova) declared a strike, went in organized fashion to the city of Brezno where there were military barracks, and demanded weapons. On the same day partisans arrived in Podbrezova, and armed a unit of workers, who then seized the plant. After that the local national committee took authority in the city into its own hands.****

With each day the national committees operated more and more actively, becoming the true organizers of national resistance to the fascist regime.

---

* VHA, the Slovak State- MNO- Reports of Strength-cj. 72237/taj. 11/4-1944; Oldrich Janecek. With Weapon in Hand. Prague, 1957, p.152.

** See Volume III of this edition, pp. 524-526.

*** See Juri Dolezal. The Slovak National Uprising. Prague, 1954, p. 92

**** See The Slovak National Uprising. Collection of Papers on the 10th Anniversary. Bratislava, 1954, p. 80-84.

Relying on the support of the working class, maintaining close contact with partisan detachments, they also carried on revolutionary agitation in the country. In towns and villages near which partisan detachments were based practically all power had already passed into the hands of the national committees several days before the uprising.* /316

In the summer of 1944 on the request of the Czechoslovak directors and in accordance with the Soviet-Czechoslovak agreement and the treaty of friendship and mutual assistance, a transfer of Soviet and Czechoslovak partisan groups from the USSR to Slovakia was organized. In July 1944 the Ukrainian headquarters of the partisan movement and the command group of the 1st Ukrainian front had already begun to transfer partisan organizational groups to Slovakia, which consisted largely of Soviet and Czechoslovak officers and junior commanders who had experience in the partisan struggle and had undergond special training. These groups, in cooperation with the illegal CPCz organizations and national committees, were to form partisan detachments from the population, stir the armed struggle against the German and local fascists, use all means to disorganize the rear of the Hitlerite army, and conduct political work among the masses.** Soviet pilots took active part in the airlift of partisan organizational groups.

In the second half of 1944, 53 organizational groups numbering approximately 1,200 persons were transferred to Slovakia.*** On the basis of these groups large partisan formations consisting largely of Slovaks grew up rapidly. In this way the 1st Czechoslovak brigade named for M. Stefanik, which in September had numerical strength over 1,400 persons, was formed. On the basis of Y. P. Volyanskiy's group arose the 2nd Czechoslovak partisan brigade "Slavic Liberty", which in September united 1,384 persons. The group of E. B'yelik [transl. from Russ.] compzised the basis of the "Yanoshik" brigade, which in September already had 808 persons and in October 1,287.

---

* See The Slovak National Uprising. Collection of Papers on the 10 Anniversary. Bratislava, 1954, p. 83.

** See A. Bencik, V. Kural, J. Paulik, J. Solc, Z. Stepanek, J. Tesar. The Partisan Movement in Czechoslovakia during the Second World War, Prague, 1961, p. 159-161.

*** See Jaroslav Solc. From the History of the Partisan Movement in Slovakia. In the collection "How an Everlasting Friendship was Born". Bratislava, 1959, p. 371.

The group of A. Shagat was transformed to the brigade named for Jan Nalepki. The brigade's composition included approximately 1,100 persons. On the basis of A.S. Yegorov's group arose the 1st brigade, which in August numbered 750 persons, and in September 2,812. The backbone of the brigade was comprised of workers from Podbrezova, Dubovaya, Ružomberok, and Banska Bystrica. The nucleus of the partisan brigade named for Jan Žižki, which in September included 496 fighters, was the group of T. Pola.*

In the summer of 1944 entire Soviet partisan detachments and brigades also came to the territory of Slovakia. At the end of July a formation under the command of V. A.Karasev broke through across Southern Poland from the area near Minsk to the region of the Chergovskiy Mountains. Reinforced with Slovak volunteers, this formation turned into a strong combat unit. After them the formations and detachments of V. A. Kvitinskiy, M.I. Shukayev, L. E. Berenshtein and others arrived from Poland. These partisan formations were reinforced with local inhabitants or merged with Slovakian detachments.

The Slovakian and combined Slovak-Soviet partisan detachments and brigades operated in a broad territory from the Nitra River in the west to the Trans-Carpathian Ukraine in the east, from the Carpathians in the north to the border of Hungary in the south.

Thus the line of the directing center of the CPCz prevailed, which was calculated on the combination of an active antifascist struggle within the country and the advance of the Red Army, on the development of the partisan war, both of the main form of the antifascist movement and of the national committees, as the main path to the revolutionary unification of the people. This was the line of preparation of a national antifascist armed uprising under the leadership of the working class.

The Czechoslovak government, which was located in London, and the representatives of the Slovak bourgeoisie (J. Ursini, I. Lettrich) and the /317

*The numerical strength of the partisan brigades is presented according to A. Bencik, V. Kural, J. Paulik, J. Solc, Z. Stepanek, J. Tesar. The Partisan Movement in Czechoslovakia during the Second World War, p. 169-178, 491-492; also "Bojova druzba", a collection, Prague, 1960.

reactionary segment of the Slovak army's officer cadres (J. Golian, A. Malar), which had attached themselves to the leadership of the Resistance movement, conducted a different policy. Their main goal was to preserve the rule of the bourgeoisie in the liberated Czechoslovak republic.

The bourgeois nationalists G. Gusak and L. Novomeskiy, who had gotten into the leadership of the CPCz, rendered a great service to the reactionaries with their opportunistic activities. It should be considered that as early as 1943 the directing center of the CPCz sent to Czechoslovakia a group of party workers, including K. Shmidke and K. Batsilek, who were to unite the operations of underground party organizations in Slovakia, renew the activity of the fourth composition of the CC CPS, which had been disbanded in the spring of 1943, and unite all of the forces of the antifascist movement on the basis of the platform of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. K. Batsilek [names transl. from Russian] was assigned to restore and maintain constant communication by radio with Moscow. Batsilek performed this assignment and further took active part in organizing the antifascist struggle in Slovakia. Shmidke was able to restore the network of party organizations. However, as a result of his insufficient political maturity, he fell under the influence of bourgeois-nationalist elements. Forming the fifth composition of the Central Committee, Shmidke included Gusak and Novomeskiy, who were supporters of the nationalist, so-called "London conception" of the struggle for the liberation of the country. Its essence was to await the breakthrough of the Red Army to the border of Slovakia, not developing the partisan movement, and at the approp riate moment to carry out a revolt with the forces of the Slovak army, with the purpose of preventing the development of the revolutionary struggle of the workers and preserving the bourgeois order in the country. This conception essentially coincided with the Anglo-American plans to restore bourgeois regimes in the countries of Central and Southeastern Europe that had been liberated from the German fascist yoke.

The opportunistic position of the bourgeois nationalist elements in the CC CPS gave the representatives of the bourgeois the opportunity to occupy leading posts in the central organ of the uprising, the Slovak National

Council, and the reactionary segment of the Slovak army's officer cadres the opportunity to take the preparation of the military plan of the uprising into their own hands. This later caused great harm to the uprising. Gusak and Novomeskiy entered into contact with certain ministries of the Tiso government, promising them not to undertake any actions that might "provoke" the Hitlerites to punitive actions against the Slovaks.* By every means the nationalists attempted to narrow the frame of the partisan movement and to prevent soldiers and officers from joining it. With this goal they limited the activity of communists in the army, and hindered soldiers from going over to the partisans. Lt. Col. J. Golian (later general) who was placed at the head of the Military Center of the Slovak National Council by order of the London government, coming to an arrangement with the bourgeois nationalists, demanded that partisan detachments be subordinated to him, and denied the partisans arms.

Seeing the incorrectness of the policy of the CPS leadership in relation to the partisan movement, the CC CPCz sought to change it. Elucidating the line of the CC of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, K. Gottwald wrote in the newspaper "Československe listy": "It is essential to tell everyone concerned clearly what to say about the national uprising in the future; and to delay the development of the partisan movement in the future means either a lack of comprehension of the conditions from which the national uprising arises or simply ill will, that is, an attempt to avoid the struggle today through talk of the struggle tomorrow."**

Against the instructions of the Central Committee of the Communist /318
Party of Czechoslovakia the bourgeois nationalists with whom the CC of the Communist Party of Slovakia had been sowed hindered the formation of national committees, tried to transform them into inactive representative organs, and paralyzed the armed liberation struggle of the people.***

---

* See J. Dolezal. Slovak National Uprising, p. 82.

** See Klement Gottwald. Writings, XI, 1943-1945. Praha, 1955, p.288.

*** See The Slovak National Uprising. Collection of Papers on the 10th Anniversary, p. 239-261; Miroslav Gisko. The Slovak National Uprising. Bratislava, 1954, pp 20-23; J. Dolezal. The Slovak National Uprising, pp 81-83, 96-114, 145-156.

However, nothing could now stop the ever-growing antifascist movement. Thanks to the active work of the local party organizations and the national committees they directed, in the last third of August in the greater part of Slovakia the operations of the partisan detachments, which were steadily reinforced with volunteers, began to grow into a mass partisan war. From August 20 through 29 alone the partisans of Slovakia conducted more encounters with the enemy than during the entire preceding period of the national liberation struggle.* In Eastern Slovakia alone during those days, according to data that are far from complete, 22 partisan acts took place.**

In the areas of partisan operations, national committees emerging from the underground or which had been reformed took power into their own hands, supplied the partisans with all necessities, and recruited volunteers. Some local national committees proposed the restoration of an independent Czechoslovak republic. In Turčansky Sv. Martin, for example, this was done on August 25, in Vrutky on August 28.*** In the last ten days of August Central Slovakia and the northern regions of East Slovakia were already in fact under the control of the partisans, who in the majority of cases enjoyed the support of the soldiers of the Slovak army and a part of the gendarmery.

The intensification of the partisan struggle caused a panic among the fascist rulers of the country. Not having sufficient forces to suppress the liberation movement, and feeling that an end was coming to their rule, on August 23 they appealed to Hitler to send military units. The German fascist command group, which only awaited an excuse to occupy Slovakia, immediately began to concentrate its forces on the borders.

In response to this Slovak and Soviet partisan formations located in the mountainous regions of the country came down from the mountains and began active offensive operations. On August 25 partisans seized the city of Turčansky Sv. Martin, where even before their arrival workers had begun

---

* See The Slovak National Uprising. Collection of Papers on the 10th Anniversary, pp. 79-80; J. Dolezal, The Slovak National Uprising, pp. 118-119.

** See Antonin Bencik. Partisan actions in eastern Slovakia in the Period from January 1 to August 30, 1944. "History and Military Affairs", 1960, Nr 3, p 374-379

*** See Jiri Dolezal, Josef Hroziencik. International Solidarity in the Slovak National Uprising. Bratislave, 1959, p. 26.

to occupy industrial enterprises. The garrison of Slovak troops positioned there went over to the side of the insurgents. The partisans distributed guns to the population. The district leadership of the Communist Party organized an armed workers militia to guard industrial objects.* From August 26 through 28 partisans seized Liptovsky Sv. Mikulaš, Ružomberok, Vrutky, Poprad, Brezno and other cities and inhabited areas, and in some of them garrisons of the Slovak army also went over to the side of the insurgents. On August 27 in Turčansky Sv. Martin soldiers of the local garrison shot a German military mission returning from Rumania to Germany. On the night of August 30 partisans burst into Banska Bystrica and seized it.

On August 28 the Hitlerites threw the 357th infantry division and several detached regiments and battalions, approximately 20,000 men in all, against the insurgents. On August 29 the German fascist forces, entering the territory of Slovakia from Moravia, broke through to the area of Žilina.

The Slovak people responded to the incursion of occupiers with a mass armed struggle. On August 29 fierce battles were joined in the region of Zilina. A unit of the regular Slovak army joined the partisans. The officers, supporters of the fascist regime, were arrested. The uprising rapidly spread from the southern borders of Slovakia to the High Tatra in the north and from Trenčin and Trnava (36 kilometers west of Nitra) in the west to Spišska Nova Ves in the east. The Slovak National Council and its Military Center, which had counted on a military coup without the participation of partisan detachments and the popular masses, were taken by surprise. Finding themselves in the center of events, they joined the insurgents to keep from ending in total isolation. /319

Banska Bystrica became the political center of the uprising. There the directing organs of the uprising were located: the Slovak National Council, the Military Center, partisan headquarters, the CC CP of Slovakia and the editors of the newspaper "Pravda," the organ of the CC CPS. From there

* See J. Dolezal. The Slovak National Uprising, p. 119.

directives and orders were transmitted by radio to the insurgents. The secretariat of the CPS, in which K. Batsilek, later M. Chulen, and others worked, directed party activity.

The Military Center ordered the garrisons of the Slovak Army to act against the advancing German forces. Under the pressure of events the Slovak National Council called upon the people on August 30 to begin the struggle. In the territory that had been liberated by the insurgents the restoration of the Czechoslovak republic was proclaimed, and mobilization of men from 18 to 40 years of age into the army was announced. On September 1 the Slovak National Council published a declaration that it had taken legislative and executive power into its hands in the entire territory of Slovakia.

The Communist Party of Slovakia issued a proclamation "To workers, peasants, and working intelligentsia," calling on them to rise to the struggle for national and social liberation. Local party organizations became the leaders of the movement.

Eighteen regions of Slovakia entered an open struggle with the Hitlerites and Slovakian fascists.* The forces of the insurgents grew rapidly. In October approximately 16,000 persons fought against the occupiers, in November over 19,000.** Units of the Slovak army, which had a small amount of artillery,*** operated together with the partisans.

The partisan detachments became the main striking force of the insurgents. The troops of the Slovak army, dispersed over a considerable territory and poorly controlled by their generally reactionary command group, could not long resist the onslaught of the German fascist subunits and units. In spite of the heroism displayed by the partisans and some of the soldiers, the Hitlerite forces began to press the insurgents in several directions. The situation became more and more complicated.

---

*See J. Dolezal. The Slovak National Uprising, p. 125.

**Party Archive of the CC CPUkr. Institute of Hist. of the Party, col. 62, inv. 62-1, div. 96, pp. 59, 66.

***After the mobilization announced Sept. 30 approximately 60,000 soldiers joined the army. See The Slovak National Uprising. Collection of papers on the 10th Anniversary, p. 163. Of this number approx. 15,000 persons took direct part in battles; O. Janecek. With Weapon in Hand, p. 159.

CHAPTER 11

THE SLOVAKIAN PEOPLE'S UPRISING AND THE ADVANCE OF THE SOVIET AND CZECHOSLOVAK FORCES IN THE EAST CARPATHIANS

2. The advance of the Soviet and Czechoslovak forces in the East Carpathians

On August 31 the ambassador of Czechoslovakia to the Soviet Union, Z. Fierlinger, appealed to the People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs of the USSR for military assistance to the uprising that had begun in Slovakia.*

* See Zdenek Fierlinger. In the Service of the CSR. Part II Prague, 1948, pp. 339-353

The Soviet government soon received information on the situation in Slovakia from the command group of the 1st Ukrainian front. On the morning of September 2 Marshal of the Soviet Union I. S. Konyev informed the Supreme High Commander that a group of Slovak military aircraft from the command of Col. V. Tal'skiy, the second in command of the East Slovak corps, had flown over to our side. Having acquainted the Soviet command group with the situation that had been formed in Slovakia in connection with its occupation by German fascist troops, Tal'skiy announced that in the event of an advance by Soviet forces in the southwestern direction, units of the 1st and 2nd Slovak divisions could begin an advance on Krosno, to meet the Red Army. /320

Reporting on this to Headquarters, the commander of the front proposed that an operation be conducted with the forces of the left wing of the 1st Ukrainian front and right wing of the 4th Ukrainian front to break through into Slovak territory. The direction of the blow was planned for Krosno - Duklya - Tylyava [transl. from Russian] and the composition of the forces of the 1st Ukrainian front that could be drawn upon to complete the mission was determined (four rifle divisions of the 38th Army, the 1st Guards cavalry corps and the 1st Czechoslovak army corps which was located in the troop composition of the front).* On the evening of September 2 Headquarters of the Supreme High Command gave the commander of the 1st Ukrainian front a directive in which it was stated, "In connection with the activization of the partisan movement in Slovakia and the development of the armed struggle by detached regular units and formations of the Slovak army against the German invaders... prepare and conduct an operation at the boundary of the 1st and 4th Ukrainian fronts in order to break through to the Slovak border with a strike from the area of Krosno and Sanok in the general direction of Prešov, and join the Slovak forces."** Headquarters allowed the 1st Czechoslovak army corps to be brought into the operation.

To ensure the success of the operation by the troops of the left wing of the 1st Ukrainian front, on September 3 Headquarters ordered the commander of the 4th Ukrainian front also to go over to the offensive on

---

* Archive of MD USSR, col. 236, inv. 17062, div. 16, pp. 450-454.

** IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #9493, p. 124.

September 8 on the right wing of the front from the region of Sanok in the direction of Koman'cha with the forces of one rifle corps.*

The organization of the advance involved great difficulties. At the end of August the troops of the 1st and 4th Ukrainian fronts, having completed a long offensive operation, had a great shortage of personnel and needed rest. The supply bases had fallen behind the troops, and the formations and units had only limited reserves of material resources at their disposal. The troops had no experience in conducting offensive operations in mountains, and little time had been designated for training.

Even before the beginning of the offensive the Soviet command group organized supplies for the insurgents. On the night of September 5 Soviet transport airplanes delivered to the insurgents' airfield at Tri Duba (7 kilometers south of Banska Bystrica) antitank cannons and guns, and ammunition, which were used the following day in battle. From September 5 to 18 our pilots airlifted to that airfield 580 submachine guns, 250 light and 74 medium machine guns, 1.5 million cartridges, and a considerable quantity of antitank guns and antitank cannons.

In accordance with the directive of Headquarters, the commander of the 1st Ukrainian front assigned the conduct of the operation to the 38th Army which was commanded by Col.-Gen. K. S. Moskalenko. For this Marshal I. S. Konyev ordered that considerably greater forces be drawn upon than he had called for previously, on September 2. The 52nd, 101st and 67th rifle corps as well as reinforcement units were to operate in the composition of the army. It included a mobile group (the 1st Guards cavalry and 25th tank corps) and the 1st Czechoslovak army corps. This corps was formed in the Soviet Union in the spring of 1944 on the basis of the Detached Czechoslovak Brigade, which had fought valorously with the Soviet forces in the Ukraine.

The plan of the offensive operation of the 38th Army, which received /321
the name of the Carpathian-Duklya operation, was as follows. It was planned

* IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #0493, p. 129.

that the main blow would be struck by six divisions from the region northwest of Krosno in the direction of the small town of Duklya and further toward Presov. After the breaching of the enemy's tactical zone of defense, which had only three infantry divisions against the 38th Army, the second echelon of the army was to be brought into the battle - the 1st Czechoslovak army corps. It was also proposed that the mobile group be brought into the breach to develop the success along the mountain roads in the southwestern and southern directions. The plan called for the operation to be completed on the fifth day with the army's breakthrough to the regions of Lyubotin [transl. from Russian] and Prešov. A part of the forces of the 2nd Airborne Army were to support the ground forces. The advance was scheduled for September 8. Because the insurgents urgently needed assistance preparations were carried out for the advance in a limited time, only 5 days.

On the decision of the commander of the 4th Ukrainian front the 107th rifle corps from the composition of the 1st Guards Army adjacent to the 1st Ukrainian front was designated to support the 38th Army. It was given the assignment of breaching the enemy's defense in the area of Sanok and breaking through by the end of the second day of the advance to the line of Vislok-Bel'ki - Koman'cha.

The road over which the Soviet forces and the Czechoslovak army corps were to advance was hard. Before the troops lay the region of the East Beskids, a mountain chain consisting of a row of parallel, thickly forested ridges up to 850 meters in height and separated from one another by narrow valleys with mountain rivers. Here the troops could progress only through mountain passes, of which the most important was Duklya Pass; through it ran the shortest route from Southeast Poland to Slovakia.

Exploiting the advantageous conditions of the terrain, the enemy built a defense in the East Beskids 50 kilometers in depth. The main zone of defense was built in the foothills. Farther along the northern slopes of ridges the enemy equipped positions that covered the most important directions. Particularly strong fortifications were located on the roads leading to the passes.

The advance of the 38th Army began at dawn of September 8. Artillery and air preparation lasted over two hours. The attacking troops rushed forward, at first meeting no organized resistance. In view of the successful progress of the troops of the first echelon, in the middle of the day the commander of the army gave the order to bring the mobile group and the Czechoslovak army corps into the battle. However, the roads in the breakthrough sector were found to be so heavily loaded that these formations were unable to enter the battle on the first day of the operation. The enemy, recovering after the sudden blow, by evening of September 8 had already begun to offer ever growing resistance. He was able to occupy the defense on the new line in time and to temporarily stop the advance of our troops at a depth of 6-12 kilometers from the forward edge.

The Hitlerite command group understood that the successful operations of the Soviet forces in the Krosno - Duklya direction could form a serious threat to the German fascist troops located in Slovakia and in Transylvania. Therefore it began to rapidly concentrate forces in the area of the breach. On the night of September 9 the 75th infantry division, which had arrived from the area of Turka (75 kilometers southeast of Sanok) had already entered the battle. The 1st and 8th Panzer divisions were transferred from the region of the Sandomierz beachhead, and on September 9 the forward units of the 1st Panzer division had already been counterattacked by our troops. Detached units from Slovakia were hastily transferred there, which until that time had fought against the insurgents.*

The troops of the 38th Army, who renewed the offensive on the morning of September 9, met stubborn resistance from the considerably strengthened enemy grouping. Particularly fierce battles developed for Krosno, which our troops were unable to seize on the first day of battles. Holding that city the enemy deprived the 38th Army of the main roads for development of /322
the advance. Bringing the mobile group and Czechoslovak army corps into the battle did not lead to the anticipated break in the course of the

* Archive of MD USSR, col. 393, inv. 9005, div. 239, pp. 24, 44.

operation because the gap initially made in the German defense was already tightly closed. The battles became extended. Greater and greater forces were gradually drawn into them on both sides. By evening of September 9 the main grouping of the 38th Army exceeded the opposing enemy only 2-fold in infantry and very insignificantly in tanks. In the following three days the enemy continued to build up his forces rapidly, while the forces of the advancing 38th Army remained as before. From September 9 through 11 the troops of the 38th Army, repelling numerous enemy counterattacks, progressed with exceptionally stubborn fighting only 5-10 kilometers and seized an important enemy strong point, the city of Krosno.*

During these days the Soviet and Czechoslovak troops fought with exceptional courage. On the night of September 11 units of the Czechoslovak army corps seized height 534, which dominated a wide valley and the Zmigrud-Novy - Duklya highway that ran through it. The commander of the Czechoslovak corps, Gen. L. Svoboda, decided to continue the advance along the southern slopes of the height and seize the sector of the highway in the region of the village of Teodoruvka. In fierce encounters the 1st Czechoslovak rifle brigade was able to burst into Teodoruvka by the end of the day and cut off the highway. However, with the onset of darkness, the Hitlerites counterattacked the Czechoslovak units and created a threat to the rear of that brigade. It had to be withdrawn to the height.

Particularly intense battles for height 534 broke out on September 12. The enemy transferred two regiments of the 101st light infantry division, part of the forces of the 78th infantry and the 1st Panzer division to the region of Teodoruvka. With desperate stubbornness they counterattacked the Czechoslovak soldiers. After mid-day more than a battalion of Germans supported by tanks broke through to the height. However, with a daring counterattack on the enemy's flank the 1st Czechoslovak rifle battalion threw the Hitlerites back to the southern slopes of the height. Fierce fighting continued all day. The height changed hands several times and at the end of

---

* Archive of MD USSR, col. 665, inv. 35805, div. 5, p. 8.

the day was taken by a battalion of Czechoslovak submachine gunners under the command of Hero of the Soviet Union Lt. A. Sokhov. The operations of the Czechoslovak corps on September 12 were supported by Soviet aircraft. Along with the Czechoslovak units fought subunits of the Soviet 183rd rifle division, 111th tank brigade and 11th antitank artillery brigade. In the battles the brotherly friendship of the Soviet and Czechoslovak soldiers grew and was strengthened.

As the result of stubborn battles our troops succeeded in forming a gap 2 kilometers in width in the enemy defense in the sector between the villages of Lysa Gura and Gloystse [transl. from Russian]. The commander of the front decided to bring the 1st Guards cavalry corps into the breach. On the night of September 13 the cavalrymen breached the curtain of fire created by the Hitlerites in the breakthrough sector, and broke through to the enemy's rear. The fascist command group threw in considerable forces in order to cut off the Soviet units threatening the rear of its main grouping. Soon our horsemen were forced to carry on the battle in the surroundings of the mountainous, forested region in the enemy's rear between the inhabited areas of Kremona and Polyany [transl. from Russian].

The main forces of the 38th Army moved slowly forward, and by evening of September 14 broke through to the line of Vazhitse - Osek - north of Duklya - Ivonich. In seven days of stubborn battles the troops of the army breached the main zone of defense, overcame the second zone in a narrow sector and moved to the southwest up to 23 kilometers.

The intense nature of the battle was due above all to the fact that, as before, the enemy rapidly built up his forces. While by September 8 three enemy infantry divisions were operating before the front, by the middle of September over 6 infantry and two Panzer divisions were already fighting there. On September 14 the enemy exceeded our army in tanks and assault guns by 2.3 times. In men the ratio had become approximately even.

The advance of the adjacent 1st Guards Army commanded by Col.-Gen. A. A. Grechko, which had begun on September 9, was developed at the same time. On the first day the 107th rifle corps breached the enemy defense south of Sanok. In the following days the 30th rifle corps also went over to the offensive. In fierce battles lasting six days the troops of the 1st Guards Army seized several inhabited areas and progressed 10-15 kilometers to the southwest. On the evening of September 14 they were conducting battles in the line of Bukovsko - Gochev [transl. from Russian]. /32

In spite of the fact that the Soviet troops and the Czechoslovak army corps were unable to perform their assigned mission, even in the first days the advance eased the situation of the Slovak insurgents to a certain extent. The German fascist command group was forced to transfer units of the 357th infantry division and the 338th infantry regiment and other subunits from the regions of the uprising. The numerical strength of the fascist forces that arrived from September 8 through 13 in the zone of the advance of the 38th Army alone was approximately 19,500 men.

The situation that had developed on the front of the 38th Army by September 15 required that a decisive break in the course of the battle be achieved. With this goal the commander of the front decided to strengthen the army with two tank corps and strike a blow from the region of Besko through the mountain passage to Trnavka, then to develop the advance in the direction of Duklya. In this way it was proposed that they break through to the flank and the rear of the Duklya grouping of the enemy. On September 15 the 4th Guards and 31st tank corps, which had available 144 tanks and assault guns, were included in the composition of the army.

After the battles of September 15-17 north of Rymanuv the 4th Guards tank corps, jointly with units of the 31st tank corps, concentrated on the night of September 18 in the area of Besko, which had been seized by that time by the troops of the 67th rifle corps. On the morning of September 18 the 4th Guards and 31st tank corps went over to the offensive. The tank crew members were forced to operate under exceptionally difficult conditions.

The narrow mountain passage, which was being fired upon by the enemy with antitank guns, gave the tank units no opportunity to deploy themselves in better order, and they were compelled to move in a column. Nevertheless, after a heavy battle, by morning of September 19 the tank crew members succeeded in overcoming the resistance of the enemy in the mountain passage and breaking through to Trnavka. Developing the advance, by evening of September 20 the 4th Guards tank corps had progressed 18 kilometers in the western direction and taken Duklya.* A Czechoslovak tank battalion took part in the liberation of Duklya. The enemy's resistance on the mountain ridge south of Rymanuv was crushed. However, the main enemy grouping retreated to the south and reconsolidated on an advantageous line.

After the seizure of Duklya, on September 21 the command group of the army made a decision to destroy the enemy in the region of Tylyava with a blow in the southern and southwestern directions, force the main Carpathian range and join the 1st Guards cavalry corps, which was carrying on heavy fighting in the enemy's rear. The blow was to be struck by the 4th Guards and 31st tank corps.**

By the morning of September 23 preparations for the new advance were completed. As the result of intense artillery and air preparation, in which up to 600 guns and mortars and 107 aircraft took part, the enemy defending the sector of the highway between Duklya and Tylyava was demoralized. Bearing great losses, throwing down their machine guns and weapons and abandoning their tanks, the Hitlerites retreated to the south. In the second half of the day our tank crew members seized Tylyava. With a part of their forces the tank corps moved out west of Tylyava, where on September 24 they established cooperation with the 1st Guards cavalry corps, which had broken through toward the tank crews.*** However, the tank corps could not develop

---

* Archive MD USSR, col. 665, inv. 35805, div. 5, p. 139.

** Ibid, col. 393, inv. 9005, div. 239, p. 63.

*** Ibid, col. 665, inv. 35805, div. 5, p. 25.

the advance because the enemy again succeeded in occupying the defense southwest of Tylyava and offering stubborn resistance. For two days the /324
cavalrymen, who had suffered considerable losses in the heavy battles, withdrew from the enemy's rear and were taken out to the front reserve.

The advance of the 38th Army and the Czechoslovak corps in the mountains continued. It was necessary to conduct intense battles for every height and village, every forest mass. Only on September 25 did our troops throw the enemy back to the main Carpathian range, but there they again encountered previously prepared German defenses. Battles were joined in the approaches to Duklya Pass.

At this time the troops of the 1st Guards Army continued to move forward with fierce fighting. On September 25 they broke through to the watershed of the Carpathian range. Their successful advance not only promoted the progress of the 38th Army, but created conditions for the 18th Army, which was also approaching the passes of the Carpathian range, to go over to the offensive. It was commanded by Lt. Gen. Y. P. Zhuravlyov.

Four days were required to prepare a new breach in the enemy defenses by the 38th Army. The goal of the advance was to overcome the main Carpathian range and to break through to the territory of Slovakia.* The main blow was planned to be struck from the region of Tylyava in the southwestern direction.

On September 30 the Soviet and Czechoslovak forces again went over to the offensive. As before, the battles were extremely stubborn. In four days the troops progressed only 5-10 kilometers. Extremely unfavorable weather - rain, fog - affected the rate of the advance. Pushing steadily forward to the borders of Czechoslovakia, on October 6 the troops of the Czechoslovak army corps seized the Duklya Pass. Here the Czechoslovak soldiers together with units of the Red Army entered the territory of their homeland as its

* Archive of MD USSR, col. 393, inv. 9005, div. 239, p. 75.

liberators. This was a solemn, historic moment, symbolizing the beginning of a new stage in the life of the Czechoslovak people. In the heavy battles at Duklya the new army of the future, free, Czechoslovakia was born. The day of October 6 later was declared the Day of the Czechoslovak People's Army.

After the liberation of the inhabited areas south of Duklya Pass, the local inhabitants began to return from the woods and mountains to their homes. The German fascist invaders had destroyed and plundered their farms. The Soviet government gave instructions to give the population that had suffered immediate aid in the form of provisions.

By the evening of October 6 our troops, having progressed 3-5 kilometers to the south from the pass, were again stopped by the enemy. In order to avoid fruitless frontal attacks on the strongly fortified sectors of the enemy defense south of Duklya Pass and to attempt to break through to the enemy's important communications, the command group of the army decided to shift the direction of the main blow from the southwest to the west. The new advance was prepared under complex conditions. Constant rain, poor roads, and dense fog held back the movement of the forces and considerably hindered the conduct of reconnaissance and regrouping of forces. Many roads became impassable for automobile transport. It was necessary to deliver ammunition and provisions to trans-loading points and to convey them from there to the fire positions on pack horses or on foot.

The advance was renewed on October 7. Bloody battles were joined again. Certain heights passed from hand to hand several times. For many days the Czechoslovak corps carried on stubborn battles in the regions south of the Duklya Pass. The brigades of that corps, jointly with the 359th rifle division, pushed steadily to the south. They frequently were forced to encounter the enemy in hand-to-hand combat. At every step mines lay in wait for the soldiers. Recalling those days, the Chief of Staff of the Czechoslovak corps, Gen. Lomsky, wrote, "Literally meter by meter the enemy's resistance was broken down. The battle consisted of constant attacks, which /325

were conducted day and night."* By evening of October 18 the Czechoslovak corps in cooperation with the 359th rifle division succeeded in progressing 10-15 kilometers in the southern direction.

On October 19 the advance was again stopped temporarily. The commander of the army made a new decision, in accordance with which the main blow was to be struck on Kapishova.** After partial regrouping, on October 25 the army renewed the offensive. An improvement in the weather allowed the use of aircraft, which inflicted strong bombing and strafing attacks on the enemy. During October 25-27 the army progressed 6 kilometers in the southern direction and broke through to the region of Kapishova. Further attempts to develop the advance were without success. On October 28 the 38th Army went over to the defense on the line of Gloystse - Polyany - Kapishova. By that time the troops of the center and left wing of the 4th Ukrainian front, exploiting the favorable situation created by the 2nd Ukrainian front in Hungary and Transylvania, broke through in the area of Mukachevo-Uzhgorod and liberated the Trans-Carpathian Ukraine (map 13).

During November the 38th Army and the Czechoslovak army corps conducted local battles in order to improve their tactical position. In connection with the progress of the 2nd Ukrainian front in Hungary and the breakthrough of the army of the 4th Ukrainian front in the Transcarpathians, the position of the German fascist troops occupying the defense before the 38th Army worsened considerably. On the night of November 26 the Hitlerite command group began to withdraw its forces in that sector of the front. Conducting battles with the enemy rear guards, by November 30 the formations of the 38th Army reached the Ondava River, where they went over to the defense.

The intense struggle in the East Carpathians, which continued for two and one-half months, ended in late autumn of 1944 with the breakthrough of the 38th Army and Czechoslovak corps to the southern slopes of the Carpathians. The Soviet and Czechoslovak forces had progressed not more than

---

* Bohumir Lomsky. Dukla-a monument to Eternal Czechoslovak-Soviet Amity and Military Friendship. "History and Military Affairs", Nr. 3, 1954, p.74.

** Archive of MD USSR, col. 393, inv. 9005, div. 115, pp. 85-86.

50 kilometers in force. Each step cost heroic efforts, stubborn combat work and great sacrifices. In the course of the advance the Soviet forces lost over 90,000 persons either killed, wounded or missing in action.* The Czechoslovak army corps lost 6,500 soldiers.** These losses were not in vain. The advance of the Soviet and Czechoslovak troops in September-October 1944 rendered real assistance to the Slovak people's uprising, which opened a new page in the chronicle of the national liberation struggle of the peoples of Europe against fascism.

The German fascist command group was forced to throw almost all of the formations and units that at that moment it was able to free from other sectors of the Soviet-German front against the Soviet and Czechoslovak troops. In September-November it sent 13 infantry and 3 Panzer divisions, up to 5 detached regiments and 9 detached battalions - approximately 18 divisions in all - to the zone of the 38th Army.*** Beginning on September 10, 9-12 enemy divisions operated continuously before the front. The gathering of a large quantity of forces in the zone of advance of the Soviet and Czech forces led to a situation where the Hitlerites were able up until the second half of October to keep largely police, SS forces, and only a negligible number of regular military units against the Slovak insurgents.

In spite of the fierce nature of the battles, the Soviet and Czechoslovak troops were unable to join the partisans of Slovakia, above all because the Soviet command group could not deploy large forces for operations in the Krosno-Duklya direction, because of the limited operative capacity of the mountainous region. Furthermore, the troops of the Red Army and the 1st Czechoslovak corps were not prepared for an offensive in a mountainous, forested terrain and did not have the necessary equipment at their disposal. /326

---

* Archive of MD USSR, col. 393, inv.9011, div. 32, pp. 238-243, 275-279, 309-312; col. 236, inv. 41782, div, 10, p. 585; inv. 19577, div. 3, pp. 7, 188; col. 244, inv. 75862, div. 3, p. 62.

** See "War and Revolution". V. 1. Prague, 1949, p.8; The Slovak National Uprising. A Collection of Papers on the 10th Anniversary, p. 163.

*** 1st, 8th, 24th Panzer divisions, 545th, 68th, 208th, 96th, 544th, 78th, 359th, 168th, 357th infantry divisions, 101st mountain rifle division, 1st ski-chausseur division and various detached units (total numerical strength up to two divisions).

There was too little time to prepare an offensive operation under such complex conditions. There were also deficiencies in the logistical supply of the forces. Furthermore, the enemy, exploiting the conditions of the mountainous, forested terrain, which were advantageous for defense, had gathered considerable forces into that region, covering the few roads and valleys that were suitable for the movement of the advancing troops, and offered fierce resistance.

Another no less important cause of the operation's lack of success was the fact that the East Slovak corps did not act. According to the plan of the uprising this corps was to prevent the German forces from entering East Slovakia from the south, and, with a blow to the rear of the enemy units occupying the defense at Duklya and Lupkov Passes in the Carpathians, to help the Soviet forces to seize those passes. Headquarters regarded the action of that corps as an important factor in promoting the advance when it issued its directive to the 1st Ukrainian front on the conduct of the operation. Consequently both the course of the operation and the fate of the uprising itself depended on the actions of the East Slovak corps. However, at the decisive moment certain senior officers of that corps revealed faint-heartedness and cowardice. There were also cases of direct betrayal. As a result the Hitlerites disarmed both corps. Only a small part of the personnel of the corps was able to go to the partisan detachments operating in East Slovakia.

All of this led to the 38th Army's offensive not taking on the scope anticipated. Nonetheless, it had serious political and military significance. This advance was an important stage in the liberation of Czechoslovakia. It played a large part in the struggle of the Czechoslovak people for a new Czechoslovakia, in the consolidation of friendship with the Soviet Union and its army, and the unity of the Czech and Slovak peoples. The Carpathian-Duklya operation foiled the plan of the emigrant government, which hoped to subordinate the liberation movement in Slovakia to its influence. The Czechoslovak corps, which later became the basis for the creation of the truly national army of the new Czechoslovakia, stood out in this struggle as

an expressor of the national interest. It was led by experienced and energetic generals and officers, who were devoted to their people. At almost all stages of the operation the corps acted in the direction of the main blow of the 38th Army. In fierce battles in the region of Teodoruvka, height 534, and in Duklya Pass, the soldiers and officers were models of military skill, and fulfilled their duty before their homeland with honor.

The Carpathian-Duklya operation entered the history of the Great Patriotic War as an act of the unbreakable friendship between the Soviet and Czechoslovak peoples, of the military cooperation of the Soviet and Czechoslovak armies. The memory of the events of the autumn of 1944 in Duklya is dear to every Soviet person and every Czech and Slovak. In the consciousness of the peoples of Czechoslovakia the struggle for Duklya is now connected not only with the idea of the expulsion of the occupiers from the Czechoslovak republic, but also with the thought of the beginning of a new epoch in the life of the country. K. Gottwald, speaking of the significance of the joint offensive by the Soviet forces and the forces of the Czechoslovak corps across the Duklya Pass, emphasized, "In Duklya was born a slogan that has strongly entered the feelings and consciousness of our people: With the Soviet Union forever! With the Soviet Union, and only thus from now on!"*

* K. Gottwald. 1949-1950. Praha, 1951, str. 137.

CHAPTER 11

THE SLOVAKIAN PEOPLE'S UPRISING AND THE ADVANCE OF THE SOVIET AND CZECHOSLOVAK FORCES IN THE EAST CARPATHIANS

3. The further course of the Slovak uprising. The partisan struggle in Slovakia in October-November 1944.

While the Soviet and Czechoslovak troops were conducting the battle for the Duklya Pass, a stubborn struggle was continuing in the region of the Slovak uprising by the partisan and regular units of the Slovak army /327

that had deserted to the people's side, against the advancing units of the German fascist occupiers.

As the enemy progressed to the central sector of the liberated territory the partisan detachments conducted active combat operations in his rear. The Ukrainian headquarters of the partisan movement at this time continued to airlift organizational groups into Slovakia. In West Slovakia in the area of Myjava - Stara Tura (60-65 kilometers northwest of Nitra) Soviet Col. I. D. Dibrov organized a partisan brigade on the basis of two Slovak detachments, which in September-October struck heavy blows on the enemy's troops and communications. At the same time, in East Slovakia the partisan war was conducted by formations and detachments under the direction of Soviet commanders M. I. Shukayev, N. A. Prokopyuk and others. The "Chapayev" brigade was the most active there. The partisan brigades demolished dozens of enemy trains and railroad bridges, and liquidated several fascist garrisons including the headquarters of the 97th light infantry division.* The detachments of M. M. Perechinskiy, V. I. Magarit, Y. P. Volyanskiy, K. K. Popov, A. K. Lyakh, D. B.Murazin and others also operated actively.

The widely developed struggle of the partisan detachments, the number and numerical strength of which grew steadily, insistently demanded coordination of operations and a united leadership. The Main Headquarters of the partisan detachments in Slovakia, which was created in September 1944 by the Slovakian National Council, could not unite the operations of the partisans. Furthermore, in connection with the start of the Carpathian-Duklya operation it was essential to achieve such coordination at all costs. On the request of the controlling center of the CPCz at the end of September the Ukrainian Headquarters of the partisan movement sent to the Main Headquarters of the partisan detachments in Slovakia Col. A. N. Asmolov and a group of officers, who were to help their Czechoslovak comrades to organize the work of their headquarters.** The Soviet command group took measures to supply the partisan detachments with materials and to draw the patriots of Moravia and Czechia

---

* See The Slovak National Uprising. A Collection of Papers on the 10th Anniversary, 2p. 105-106.

** See J. Solc. From the History of the Partisan Movement in Slovakia. In the collection "How an Everlasting Friendship was Born", p. 371.

into the struggle. In September and October Soviet aircraft airlifted 45,560 kilograms of cargo to the partisans of Slovakia - arms, ammunition, medicaments, and means of communication.*

The most active fighting force of the uprising was the partisan detachments, although their numerical strength was considerably less than the numerical strength of the army units that sided with the uprising. By the beginning of October 1944, 3 partisan formations, 6 brigades and 20 separate detachments with total numerical strength of 15,845 persons** were operating in the territory of Slovakia. The partisan detachments attacked enemy garrisons, destroyed enemy fighting equipment and disrupted communications. They kept the fascists in constant tension and forced them to scatter their forces. In October the partisans destroyed over 9,000 enemy soldiers and officers, undermined 26 military trains, destroyed 20 locomotives, 209 train cars with various cargos, 18 tanks, 11 armored cars, 207 automobiles and much other enemy fighting equipment. They blew up 13 railroad and 8 highway bridges and a railroad tunnel, wrecked the headquarters of two divisions and seized important trophies.*** In battles with the Hitlerites the correctness of the active offensive tactics of the partisan formations and detachments was fully confirmed. /328

Military operations after the incursion of German fascist forces into Slovakia developed as follows. In the northwest sector of Slovakia, which had been seized by the uprising, the most stubborn fighting took place in the area of Žilina, then moved in the direction of Vrutky - Turčansky Sv. Martin and further to the northern slopes of Bol'shaya Fatra. After the seizure of the city of Ružomberok by the occupiers on September 5, battles continued until October 27 in the region of Liptovska Osada.

In the northeastern sector of the liberated territory, as the result of the traitorous position of the reactionary officer cadres of the Slovakian army garrison, the Hitlerites were able to seize Kežmarok and Levoča on

---

* Party Archive of the CC CPUkr. Inst. of Hist. of the Party, col. 62, inv. 62-1, div. 84, p. 173; div. 96, p. 68.

**Ibid, div. 96, p. 66.

***Ibid, col. 62, inv. 62-1, div. 96, p. 68.

August 31, Poprad on September 1, and Liptovsky Sv. Mikulaš on September 4, after which the front stabilized there. East of Telgart the battles did not cease until October 21. In the period from October 21 through 27 the defenders of Telgart were forced to retreat through Gelpa and Brezno to the south slopes of the Lower Tatra under the onslaught of the enemy Panzer and infantry units.

Intense fighting developed in the liberated territory of the southwest sector of Slovakia where the insurgents' main defensive lines ran south of Zvolen and Kremnica and west of Bol'shaya Fatra, in the region of Gandlova and Prievida. Here the enemy succeeded in breaking the defense of the insurgents only on October 24, and seized Zvolen on October 26. Only after that did the way to the political center of the uprising, Banska Bystrica, open to the fascist forces, and they seized it on October 27.

The partisan detachments and separate units of the Slovak army displayed heroism and selflessness in their struggle with the enemy. Battles in the area of Strečno, Turčansky Sv. Martin, Ružomberok, Telgart, and Sveti Kriz testified convincingly to this. In the area of Strečno the blow of the advancing Hitlerite forces was taken by the partisans of A. S. Yegorov's brigade, the soldiers of the Žilina and Turcansky Sv. Martin garrisons and the fighters of Lyanur'yen's [transl. from Russian] French detachment.* For five days they courageously repelled the furious attacks of the German motorized units, and frequently counterattacked them. The heroic struggle for Strečno provided an opportunity to prepare the defense of other areas of the northwestern sector of the insurgents' territory. The defenders of Telgart, who for several weeks repelled the attacks of superior enemy forces, then went over to the offensive in one of the directions that were important for the fate of the uprising, east of Banska Bystrica, covered themselves with glory. The military cooperation of the military units and partisans played a positive role. It showed that joint decisive actions by the army and partisan detachments could ensure success in the struggle against the German fascist forces.

---

* The detachment was formed of Frenchmen who had escaped from forced labor and concentration camps.

These and many other examples of the military operations of the insurgents, and also the fact that there was the possibility of drawing considerably greater armed forces into the struggle against the Hitlerites,* indicated the presence in Slovakia of the necessary prerequisites for conducting active offensive and defensive operations in the area of the uprising up to the arrival there of the Soviet forces. However, these prerequisites were not used, due to the incorrect position of the Slovak National Council and the command group of the segment of the Slovak army that sided with the uprising.

The Slovak National Council, which declared itself to be the supreme legislative and executive organ in the entire territory liberated by the insurgents, did not and could not become the true revolutionary director of the popular masses. The bourgeois representatives that had been planted in it with the support of the bourgeois nationalist elements from the leadership of the CPS, continued even during the uprising to follow a line toward foiling the national liberation movement, curtailing the military activity of the popular masses, setting the army in opposition to the partisan detachments, and subordinating the partisan movement to the army command group. /329

At the head of the Slovakian National Council was the Presidium, which on the basis of equal representation included four members each from the Communist Party and the bourgeois bloc. The CPS was represented by K. Shmidke, G. Gusak, L. Novomeskiy, and D. Ertl' (a former Social Democrat). The chairmen were K. Shmidke from the CPS and V. Shrobar from the bourgeois bloc. Thus in the Presidium of the Slovak National Council, which decided all of the most important political and military questions, there was not one member who would consistently conduct a revolutionary line.

The plenum of the Slovak National Council, which was also formed on the basis of the principle of equal representation, had at first 13 persons, and by the end of October approximately 50. Here the Communist Party was

---

* Up to 120,000 persons in all. See Imrich Stanek. Zrada a pád. Praha, 1958, str. 370.

represented by many true communists. They conducted a great revolutionary work among the masses, promoted the expansion and strengthening of the anti-fascist struggle and the realization of democratic measures by local national committees. However, they were unable to achieve a change in the compromising, opportunistic position of the representatives of the CPS in the Presidium of the Council, who continued essentially to be led by the representatives of the bourgeois bloc.

The Slovak National Council, which issued approximately 40 laws and decrees during the two months of the uprising, made no attempt to resolve even one of the fundamental social-economic questions, in spite of the fact that the workers of several regions demanded that land reform be carried out, state control over industrial enterprises be established, etc.

The military policy of the Slovak National Council inflicted serious damage on the uprising. The actions of the Military Center and the later-formed Defense Council attached to the Slovak National Council affected the course of military operations disastrously. The representatives of the bourgeoisie who headed these organs attempted largely to narrow the scope of the armed conflict and at the same time to create a reputation for themselves as active participants in the national liberation movement.

The plan of the uprising that was developed by the command group of the Slovak army was fundamentally faulty. It was of a defensive nature, did not call for the cooperation of regular units and partisan detachments, and did not take into consideration the role of the mass people's revolutionary movement. A comparatively small area in the triangle of Banska Bystrica - Zvolen - Brezno was planned as the main operative zone of the uprising. It is entirely understandable that in thus limiting the operative zone of military operations the authors of the plan essentially transformed it into a trap for the insurgent units. It is true that these calculations by the command force of the army were not borne out, and the uprising embraced a much larger territory. Nonetheless, the limiting tendencies of the plan constricted the actions of the insurgents. The passive tactics of the military units created a serious threat of the defeat of the uprising even at

its very beginning. The situation at this period was only saved by the partisan detachments, which, not awaiting the arrival of the German fascist forces, moved to meet the enemy, going far beyond the borders of the triangle called for by the plan. In Levoča, Poprad, Spišska Nova Ves, Bratislava, Nitra and almost all cities of West Slovakia the garrisons were led by officers with reactionary views, connected with the War Ministry of F. Catlos, who frustrated the action of the units and subunits subordinate to them, and did not allow them to join the insurgents.

The true organizers and directors of the masses in the liberated territory were the local party organizations of the CPS and the democratic organs of power created by the people, the national committees. As the uprising developed the national committees took power in the provinces into their own hands. In many inhabited areas they removed officials of the Tiso fascist /330 government, put the property of fascist organizations under the control of the workers, conducted mobilization into the insurgent army, organized defensive works and supply of the insurgents and population, and ensured the activity of industrial enterprises and the conduct of agricultural work. The national committees formed a worker's (people's) militia to protect plants, warehouses, roads, and civilian property, maintain the revolutionary order and render fascist elements harmless. The national committees published newspapers: "Nash boy" in Dobsina, "Nashe zdravy" in Revuca, "Glas Gemera" in Tisovec and others*[transl. from Russian].

Thus, in the course of the uprising in the liberated territory the first democratic organs of revolutionary people's power in the history of Czechoslovakia, the national committees, which represented the interests of the broadest strata of the populations and were directed by communists, arose and operated legally. The national committees later became the political basis of the people's democratic state. The local party organizations underwent a great test during the uprising. In spite of the incorrect policy of the leadership of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Slovakia at that time, the great majority of them were able to judge the situation correctly and lead the uprising in the provinces.

*See The Slovak National Uprising. Materials from a Scholarly Conference on the 15th Anniversary of the Slovak National Uprising. Bratislava, 1959, p.80.

Proceeding from the necessity to establish political unity in the ranks of the working class in the struggle against fascism, on September 17, 1944 the Communist Party of Slovakia and the Slovakian Social Democratic Party formed the single Communist Party of Slovakia at their United Conference. However, due to hurried preparations the Conference was of a formal nature. The party was unable to achieve full ideological unity on the basis of the principles of Marxism-Leninism. During the unification rightist Social Democrats penetrated the CPS. The new leadership, in which the bourgeois nationalists consolidated their position, did not function during the uprising as a collective organ.

At the end of September a member of the directing center of the CPCz, one of the outstanding representatives of the Communist Party, J. Shverma, arrived to ensure correct party direction of the uprising and of the activity of the CPS organizations. He did much to strengthen the connection of the party to the broad masses of workers and to eliminate the harmful consequences of the activity of bourgeois nationalists. J. Shverma actively collaborated on the newspaper "Pravda " (the organ of the CC CPS), entered the Military Council attached to the Main Partisan Headquarters in Slovakia, and exerted a decisive influence on all of the most important aspects of the political life of the liberated territory.

A service of the local organizations of the CPS was the fact that they promoted the formation of plant committees at industrial enterprises. The plant committees resolved a wide range of questions connected with various aspects of life and the armed struggle of the workers of the liberated segment of Slovakia. On the initiative of the communists, on October 15 in Podbrezova an All-Slovakia Conference of representatives of the plant committees took place. Over 200 delegates from 137 plants located in both liberated and occupied territory took part. The conference discussed questions of the activity of the plant committees and the necessity to establish unity in the labor union movement.

J. Shverma took active part in the work of the conference. This helped the representatives of the Slovak plants and factories to take the correct

position when discussing the main questions. The Conference passed two resolutions. In the first, addressed to the Slovak National Council, it was stressed that"the working class will take its place in the first ranks of fighters for freedom." The resolution demanded that a new law be issued on the plant committees, on the establishment of workers' control at enterprises. In it the demand was also advanced that industrial enterprises /331 and property that had belonged to foreign and internal enemies of the Soviet people be nationalized. The second resolution defined the tasks of the plant committees in the struggle with fascism and hostile elements, the role of these committees in the organization of war production and the supply of the insurgent army, in the protection of the plants and the entire free territory. The resolution ended with an appeal: "Let every plant be transformed to a fortress of our national liberation struggle."* The Conference of plant committees in Podbrezova laid the foundation for the unity of the labor union movement in Slovakia. However, the Slovakian National Council, having taken notice of the demands of the Conference, did nothing to realize them.

The activity of the national committees, the worker's (people's) militia, and the plant committees was the reflection of the great revolutionary activity of the workers of Slovakia, who had begun to build a people's democratic Czechoslovak state under the conditions of an intense struggle with the Hitlerites and Slovak fascists.

The fall of the political center of the Slovak people's uprising, Banska Bystrica, and the occupation of the insurgents' territory by German fascist troops did not lead to a cessation of the struggle. A large part of the insurgents withdrew to the mountains, where they continued the partisan war.

On the initiative of J. Shverma the Main Headquarters of the partisan movement in Slovakia had in mid-October 1944 already begun to prepare the partisan struggle for the event that it should be necessary to retreat from the liberated territory to the mountains. The partisan forces were divided

*At the Birth of Unity. Reminiscences of Participants in the Conference of Plant Committees and Advisory Councils, held on October 15, 1944 in Podbrezova. Bratislava, 1959. Appendix 3,5.

into groups; behind each of them a certain region was secured. Measures were taken for the party organizations of the CPS to go over to an illegal footing and to continue the publication of the newspaper "Pravda" and other organs of the Communist press. On instructions from the CC CPz and the Main Headquarters of the partisan movement, on October 27-28 the partisan detachments had already begun to retreat to the movements.

A different position was taken by the commander of the Slovak army, Gen. J. Golian, and then Gen. R. Viest, who was sent from London and replaced him on October 6. On October 22 Viest called a meeting of unit commanders at which a resolution was passed to cease the defense of the territory of the uprising. On October 26 the command group was redeployed to the region of Donovaly. The leadership of the army declined to accept the proposal of the CPS that the Slovak units go over to partisan forms of battle under the direction of the Main Headquarters of the partisan movement, and essentially disbanded the army, in spite of the fact that it had every opportunity to continue the organized struggle.* The Slovak units, having lost contact with the command group, began to retreat in disorder from the positions they held to the region of Donovaly where they were subjected to a heavy attack by the enemy. Many officers and soldiers scattered, and only a few of them joined the partisan detachments. Generals Viest and Golian were taken prisoner by the Germans and later shot. As a result of the breakup the Slovak units bore greater losses in manpower and equipment in the last days of October than throughout the entire preceding period of the uprising.**

The directors of the partisan movement in Slovakia (J. Shverma, A. N. Asmolov) took measures to organize communication with partisan detachments and to position them in previously planned regions. In view of the threat of encirclement, the headquarters and the group of partisans located in Donovaly withdrew from that region across Mt. Klabenets [transl. from Russian] (Lower Tatra). During the transfer the national hero of Czechoslovakia, J.

---

* See E. Bel'ak. Military Questions of the Uprising. "Obrana Lidu", August 29, 1959; The Slovak National Uprising. A Collection of Papers on the 10th Anniversary, p. 124.

** See M. Gisko. The Slovakian People's Uprising, p. 64.

Shverma, perished. He remained at his battle post until the last minute of his life. Several days before his death, when it had been proposed that he evacuate due to a serious illness, J. Shverma said, "I would have to feel shame for my whole life if I were to abandon the Slovak people in a moment of danger. I came to Slovakia not only to make speeches and to write, but also to fight."* /332

Basing itself in the region of Khabenets, the Main Headquarters of the partisan movement carried out great organizational and political work. In spite of heavy battles and the great losses borne by the partisans, their numerical strength not only did not decrease, but it continued to grow. At the beginning of November in the enemy's rear operated 4 partisan formations, 6 brigades, and approximately 30 independent detachments with total numerical strength up to 19,000 persons.** Under the guidance of the Main Headquarters, in October and November the partisans went over to more maneuvering operations. Not engaging in battle under unfavorable conditions, they completed numerous diversions, attacked small groups of Hitlerite and Slovakian fascists, carried out reconnaissance and reported information on the enemy to the Soviet command force. The main region of partisan operations in this period was the slopes of the Lower and High Tatra, Slovenske Rudohorie, and Bol'shaya and Malaya Fatra.

As the organizational unity of the partisan movement was strengthened and the numerical strength of the partisan detachments increased, their actions became more and more aggressive and their operations ever larger.

Thus, for instance, the "Gottwald" brigade conducted several diversions on railroad lines southwest of Spisska Nova Ves, organized the crash of 35 enemy military trains, destroyed 130 automobiles and blew up over 20 railroad and highway bridges. Other partisan detachments also operated successfully. In just three weeks in December 1944, according to incomplete

---

* J. Dolezal. The Slovak National Uprising p.186.

** See J. Solc. From the History of the Partisan Movement in Slovakia, p. 372.

data, partisans derailed 40 German trains with soldiers, arms, and equipment, knocked out 30 tanks and 110 automobiles, blew up 20 bridges, a railroad depot and a military factory, and damaged a large number of telegraph and telephone lines. During this period over 5,200 German soldiers and officers were eliminated by partisans.*

Great support was given to the partisans by the population, which informed them of German troop movements, supplied them with provisions, clothing, and footwear, sheltered their scouts, and so on. For example, in Gorni-Legota the German authorities issued an order on the collection of presents for Hitlerite soldiers. The local population, making use of this, collected essential items and conveyed them to the 2nd partisan brigade.**

In spite of the cruel punitive measures of the occupiers and detachments of the fascist Glinka Guards, the military operations of the partisan detachments developed in November and December with unweakening force. The national liberation movement of the popular masses continued until the liberation of Slovakia by the Red Army.

The Slovakian people's uprising made a great contribution to the matter of liberating the Czechoslovak Republic. Speaking in 1959 in Banska Bystrica at a ceremonial meeting dedicated to the 15th anniversary of the Slovakian uprising, the 1st Secretary of the CC CPCz, President of the Czechoslovak Republic A. Novotny, said, "The Slovakian people's uprising will always remain recorded in the history of the glorious battles of our peoples for freedom, and is one of the brightest of its pages."*** Rising to open struggle against the occupiers, the Slovak people joined the ranks of active fighters /333 to rid the peoples of Europe of fascist slavery, and proclaimed the restoration of the Czechoslovak Republic as a state of two equal, brother peoples, Czechs and Slovaks.

---

* See Questions of the Popular and Democratic Revolution in the CSR. Collection. Prague, 1955, p.72.

** See J. Dolezal. The Slovak National Uprising, p. 193.

*** "Rude Pravo", August 30, 1959.

The assistance of the USSR, especially the advance of the troops of the Red Army in the Carpathians, was one of the most important conditions for the existence for two months of a liberated insurgent region in the rear of the German fascist forces, where the master of the situation was the people. Here new forms of social and economic life were engendered, a new, people's democratic Czech republic. The uprising promoted the breakdown of the fascist "Slovakian state" - a satellite of Hitlerite Germany. It was the peak of the antifascist struggle of the Slovak people and the beginning of the national democratic revolution in Czechoslovakia, which in May 1945 led to the victory of the national democratic order in the country.

The Slovakian uprising exerted a great influence on the course of the liberation struggle in the Czech regions. The insurgents decisively cut off all attempts of the bourgeois nationalists to place the interests of Slovakia against the interests of Czechia. This position of the Slovak people was a result of the enormous work carried out by the Czechoslovak communists in educating the workers of the country in the spirit of brotherly friendship and class solidarity.

The Czech people in turn attempted to support the Slovak insurgents under the difficult conditions of the Hitlerite occupation. The CPCz stepped forward as the organizer of assistance to the uprising. In the country radio information on the course of events in Slovakia was regularly transmitted, in which it was explained that the Slovak people's uprising was the highest form of the national liberation struggle for a united free Czechoslovak republic. This encouraged many Czechs, in spite of cruel persecution by the fascists, to cross the Moravian-Slovakian border and join the insurgents. By September 3 approximately 1,000 Czechs had crossed into Slovakia, and the same number again came after that. However, the main form of support for the uprising by the Czech people was the development of the revolutionary antifascist struggle in Czech regions, the creation of national committees there, and the strengthening of the partisan movement.

A characteristic feature of the Slovakian uprising was the participation in it of representatives of almost 30 nationalities. In Slovakia fought

approximately 3,000 Soviet partisans, up to 2,000 Czechs, approximately 800 Hungarians, 400 French, 80 German antifascists, 70-100 Poles, over 100 Yugoslavs, 50 Americans and Englishmen, and also Greeks, Italians, Bulgarians, Belgians, Dutch, Austrians and representatives of other peoples.* These were people who had for the most part escaped from German fascist captivity and were attempting to break through to meet the Red Army. The international composition of the participants in the uprising reflected the general upsurge in the antifascist struggle of the peoples of Europe.

The participation of Soviet partisans in the uprising played a large part. They shared their rich military experience with the Slovaks and helped the partisan detachments to become the main force in the armed struggle. Great support to the insurgents was given by the airlift in the middle of September, which was organized by the Soviet command group, of a Czechoslovak fighter air force regiment, trained and completely armed in the USSR, and in the last days of September of a parachute assault landing brigade of the Czechoslovak army corps. Throughout the entire uprising the Soviet command force provided the insurgents with arms, ammunition, equipment and provisions. The aid of the Soviet Union to the people's uprising was a remarkable expression of the brotherly friendship and military cooperation of the peoples of the USSR and Czechoslovakia.

The Slovakian uprising had great military significance. It put railroads and highways in the territory of Slovakia which were essential for the German command group for transferring troops and ammunition to the Soviet-German front out of operation for a long period. The people's uprising and the Carpathian-Duklya operation forced the Hitlerites to send considerable forces to Slovakia, which to some extent supported the success of the Soviet troops in the Trans-Carpathian Ukraine and partially in Hungary. The uprising frustrated the plans of the German command force, which had counted on exploiting the human resources of Slovakia for the struggle against the Red Army. Moreover, in the course of the uprising and the subsequent partisan

*See I. Doležal, I. Grozienchik. International Solidarity in the Slovakian National Uprising of 1944. "Voprosy istoriyi," 1961, No. 7, pp. 73, 74, 77, 78, 79.

struggle the German command force bore heavy losses in manpower and equipment. In battles against the insurgents the Hitlerites lost approximately 56,000 men.*

The most important factor in the Slovakian uprising was the consolidation of the Soviet-Czechoslovak military alliance, strengthened with the blood spilled by Soviet, Slovak and Czech soldiers in the joint fight against the enemy. /334

* See I. Stanek. Betrayal and Downfall, p. 370.

CHAPTER 12

THE LIBERATION OF THE SOVIET BALTIC REPUBLICS - LATVIA, LITHUANIA AND ESTONIA. THE DEFEAT OF THE ENEMY IN THE ARCTIC.

1. The Baltic region under the yoke of the German occupiers. The advance of the Soviet forces in the Baltic direction in the summer of 1944.

/335

In the summer of 1944 Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania were still under the yoke of the German fascist invaders. The three-year occupation had brought incalculable calamities to the peoples of these young Soviet republics. The Hitlerites attempted to transform the Baltic area into a part of fascist Germany "by Germanization of racially suitable elements, colonization by representatives of the German race and extermination of undesirable elements."[1] In the "Ost" general plan the full Germanization of Estonia

---

[1] See The Nuremberg Proceedings, ed. 3, Vol. 1, p. 406.

and Latvia was planned to be carried out over 20 years.[1] With this goal it was planned to colonize the countries of the Baltic region with a certain number of Germans and to leave individuals from the local inhabitants who possessed clearly marked features of the Nordic race." Racially "unsuitable" people the Hitlerites planned to relocate to the East and even to other countries. In this way the fascist bosses proposed to liquidate the governmental and national independence of the Baltic peoples and turn them into the obedient slaves of the German occupiers.[2] Even in 1941 all civil power in the Baltic was concentrated in the hands of the imperial commissar, who had his headquarters apartments in Riga. In Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania power belonged to the general commissars, who were subordinate to the imperial commissar. In the districts and large cities of these republics German commissars and burgomeisters were appointed. German was declared the official language. The Nazis even did away with the very names "Lithuania," "Latvia," and "Estonia," replacing them with the impersonal expression "Bezirke" - region.

However, after the first major defeat near Moscow in March 1942 the /336
Hitlerites declared the introduction in the Baltic republics of so-called "administrative self-government." Outwardly this was expressed in the creation of an institute of advisors attached to the German general comissars. Attempting to deceive the people, the occupiers announced that the advisors would be in charge of separate branches of the national economy. In fact this was a maneuver calculated to weaken the resistance of the Baltic peoples. Only representatives of the local bourgeoisie, with whose help the Hitlerites conducted a policy of tyranny and robbery, were appointed to the position of advisors.

To please the German colonists the fascist oppressors deprived the peasants of their land, which they had received from the Soviet authorities in 1940-1941. The occupiers drove the peasants from their farms in whole families, giving them no opportunity to take with them either food or clothing. Many were sent to forced labor in Germany or to German farms in

---

[1] See also Chapter 6 on the Hitlerites' colonialist policy in Lithuania, pp. 183-184.

[2] See "The Defeat of German Imperialism in the Second World War," pp. 230, 236.

the Baltic region where the workers were kept in inhuman conditions. Just how monstrous were the colonizing plans of the fascists can be seen from the cynical speech of the Hitlerite Minister of Agriculture, Darre, who said, "In the whole of the east only Germans have the right to be the owners of large estates. A country settled by an alien race must become a country of slaves, agricultural servants and industrial workers."[1]

The colonization policy was also conducted in the cities, where the Hitlerites evicted the inhabitants of homes in the central streets and settled Germans in them. Many plants and factories were closed and their equipment removed to Germany. As a result of violence and unrestrained theft the situation of workers, especially laborers, became sharply worse. The occupiers deprived them of all rights. Labor unions were liquidated. The directors of factories and plants could establish the length of the working day at their own discretion, subject workers to corporal punishment, or have them placed in punishment rooms. Forced to labor 12 to 16 hours per day, the workers received only a starvation norm of bread (150-200 grams per day). The German butchers ruthlessly annihilated the population of the Baltic region. Thus, for example, during the occupation period 250,000 persons[2] were exterminated in Latvia and over 125,000 in Estonia.[3]

Attempting to destroy the national culture of the Baltic peoples, the fascists closed schools, made school buildings unusable, did all they could to prevent the teaching and education of children. In Estonia alone they destroyed over 275 school buildings, not counting those that were turned into barracks and warehouses. Attempting to undermine the friendship of the peoples of the Soviet Union, the Nazis cut out of textbooks the pages telling of the heroic feats of Estonians in the struggle against German conquerors in earlier times and of the help rendered them by the Russian people. Many advanced, progressively inclined teachers were removed from work in the schools, and hundreds of teachers were confined in concentration camps. All

---

[1] Central Party Archive IML, col. 17, inv. 2, div. 885, pp. 6-22.

[2] See Collected Reports of the Extraordinary State Commission on the Crimes of the German Fascist Invaders, p. 384.

[3] See History of the Estonian SSR. 2nd Ed. Tallinn, Estongosizdat, 1958, p. 621.

of this led to a situation where in the last year of the occupation almost all schools in Estonia had essentially ceased operation. In those that continued to exist, an admiration for all things German was instilled in the children, and they were taught in the spirit of slavish docility toward the colonizers.

The calamities of the peoples of the Baltic were greatly aggravated by the fact that in conducting their inhuman policy the occupation powers were aided by traitors to the Motherland - bourgeois nationalists who were attempting to tear Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania from the Soviet Union and to restore the capitalist order. Together with the invaders they robbed the people and destroyed their cultural and educational institutions. The traitorous policy of the bourgeois nationalists is testified to specifically by a well-known memorandum of Lithuanian-German nationalists, in which they /337 called the wresting of Memel (Klaipeda) from Lithuania "regulating the position of the Klaipeda district" and expressed the wish that "Lithuania be included in the new Europe" led by the great Germany.[1] From nationalist bands of the so-called "Front of Lithuanian Activists" the occupants formed secret policy political battalions which were used to bear police service in Lithuania and beyond its borders. On assignment from the Gestapo these subunits participated in the destruction of Soviet activists and Jews, and in driving the population to forced labor in Germany. With the help of the nationalists the fascist invaders organized military subunits in Lithuania for the struggle against the partisans. However, all of these formations disintegrated when the Hitlerites attempted to send them to the Soviet-German front.[2] The activities of the bourgeois nationalists were promoted by the fact that at the start of the war the kulak system had still not been fully liquidated in the Baltic republics. It became the support of the fascist occupation regime.

From the first days of the war the workers of the Baltic region began, under the direction of the communists remaining in the provinces, to offer

---

[1] CPA IML, col. 17, inv. 2, div. 2228, pp. 6-7.

[2] See B. Baranauskas. Lithuanian bourgeois nationalists in the service of the Hitlerite occupiers. Report at the scient. conference of the Inst. of History of the Academy of Science of the Lithuanian SSR and the Inst. of Party History of the CC CP of Lithuania, held Nov. 2-3, 1951. in Vilnius.

resistance to the Hitlerite invaders and their hirelings. The inspiring words of the revolutionary poet of Latvia, Jan Raynis, sounded out as a battle cry:

You have sown death,
Malice and fear -
And you shall reap them
In our fields.

In spite of cruel repressions the workers of factories and plants sabotaged the instructions of the business owners and decreased production output. The peasants burned the farms of German colonists, and blocked deliveries of agricultural products. In cities and villages anti-fascist committees were formed uniting the representatives of all strata of the population, drawing the finest sons and daughters of the Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian peoples into the struggle. At the same time the partisan organizations were restored and intensified their activity, thanks to which the resistance of the peoples of the Baltic increased more and more.

Under the leadership of the underground party organizations in the territory of the Baltic region the partisan movement began to develop widely. It was particularly strengthened after the formation of republican headquarters of the partisan movement, the work of which was directed by the CC CP(b) of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.[1] These headquarters planned the intelligence and diversionary activity of the partisan detachments, and organized their cooperation with units of the Red Army. They also were in charge of questions of material and technical supply of the partisans and training of cadres.

The partisan struggle took on great scope in 1944 when the Red Army was approaching the borders of the Baltic region. At that time the Hitlerites declared immediate mobilization of the Baltic population, which caused a surge of resentment among the workers. To escape the mobilization the

[1] See Vols. 2 and 3 of this edition: Vol. 2, pp. 476-477; Vol. 3, pp. 447, 450.

draftees joined the partisans. This made the partisan movement even more massive. In Latvia, for example, in the summer of 1944 it embraced almost all districts; three brigades and four independent detachments operated there. While by the beginning of the year in the Latvian partisan detachments there were 854 persons, by the summer their numerical strength had grown to 1,623 persons, and by September the detachments numbered 2,698 persons. The growth in the numbers of active partisans was only restrained by the shortage of weapons.[1]

The partisan operations in Latvia had their own unique characteristics. The absence of large forest-masses, the predominance of the farmstead system in the agricultural economy and the well-developed network of roads and telephone communications excluded the possibility of basing large detachments in certain regions. This forced the partisans to carry on the struggle in small detachments and independent groups. In the summer of 1944 the difficulties of the partisans in the eastern regions of Latvia by the fact that they had to operate directly in the disposition of the rear services of the German fascist army group "North." Nevertheless, the partisans, maneuvering skilfully, wearing down the enemy and avoiding daylight battles, inflicted heavy losses on the occupiers and frequently emerged victorious from skirmishes with them.

The activity of the Latvian partisans particularly increased during the days when the front approached the regions of their operations. Thus in July 1944 in the course of the Pskov - Ostrov operation of the 3rd Baltic front the partisans of the 1st brigade under the command of V.P. Samson[2] offered great assistance to the units of the 123rd rifle corps during the seizure of the strongly fortified road junction of Liepna. In August in the region of Tsevayne [transliterated from Russian] the partisans of the second brigade, commanded by P.K. Ratyn'sh, dismantled obstructions and prepared passages for the troops of the 2nd Baltic front. In the same

---

[1] Party Archive of the Institute of Party History of the CC CP of Latvia, col. 302, inv. 2, div. 13, p. 248.

[2] On June 28, 1945 V. P. Samson was awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union.

month the 3rd partisan brigade of O.P. Oshkalns operating southeast of Riga sent its scouts and guides toward the advancing 4th Shock Army. The headquarters of the army regularly received information from the partisans on the enemy's retreat. This information was very valuable.

The workers of Latvia recall with exceptional warmth the feats of the glorious underground partisan, the leader of the Riga underground, Hero of the Soviet Union I. Ya. Sumalis. Military operations and diversions conducted under his guidance stunned the enemy by their audacity. In spite of police shadowing the fearless communist traveled around Latvia, established contact with underground members and partisan detachments, and prepared more and more new operations. However, with the help of provocateurs the fascists succeeded in picking up the trail of the Riga underground organization. In May 1944 they executed the legendary Latvian underground member and partisan Sumalis.

In Estonia, as in Latvia, due to the conditions of the terrain the partisans operated only in small groups and detachments. The dense telephone network allowed the occupiers to quickly inform their units of partisan actions. The struggle was also made difficult by the fact that the Hitlerites were helped by the Estonian fascist organization "Omakaitse." However, the partisans of Estonia fought bravely and selflessly. The feat of the partisan E. Yu. Meymre of I. Yu. Yurisson's detachment, which operated in the Parnu district, serves as a clear example of this. After a fierce battle, Meymre, wounded in the arm and in the leg, was forced to remain under cover. Discovered and surrounded by members of the punitive expedition, he defended himself as long as possible, and to avoid falling into the enemy's hands alive he blew himself up with a grenade. The Soviet government awarded the courageous partisan the Order of the Patriotic War 1st Degree. In February 1944 with the approach of the Red Army to the borders of Estonia the partisan movement became more active. It took on particularly wide scope during the period of the battles to liberate the republic.

During preparations for the offensive and in the course of the military operations of the Soviet forces the partisan detachments in the Balkan region conducted reconnaissance and made attacks on German communications.

The people's avengers demolished bridges, derailed enemy trains with war equipment, destroyed railroad stations and wrecked enemy garrisons. The increasing blows of the Latvian, Lithuanian and Estonian partisans forced the German fascist command group to designate considerable forces to suppress them.

In the summer of 1944 the strategic situation in the Baltic direction /339 was determined by the total successes of the Red Army. The operations at Leningrad and Novgorod in January and February 1944 and in Karelia in June and July 1944, in the course of which the German forces were thrown back from Leningrad and Novgorod to the Baltic and the Finnish forces from Karelia to the border of Finland (Map 11) had a direct influence on the operative-strategic situation. With this the troops of the Leningrad front, in cooperation with the Red Banner Baltic Fleet, approached the Narva River and, forcing it southwest of the city of Narva, seized a small beachhead. Further south the troops of the front occupied the eastern shore of Lake Chudskoye and the troops of the 3rd, 2nd and 1st Baltic fronts were located on a line east of Pskov, Ostrov, Idritsa and Polotsk, that is, in the tactical approach to the eastern border of the occupied Estonian and Latvian Soviet Socialist Republics.

At that time the approaches to the Baltic region were defended by troops that had with drawn to that area from army group "North" (operative group "Narva," 18th and 16th Armies) and a part of the forces of the 3rd Panzer Army, which was included in army group "Centre." In all, by June the Hitlerite command group had concentrated 47 divisions and 1 brigade in the Baltic direction.[1]

The Baltic region had great strategic significance for fascist Germany. It covered East Prussia from the northwest, and in relation to it was a unique "forward defense zone" as the German command group frequently announced. Holding the Baltic region permitted Germany to continue the blockade of our fleet in the eastern part of the Gulf of Finland, to maintain contact with

[1] Collected Materials on the Composition of Forces of Fascist Germany, 4th Ed., pp. 88-90.

Finland (until September 1944) and also with Sweden, which supplied Germany with strategic raw materials. Finally, the enemy calculated that with a large grouping at his disposal in the Baltic region, he could inflict flank strikes from the north on the Soviet forces if they should go over to the offensive in the direction of Poland and East Prussia. The Soviet Baltic was also of considerable importance for Germany as a supply base. In Estonia, for example, the occupiers used plants to process local fuel shale. The fascists continued to export agricultural products from the Baltic republics.

The enemy created a deeply echeloned defense in the Baltic region. The first defensive line, which the Hitlerites named the northern part of the "eastern rampart," was prepared along the line of Narva - Pskov - Idritsa - Polotsk. West of that line at a depth of 40-50 kilometers a rear line was equipped, and beyond that three more intermediate lines. However, all of the enemy's reckoning on the construction of an invincible defense in this direction suffered failure.

The liberation of the Soviet Baltic republics from the German fascist invaders began even during the Belorussian operation.[1] It is known that by the end of July 4 in Belorussia the troops of the Red Army had routed the main forces of army group "Centre" and broken through to the line of Disna - Lake Naroch' - Molodechno - west of Minsk (Map 6). Developing the rapid advance, on July 7 the troops of the 1st Baltic front cut off the Daugavpils - Vilnius railroad, and on July 9 the Daugavpils - Kaunas highway. By this time the troops of the 3rd Belorussian front had engaged in battle for Vilnius. Thus even at the beginning of July part of the territory of the Lithuanian SSR was liberated.

The successful advance of the Red Army in Belorussia and the rout of army group "Centre" compelled the Hitlerite command group to transfer there eight infantry and one Panzer division from army group "North" at the beginning of July. This made favorable conditions for our forces in the Baltic sector of the front to go over to the offensive. The plan of the Soviet /340

[1] See Chapter 6, pp. 183, 185, 187-188, 193-194.

command group for the summer of 1944 called for such an offensive, and the troops of the 2nd and 3rd Baltic fronts were already preparing for it.

On July 4 Headquarters transferred the 4th Shock Army, which had advanced until then in the composition of the 1st Baltic front north of the Western Dvina, to the 2nd Baltic front, and on July 7 the 1st Shock Army located in the 2nd Baltic front was transferred to the 3rd Baltic front.

According to the plan of Headquarters the 2nd Baltic front was to rout the opposing enemy, seize Rezekne and Daugavpils and then advance on Riga with the objective, in cooperation with the 1st Baltic front, of cutting off the enemy's Baltic grouping from his communications leading to Germany.[1] The 3rd Baltic front was to rout the enemy's Pskov - Ostrov grouping, advance on Voru and further on Tartu and Parnu with the objective of breaking through to the enemy's Narva grouping.[2]

Exploiting the success of the 1st Baltic front, on July 10 the 2nd Baltic front went over to the offensive. The troops of the right wing of the front - the 10th Guards and 3rd Shock Armies - struck a blow in the general direction of Rezekne, and those of the left wing - the 22nd and 4th Shock Armies - along the Western Dvina on Daugavpils.

In the composition of the 22nd Army the 130th Lettish rifle corps under the command of Major Gen. D. K. Brantkaln, which was formed in May 1944 and consisted of two Lettish rifle divisions, the 308th and 43rd Guards, operated successfully. The deeds of arms of the Lettish fighters began even in the battle at Moscow. The 201st Lettish rifle division, together with other Soviet divisions, heroically held the approaches to the capital and bore great losses in so doing. It then participated in the liberation of Naro-Fominsk and Borovsk, and in October 1942 was re-formed into the 43rd Guards rifle division. Having walked a long battle path, and taken part in the battles at Staraya Russa and Velikiye Luky, in 1944 the Lettish units

---

[1] IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #9492, p. 326.

[2] Ibid, p. 329.

approached the borders of their republic. They burned with the desire to quickly liberate their native land from the fascist occupiers.

By evening of July 16 the troops of the front, breaking the stubborn enemy resistance and repelling his counterattacks, progressed to a depth of 90 kilometers, overcame the enemy's main and rear defensive lines, liberated the cities of Opochka, Idritsa and Drissa, and brought operations into the territory of the Latvian SSR. In the area of Skiaune (30 kilometers southwest of Sebezh) the 130th Lettish rifle corps was the first to set foot in their native land. The population joyfully greeted their liberators. Along the roads on which the Red Army passed the local inhabitants gathered. Many soldiers, sergeants and officers of the Lettish corps found their relatives and friends in the liberated villages and farmsteads.

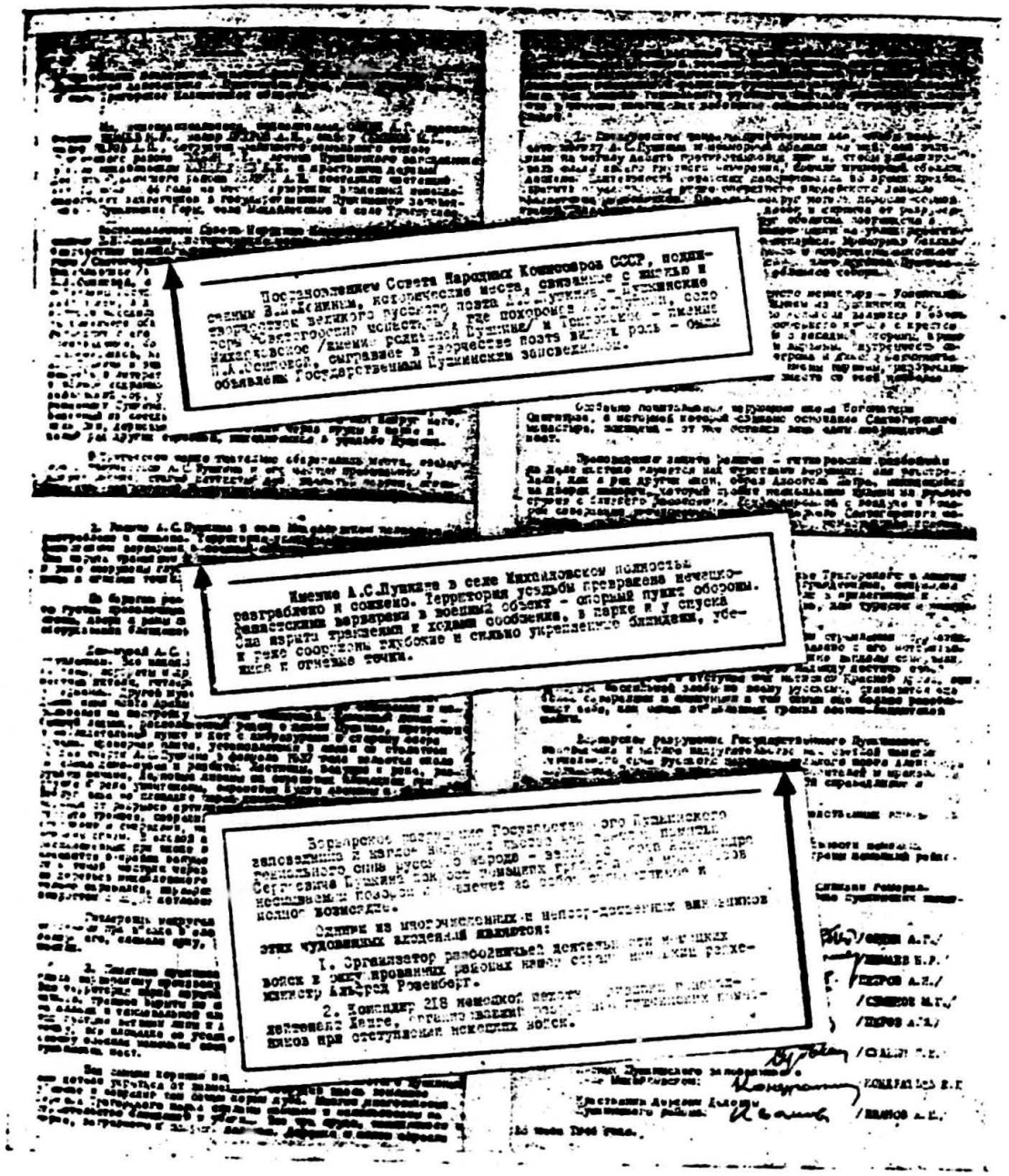
Developing the advance under the difficult conditions of a forested swampland, the troops of the front also overcame the next defensive lines, and on July 27 liberated the city of Rezekne, and Daugavpils in cooperation with the troops of the 1st Baltic front. By the end of July the front had progressed to a depth of 200 kilometers. In that time the troops had breached five prepared enemy defensive lines and reached the Lubana plain. This forested, swampy plain permitted operations only in certain directions, along the roads, and was a serious natural obstacle in the path toward Riga.

The success of the 2nd Baltic front created more favorable conditions for the 3rd Baltic front to go over to the offensive. The troops of the left wing of that front in the period from July 11 through 16 cleared the east bank of the Velikaya River in the area of the Pushkin Hills of the enemy, and on July 17, with active air support, breached the enemy defense. /342
In the two following days they progressed up to 40 kilometers to the west. Developing the advance on Gulbene, on July 19 the troops of the front broke the enemy's defense on the line of the Ludza River and entered the territory of the Latvian SSR, and on July 20 they cut off the Ostrov - Rezekne highway, creating a threat of flanking to the enemy's Ostrov grouping. On July 21 the troops of the central grouping of the front went over to the offensive and seized an important enemy strong point on the same day, the city of

Ostrov. On July 22 the troops of the right wing of the front also began to advance in the Pskov direction. Having driven the enemy from the main line of defense, they seized the eastern part of Pskov, forced the Velikaya River north and south of the city on the night of July 23, and by morning completed its liberation. As a result of the successive offensive operations of all of the forces of the front, by the end of July the enemy was thrown back to the "Marienburg" defensive line he had prepared, which ran from Lake Pskov to Gulbene. With this the troops of the front on the right wing entered the territory of the Estonian SSR.

Thus at the end of July the troops of the 2nd Baltic front approached the Lubana plain, and the troops of the 3rd Baltic front, having completed the Pskov - Ostrov operation, halted before the enemy's "Marienburg" defensive line.

In the aims of developing the further advance, from August 3 through 6 the 3rd Baltic front seized the area of Laura, which was an advantageous starting bridgehead. On August 10 the offensive was renewed. Striking the main blow from the line of Irboska - Laura in the direction of Voru, and breaching the enemy defense in that area, on August 11 the troops of the front seized Petseri, on August 13 Voru, and continued to advance on Tartu and Valga. The success of the troops in the Tartu direction was supported considerably by our assault landing force, which on August 16 was landed by a brigade of river vessels of the Red Banner Baltic fleet in the area of Mekhikorma [transl. from Russian] on the western shore of Lake Chudskoye. Routing the enemy in the approaches to Tatru, on August 24 the troops of the right wing of the front burst into the southwestern outskirts of the city, and on the following day they liberated it completely. At the same time they forced the Emayygi River [transl. from Russian] and seized a beachhead on the north bank. By this time the troops of the center and left wing of the front broke through to the east bank of Lake Bortjarv - east of Valga - the River Gauja (up to Leyestsiyeme [transl. from Russian]) and halted before the prepared "Valga" line. With the breakthrough in the area of Tartu the 3rd Baltic front created a threat to split army group "North." The enemy was forced to throw his reserves into the Tartu direction. At the end of August and the beginning of September the Hitlerites undertook



The commission report on the atrocities of the German fascist invaders in the Pushkin State Reserve - the Pushkin Hills, and the villages of Mikhaylovsk and Trigorsk /341

ferocious counterattacks, attempting to re-take Tartu and break through to the flank and rear of the main grouping of the 3rd Baltic front. Meeting the stubborn resistance of the Soviet forces, on September 6 they ceased the attack.

On July 24 the troops of the Leningrad front also went over to the offensive. On July 26 they liberated the city of Narva and deepened the beachhead on the west bank of the Narva River to 20 kilometers. Although the further offensive operations of this front did not yield positive results, nonetheless they contained the main forces of the "Narva" operations group and supported the advance of the 3rd Baltic front on Tartu.

On August 1 the troops of the 2nd Baltic front renewed the offensive on the Lubana plain. In the first ten days, flanking the enemy through impassable marshes, they progressed to a depth of 60 kilometers, overcame the enemy's defensive line on the right bank of the Aiviekste River, and approached Tsevaine, Madona and Gostini. On August 13 with a concentric attack from the north and the southeast the troops of the front seized the city of Madona, a major junction of railroads, highways and unpaved roads.

The enemy, having strengthened his grouping, attempted with counter-attacks to restore the lost positions in the area of Madona and liquidate the beachhead on the bank of the Aiviekste. However, with the active support of the air force our troops routed the enemy units west of Madona, and seized Ergli on August 19 and Gostini the following day. But the enemy, gathering considerable forces, was nevertheless able to press the Soviet troops in the area of Ergli. The Hitlerites also attempted to delay the advance of the troops of the right wing of the front, and simultaneously prepared a defense on the line of Leiastsiem - Ergli, to which they retreated, leaving Tsesvaine .

/343

The 130th Lettish rifle corps, the soldiers of which revealed increased military skill and models of valor and heroism, also participated in the

---

[1] Archive of MD USSR, col. 239, inv. 2224, div. 828, p. 66.

fierce battles during the forcing of the Aiviekste River as well as in the region west of that river. Thus, at the end of August in the battles at Vietalva (15 kilometers southwest of Ergli) Sgt. Maj. Y. Y. Roze of the 123rd Guards rifle regiment of the 43rd Guards Lettish rifle division gained renown. Having received the assignment of observing artillery fire, Roze climbed to the belfry of the Vietalva church located in "no man's land," from whence the enemy positions could be well surveyed. The accuracy of the fire alarmed the Hitlerites, and, suspecting that there was a scout in the church, they unleashed on it a tornado of fire. However, the enemy did not succeed in "smoking out" Roze. During the next artillery strike he descended with his wireless set to the lower landing, then went up, and again performed his mission. For five days and nights, until the Soviet troops went over to the offensive, this duel continued. For the feat he had accomplished Sgt. Maj. Y. Y. Roze was awarded the third Order of Glory and became the first full bearer of that honorary military order in the corps. For courage and valor displayed in the August battles 1,745 soldiers and officers of the 130th Lettish rifle corps were decorated.

Thus, exploiting the success of the group of our fronts which had struck the main blow in the summer of 1944 in the center of the Soviet-German front, the troops of the 2nd and 3rd Baltic and the Leningrad fronts in July and August achieved considerable operative progress in the Northwestern theater of military operations. The troops of the 1st Baltic front also advanced successfully during this period in the territory of the Baltic republics. Breaking through at the end of August to the line south of Bauska - Jelgava - Dobele - Kursenai - east of Kelme, they liberated several districts of the Lithuanian and Latvian SSR. The total results of the operations of the Baltic and Leningrad fronts in July and August were progress to a depth of over 200 kilometers, and the liberation of part of the Estonian, a considerable part of the Latvian and a large part of the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republics. The forces of army group "North," according to the data of the German command group, lost 70,566 soldiers and officers in August 1944 alone.[1]

[1] IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #13586, p. 396 (war diary of army group "North").

The workers of the liberated regions of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia greeted the Red Army joyfully. They warmly thanked their dear fighters for delivering them from fascist slavery and rushed to take part in the final defeat of fascist Germany. In one of the small towns of Latvia in a conversation with the soldiers, Latvian A. S. Zombart said, "The Germans brought us to the point that now every Latvian, not only the youth, but every old man, is ready to go against the fascists with a weapon in his hands."[1] Young Latvians eagerly joined the ranks of the Red Army. The people helped the Soviet units to restore destroyed roads, bridges and lines of communication, and offered transportation to deliver ammunition and evacuate the wounded. With their labor the workers of the Latvian Republic strengthened the Red Army's rear. In a short time 45 dairy plants, 8 meat packing plants, and 11 large mills were restored.[2] In the liberated districts and volosts [small rural district - Trans.] party and Soviet organs began operations.

After their retreat to a new defensive line stretching from the Gulf of /344
Finland to the Niemen River for almost a thousand kilometers, the enemy's grouping by September included 56 divisions (including 5 Panzer and 2 motorized) and 3 motorized brigades. It numbered over 700,000 men, 1,216 tanks and assault guns, approximately 7,000 guns and mortars. Army group "North" was supported by the 1st Air Force, which had 215 military aircraft. In all, counting the formations of the 6th Air Force that supported the 3rd Panzer Army of army group "Centre," the enemy had 400 military airplanes in the Baltic region.[3]

It was characteristic in the enemy grouping that in the Tukums direction the fascist command group had five Panzer divisions in the relatively small sector of Jelgava - Auce. This was due to the fact that the enemy expected that the offensive operations of our forces would be renewed there. Considerable forces were also concentrated in the Narva isthmus, in the Valga sector (south of Lake Vortsjarv) and in the Ergli-Western Dvina sector.

---

[1] Archive MD USSR, col. 32, inv. 22152, div. 7, p. 356.

[2] See "Sovyetskaya Latviya," Sept. 26, 1944.

[3] IMT. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #17936, p. 719.

By the start of the September advance of the Soviet forces the German fascist command group had prepared a strong, multi-zoned defense at the entire depth from the front line to the shore of the Baltic Sea. The terrain, which was a very swampy plain, favored this.

In the Tallinn direction the Hitlerites organized the strongest defense between the Gulf of Finland and Lake Chudskoye. For this the "Tannenberg" line constructed there earlier was completed; it included three defensive lines with a total depth of 25-30 kilometers. The German command group devoted the greatest attention to the Riga direction. In the approaches to Riga from the northeast and east four defensive lines were constructed: the "Valga" line consisting of two defensive lines with total depth of up to 12 kilometers; the "Cesis" line, including one continuous trench and equipped fire points; the "Sigulda" line, which had two defensive zones and three internal positions; and the Riga defensive perimeter, consisting of three positions. South of the Western Dvina in the approaches to Riga it would be necessary to overcome three main lines and the city perimeter. In the Memel direction the enemy also created a deeply developed defense.

By the beginning of September the Soviet grouping of forces operating in the Baltic direction included: the Leningrad front consisting of the 2nd Shock, 8th, and 13th Airborne Armies, deployed in a zone from the Gulf of Finland to Gdov; the 3rd Baltic front consisting of the 67th, 1st Shock, 54th and 14th Airborne Armies, in a zone from Lake Chudskoye to Leiastsiema; the 2nd Baltic front consisting of the 10th Guards, 42nd, 3rd Shock, 22nd and 15th Airborne Armies, in a zone from Leiastsiema to the Western Dvina; and the 1st Baltic front including the 4th Shock, the 43rd, 51st, 6th and 2nd Guards, 5th Guards Tank and 3rd Airborne Armies, in a zone from the Western Dvina to the Dubisa River.

In all, these fronts had 125 rifle divisions, 7 field fortified areas, 5 tank[1] and one mechanized corps. The forces of the fronts numbered:

---

[1] In addition, the 10th tank corps was sent from Headquarters Reserve to the composition of the 3rd Baltic front; i.e., by the start of the advance it numbered 6 tank corps.

men - 900,000, guns and mortars 76 mm caliber and greater - 17,483, tanks and assault guns - 3,081. The airborne armies of the fronts had 2,643 airplanes at their disposal.[1] In addition, the air force of the Red Banner Baltic fleet and the long range air force were also drawn upon for the operation in the Baltic region.

By the start of the operation in the composition of the Red Banner /345
Baltic Fleet there were a squadron, brigades of submarines, motor torpedo boats, skerry ships, naval railway artillery, air forces and naval bases with their formations and units. However, the military use of the ships of the fleet was made extremely difficult by the complicated mine situation in the Narva and Finnish Gulfs. In the Hogland and Porkkala - Uddskoye mine artillery positions the enemy established antisubmarine nets. All of the obstacles were covered by ships of the German fleet displayed at the ports of Estonia. Therefore, in order to secure the deployment of the ships of the fleet it was necessary to conduct large sweeping operations while preparing for and during the operation. On Lake Chudskoye the 25th brigade of river ships of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet could offer artillery fire support to the Soviet troops in the Narva and Tartu sectors of the front, and also limit the movements of the enemy ships remaining there.

The situation that had developed in the Baltic direction favored the development of the further advance of our troops with the goal of routing army group "North" and completing the liberation of the peoples of the Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian SSR from the German fascist yoke. The execution of this major task in the summer and fall of 1944 also promoted the creation of the necessary conditions for the advance of the Armed Forces of the USSR in the main, Berlin direction. The advance on the flanks of the Soviet-German front against army groups "South Ukraine" and "North" was considered by Headquarters of the Supreme High Command to be an essential condition for the development of major offensive operations in the central sector of the front, in the Warsaw-Berlin direction.[2] This idea was successfully realized. On the southern flank of the Soviet-German front the Red Army progressed

---

[1] IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #17936, p. 719.

[2] See Chapter 9, p. 254.

300-400 kilometers by the end of August and achieved brilliant military-strategic and political results. Army group "South Ukraine" was routed, and Rumania changed from an ally of fascist Germany to its enemy. It was essential to defeat army group "North" as well.

In planning the advance in the Baltic, Headquarters of the Supreme High Command considered the ideas of the commanders of the Baltic fronts, as well as the suggestions of the commander of the Leningrad front that the Leningrad front be drawn upon for the advance and the Tartu sector transferred to it from the 3rd Baltic front.[1]

According to Headquarters' plan the troops of the 1st Baltic front were to strongly hold the occupied lines in the center and on the left wing of the front, preventing a breach there by the enemy's Panzer grouping, and to advance on Rigaon the right wing from the southeast, break through to the shore of the Gulf of Riga and cut off the lines of retreat of the enemy's Baltic group in the direction of East Prussia. Simultaneously the 3rd and 2nd Baltic fronts were to strike blows in the Riga direction from the northeast and east with the goal of splitting the main force of army group "North." Thus the troops of the three Baltic fronts were to strike blows in converging directions on Riga. The Leningrad front, together with the Red Banner Baltic Fleet, was to advance in the Tallinn direction in order to liquidate the enemy grouping in Estonia. In accordance with this plan the fronts received their objectives for the advance in which the commanders of the fronts made the following decisions.

The Leningrad front - commander Marshal of the Soviet Union L.A. Govorov, Military Council member Col.-Gen. A. A. Zhdanov, and Chief of Staff Col.-Gen. M.M. Popov - having received the Tartu sector and the troops located there from the 3rd Baltic front, transferred the 2nd Shock Army there from /346 the Narva direction and struck a blow from the area of Tartu in the direction of Rakvere. The immediate task of the front was to seize the line of Rakvere-Tara and break through to the rear of the enemy's Narva grouping, then

[1] Archive MD USSR, col. 217, inv. 1227, div. 97, pp. 11-14.

develop the advance in the general direction of Tallinn.[1] The Red Banner Baltic Fleet - commander Adm. V.F. Tributs, Military Council member Vice Adm. N.K. Smirnov, Chief of Staff Rear Adm. A.N. Petrov - which was operatively subordinate to the Leningrad front, was to support the advance of the troops of the front with fire from the ships and air force operating in the Gulf of Finland and on Lake Chudskoye.

The 3rd Baltic front, which was commanded by Gen. I.I. Maslennikov - Military Council member M.V. Rudakov, Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. V.R. Vashkevich - struck its main blow on the right wing of the forces of the 67th and 1st Shock Armies from the region south of Lake Vortsjarv in the general direction of Valmiera - Cesis with the immediate objective of breaking through to the line of Mazsalatsa [transl. from Russ.]- Valmiera - Smiltene. On the left wing of the front the 54th Army was to advance from the region of Khargla on Smiltene toward the 10th Guards Army of the 2nd Baltic front, in order to defeat the enemy grouping east of Smiltene jointly with that army.[2]

The 2nd Baltic front struck its main blow in the center of the forces of the 42nd and 3rd Shock Armies in the direction of Riga with the immediate task of breaking through to the line of Jeriki - Nitaure - Madliena - Skriveri. On the right wing the 10th Guards Army advanced in the direction of Dzerbene.[3] The front was commanded by Gen. A.I. Yeremenko, Military Council member was Lt. Gen. V.N. Bogatkin, and Chief of Staff was Col.-Gen. L.M. Sandalov.

The 1st Baltic front - commander Gen. I. Kh. Bagramyan, Military Council member Lt. Gen. D.S. Leonov, Chief of Staff Col.-Gen. V.V. Kurasov - struck a blow with the armies of the right wing, the 4th Shock and 43rd, from the direction southeast of Jelgava on Jetsava and Vetsmuiza with the goal of breaking through to the Western Dvina, on the shore of the Gulf of Riga, and in the region of Riga, and of preventing the retreat of army group "North" to East Prussia.[4]

---

[1] Archive of MD USSR, col. 217, inv. 1227, div. 97, p. 94.

[2] Ibid, col. 242, inv. 2305, div. 7, pp. 285-286, 278-279.

[3] Ibid, col. 239, inv. 2226, div. 36, pp. 248-253.

[4] Ibid, col. 325, inv. 4570, div. 178, pp. 1-3.

On the decision of the commanders the airborne armies of the fronts were to cover the concentration and deployment of the shock groups of the fronts and to support their advance. Each combined-arms army was supported by one of the air force formations.

The Baltic fronts went over to the offensive on September 14, and the Leningrad front, which was required to transfer forces to the Tartu sector, on September 17. It should be noted that in effecting the transfer a large part was played by the 25th brigade of river ships on Lake Chudskoye, which was commanded by Capt. Second Rank A.F. Arzhavkin. It transported the main forces of the 2nd Shock Army (over 100,000 soldiers and officers, over 1,000 guns and up to 4,000 automobiles, not counting other equipment and cargo) across the channel of Lake Teploye.[1]

According to the decision of Headquarters and the resolutions of the commanders of the fronts the advance was to be developed on a 500-kilometer front. Twelve armies were to operate there, comprising 73 percent of the available rifle divisions, 70 percent of the guns and mortars and 67.7 percent of the tanks and assault guns. With this, in the breakthrough sectors over a total length of 76 kilometers 80 percent of the rifle divisions were concentrated, and the average artillery density was brought up to 105-186 guns and mortars to 1 kilometer of the front. In the defense on a 311 km /347
front a large part of the forces and equipment of the 1st Baltic front remained, comprising approximately one-fourth of all divisions and almost one-third of the guns and mortars, tanks and assault guns. In addition, on a front of over 100 kilometers south of the Gulf of Finland a part of the forces of the Leningrad front occupied the defense.

The overall alignment of forces on the entire offensive front was in our favor. In manpower the Soviet forces exceeded the enemy by 2 times, in guns and mortars by 2.5 times, and in tanks and assault guns by over 3 times, with the exception of the 2nd Baltic front, where the ratio in tanks was 1.4:1 and in aircraft 6.6:1 in our favor. The commanders of the fronts,

---

[1] Archive Naval IO, div. 34134, p. 10.

exploiting the superiority in forces and equipment and massing them, achieved a still greater advantage in the breakthrough sectors, where our forces exceeded the enemy in manpower by 3.7 times, in guns and mortars by 5.2 times, and in tanks by 12 times on the Leningrad, by 6 times on the 3rd Baltic, and by 3.6 times on the 1st Baltic fronts. On the 2nd Baltic Front there was not such an advantage, because the command group of the front had concentrated the greater part of its tanks in the army mobile groups. Because of this the densities of direct support tanks were negligible.

The tactical order of battle of the fronts was single-echelon, except for the 3rd Baltic. Here the 61st Army was to arrive from the Headquarters Reserves on the eigth day of the operation and form a second echelon. The 3rd and 2nd Baltic fronts had mobile groups (one tank corps in each). As regarded the tactical battle order of the armies, all of them had second echelons and mobile groups (temporarily motorized rifle formations and units), designated to be brought into the breach with the goal of developing the success and pursuing the enemy.

The strategic operation in the Baltic was planned as one of the most major operations in scope in the summer-fall campaign of 1944. Attaching great significance to the thorough preparation of this operation, Headquarters of the Supreme High Command entrusted the general control of the 3rd, 2nd and 1st Baltic fronts to its representative, Marshal of the Soviet Union A.M. Vasilyevskiy.[1] The control of the operations of the Leningrad front was effected directly by Headquarters.

The commanders, political organs, party and Komsomol organizations exerted all of their efforts to mobilize the entire personnel for the rapid liberation of the Soviet Baltic from the German fascist invaders. With this goal in the primary and company (battery) organizations party and Komsomol meetings were held, at which the tasks of communists and Komsomol members in the forthcoming battles were discussed. The commanders and political organ workers took direct part in explaining these assignments. By the start of

[1] IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #9493, p. 89.

the advance the company party organizations were considerably strengthened as the result both of the acceptance of new members and candidates and of the correct distribution of communists from arriving reinforcements. For example, in the companies of the 46th Guards rifle division of the 4th Shock Army, communists and Komsomol members comprised 27 to 40 percent.[1] This was also characteristic of the other formations of the 1st Baltic front, in the party organizations of which there were 173,190 communists by September 1944. The party organizations of the 2nd Baltic front had 113,970 members and candidates of the party in their composition, and those of the Leningrad front had 173,443 communists.[2] With such a number of communists the political organs of the fronts were able to strengthen the company party organizations /348 and ensure the continuity of party-political work in the course of the offensive operations.

In connection with the entrance of our forces into the territory of the Baltic republics the political organs and party organizations were faced with the task of rendering every assistance to the party and soviet organizations of the liberated regions in conducting mass political work among the population. Its importance was determined by the fact that Soviet power in the republics had existed for a short time. It was also important to consider the results of the anti-Soviet agitation of the fascist aggressors in the occupied territory. The fact that in Latvia the political workers of two armies of the 2nd Baltic front alone conducted over 2,000 talks and reports speaks of the scope of the educational work. Brigades of the political sections of the armies of the 1st Baltic front worked in the liberated regions of Lithuania. Army agitators explained to the population the domestic and foreign policy of the Communist Party and its significance for the peoples of the Baltic republics, and exposed the bourgeois nationalists and their subversive activities in the Baltic. All of this promoted the strengthening of the bonds between the troops and the local population, the consolidation of the rear of the active units and the creation of conditions for the complete liberation of the Soviet Baltic republics.

---

[1] Archive of MD USSR, col. 235, inv. 2086, div. 193, pp. 53-54.

[2] Ibid, div. 134, p. 5; col. 239, inv. 2187, div. 175, p. 4; col. 217, inv. 1217, div. 564, p. 195.

The address of the Military Councils of the fronts and armies to the soldiers played a significant part in increasing the troops' offensive impulse directly before the advance. The military councils called on the personnel to fulfill their duty before the Motherland with dignity, to defeat the enemy and complete the liberation of the Soviet Baltic from the German fascist occupiers.

As a result of the preparatory work conducted by the command group, headquarters and political organs of all degrees, as well as party and Komsomol organizations of the units, the Soviet forces had everything necessary for successful realization of the tasks before them. Soldiers and commanders, seized by the offensive impulse, were ready to fulfill their duty to the Homeland with honor.

CHAPTER 12

THE LIBERATION OF THE SOVIET BALTIC REPUBLICS - LATVIA, LITHUANIA AND ESTONIA. THE DEFEAT OF THE ENEMY IN THE ARCTIC.

2. The liberation of the Estonian SSR and the breakthrough of the Soviet forces to the approaches to Riga.

The final operations for the liberation of the Baltic began on September /348
14. The strike groupings of the 3rd, 2nd and 1st Baltic fronts simultaneously went over to the offensive in the Riga direction. The success achieved by the strike group of the 1st Baltic front operating on its right wing had a decisive influence on the course of the operation. Thanks to the good organization of artillery and air preparations, during which the fire plan of the enemy's defense was suppressed, in going over to the attack the Soviet units met almost no firing resistance. The success of the advance was also promoted by

the fact that the dams built by our forces upstream on the Meml and Lielupe Rivers were closed before the start of the attack, as a result of which the water level dropped sharply and the artillery and tanks were able to force these rivers rapidly.

Going over to the offensive from two sectors with a total width of 13 kilometers, the troops of the 43rd Army under the command of Lt. Gen. A.P. Beloborodov and part of the forces of the 4th Shock Army, which was commanded /349 by Lt. Gen. P.F. Malyshev, had seized the first zone of defense by the evening of September 14, and north of Bauska in a narrow sector also overcame the second zone, i.e., they breached the enemy's defense at its entire tactical depth. On the same day the mobile group of the 43rd Army, the 3rd Guards mechanized corps, was brought into the breach. However, it was stopped at the approaches to Jetsava by enemy reserves that had arrived there in time. The following day the enemy undertook approximately 17 counterattacks in the region south of that city alone.

Nevertheless the troops of the strike grouping of the front, flanking Jetsava from the east, also breached the enemy's rear line, the "east Mitava defensive line." By evening of September 16 the forward detachment of the mobile group reached the Western Dvina, and the rifle formation moved out to the approaches to Baldona. In three days the troops overcame over 50 kilometers and broadened the offensive front up to 80 kilometers. A large role in ensuring the breach of the enemy defense was played by the 3rd Airborne Army, which was commanded by Col.-Gen. of the Air Force N.F. Papivin. Under unfavorable meteorological conditions it completed 5,070 airplane flights in the first three days of the offensive. During the breach the 1st rifle corps commanded by Hero of the Soviet Union Lt. Gen. N.A. Vasil'yev operated very successfully, particularly its right flank 145th rifle division under the command of Maj. Gen. P.A. Dibrovy. Thanks to capable tactical control the formations of the corps advanced rapidly (15-17 kilometers per day), although the conditions of the terrain were difficult.

The breakthrough of our forces to Baldona and the Western Dvina and the possibility of their further movement to Riga, as well as the threat that

had been created of cutting off the enemy forces occupying the defense in the sector from the Western Dvina to Skiastkalne, forced the German fascist command group to begin to withdraw its forces from that sector. At the same time it undertook attempts to liquidate the gap that had formed in the rear line.

North of the Western Dvinain the same time the troops of the 3rd Baltic front in the sector of the main strike, south of Lake Vortsjarv, moved 4-6 kilometers and seized the second position of the main zone of defense, and the troops of the 2nd Baltic front seized only the first position in the area of Ergli. Such a small movement was due not only to the enemy's fierce resistance, but also to essential deficiencies in the organization of the breach, particularly the negligible depth of artillery preparation of the attack, and also the insufficient number of tanks assigned for direct infantry support. Nonetheless the troops of these fronts contained the forces of the enemy and forced him to expend all of his reserves. The enemy bore heavy losses: the five infantry divisions occupying the defense there were so drained that the Hitlerite command group was compelled to reduce them to battle groups.

During the first three days of the operation, thanks to the successful operations of the right wing of the 1st Baltic front, army group "North" came under the threat of being isolated and split. On September 15 and 16 the commander of the group, Col. Gen. Scherner, reported to tne Hitlerite headquarters that for the German forces in the Baltic, which had lost almost half of their personnel, the "final moment" had come, that the group was in no condition to conduct a long defensive battle, and that one possibility remained, to withdraw.[1] The German fascist command group, which previously had thought it inconceivable that they would leave the Soviet Baltic, now resolved to withdraw its forces from the lines occupied on the entire front from the Gulf of Finland to the Western Dvina.[2] At first it was proposed that the "Narva" operations group be withdrawn. After that the troops of the

---

[1] IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #13586, pp. 215-218, 246.

[2] Ibid, p. 246.

18th Army were to leave the "Valga" line and, jointly with the "Narva" group, take the defense on the "Cesis" line. However, when the troops of the Leningrad front went over to the offensive and the situation worsened for the enemy, the Hitlerite command group changed its original plan. It speeded up the withdrawal of operations group "Narva" by 24 hours, declined to go over to the defensive on the "Cesis" line, which had already been attacked by the 2nd Baltic front in its southern segment, and resolved to withdraw the troops to the next defensive line, the "Sigulda." At the same time the enemy undertook two powerful counterattacks, in the area southwest of Dobele and from the region of Baldone, attempting to hold back the advance of the 1st Baltic front in the Riga direction and restore the defensive front.

The assault group of the 3rd Panzer Army, consisting of units of Panzer divisions, carried out a counterstrike in the area of Dobele.[1] It included 12 motorized battalions and approximately 380 tanks and assault guns. This group went over to the offensive on September 16 from the region northwest of Dobele. It had the objective of seizing Dobele and Jelgava and breaking through to the flank of the assault grouping of the center of the 1st Baltic front (the 51st combined-arms and 5th Guards Tank Army), which was preparing for the advance from the area of Jelgava on Kemeri. However, in spite of stubborn attacks, in seven days, from September 16 through 22, the Hitlerites were only able to break into our position in a 12 kilometer sector to a depth of up to 5 kilometers.

The second counterstrike, from the area of Baldone, was inflicted by an enemy grouping comprised of six divisions, including 2 Panzer divisions. But neither ferocious attacks nor superior forces brought the enemy success. Repelling all of his attacks on September 19-21, on September 22 the troops of the assault group of the front seized the city of Baldone, and by the end of the day they were already 16 kilometers from Riga. The enemy's

[1] On September 20 the 3rd Panzer Army was transferred from army group "Centre" to army group "North."

attempt to make a new counterstrike on September 23 was also unsuccessful, although he additionally brought two more divisions into the battle which had arrived from operations group "Narva". In repelling the counterstrikes of the Hitlerites the 3rd Airborne Army gave great support to the ground forces. It operated particularly successfully on September 22 in the area of Baldona directly before the attack and during the seizure of that city. During the counterattacks the enemy command group was forced to bring into the battle in the southern approaches to Riga not only all of the troops occupying the defense there, but also the tactical reserves of army group "North," which were located in the zone of the 18th Army, as well as a part of the formations that had been freed as the result of the retreat of operations group "Narva" from Estonia.

North of the Western Dvina the advance of our groups developed slowly as before. In the zone of the 3rd Baltic front the enemy continued to offer stubborn resistance, attempting to hold the "Valga" line and thereby support the retreat of operations group "Narva" from Estonia. Therefore the assault group of the front required another five days to breach the enemy's defense at its entire tactical depth. Having overcome several fortified positions of the enemy, the troops of the right wing of the front, where on September 22 the 67th Army operated under the command of Lt. Gen. V.Z. Romanovskiy, reached Ala, and the troops of the center, where the 10th tank corps operated (commander Maj. Gen. of Tank Forces M.K. Shaposhnikov) broke through to the area of Daksty. The appearance of our tanks in that area caused a panic among the soldiers of the 21st infantry division occupying the defense there. It began to roll back to the west in disorder. The successful operation of the 3rd Baltic front in that direction, as well as the advance of the Leningrad front, forced the German fascist command group to hasten the withdrawal of the 18th Army. Pursuing the retreating enemy, by evening of September 23 the troops of the 3rd Baltic front reached Nuji and Rujiena and seized the city of Valmiera.

In the zone of the 2nd Baltic front the progress of the Soviet troops /351
to Riga presented an even greater danger for the enemy. He therefore took all measures to prevent the breach of the "Cesis" line there. The Hitlerites

occupied the defense particularly stubbornly in the direction of the front's main blow. Nonetheless, by September 22 the troops of the front breached the enemy defense on the "Cesis" line, progressing 16 kilometers in depth.

The offensive of the Leningrad front in Estonia, where extremely favorable conditions for it had been created, developed with the greatest speed. The troops of the Leningrad front went over to the offensive from the Tartu sector on September 17. On the first day the 2nd Shock Army under the command of Lt. Gen. I.I. Fedyuninskiy breached the enemy defense and by evening of September 18 had progressed up to 28 kilometers in depth. On the right flank of that army, along the western shore of Lake Chudskoye, the 8th Estonian rifle corps commanded by Lt. Gen. L.A. Pern advanced particularly rapidly. The corps, formed in 1942, was the first to enter the battle with the German fascist invaders in the area of Velikiye Luky. The sons of the Estonian people fought the enemy fearlessly. Their hatred for the fascist oppressors was strong. The Estonian land had groaned for many centuries under the iron heel of the German barons. The Hitlerite occupiers had resurrected the darkest times that the work-loving and courageous Estonian people had borne in the past. The divisions of the Estonian corps, having passed along a glorious road over the fields of battle, carried their victory banners onto their native Estonian soil. Operating under the difficult conditions of the forested, swampy terrain, the soldiers beat the enemy tirelessly day and night. Many fighters and commanders joined the ranks of the Communist Party and the Komsomol. In the summer of 1944 the composition of the corps numbered 10,833 communists and Komsomol members.[1]

The successful progress of the 2nd Shock Army forced the fascist command group to begin withdrawing its forces from the Narva sector as early as the evening of September 18. On the night of September 19 the 8th Army went over to the pursuit of the enemy, and in two days progressed up to 90 kilometers in depth; by evening of September 20 its mobile detachment seized Rakvere, and on the left flank the troops of the army broke through to the area of Loksa, where they met the units of the 2nd Shock Army, which had arrived

[1] Archive of MD USSR, col. 217, inv. 1217, div. 598, pp. 291-297.

there. On September 19 and 20 the latter moved out to the north, to the line of Simuna - Rakke, and broke through in the northwest at the approaches to Poltsamaa. From that time both armies began to pursue the enemy in the western direction, toward Tallinn.

The air force and the brigade of river ships of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet provided effective support to the troops of the front. The covering of the flank of the advancing forces, the landing of an assault landing group on the northern shore of the lake, promoted the rapid progress of the Soviet troops along the shore of Lake Chudskoye.

The 8th Army, to the composition of which the 8th Estonian rifle corps was transferred from the 2nd Shock Army, continued to pursue the enemy with air support in the Tallinn direction. The fighters of the Estonian corps fought bravely in these battles. The scouts under the command of Jr. Lt. K.P. Sal'ma displayed a remarkable model of heroism. The 10 bold spirits suddenly burst into the Tamsala station (10 kilometers southeast of Tapa) and defeated the enemy subunits, destroying 150 soldiers and officers in so doing and taking 22 Hitlerites prisoner.

The population greeted the Red Army and the soldiers of the Estonian rifle corps with a feeling of great joy. The local residents frequently took active part in the battles, delivered ammunition, and treated the wounded. Many of them were recommended by the Soviet command group for government awards.

The forward detachments of the 8th Army consisting of tank brigades and units of reinforcement broke through by the morning of September 22 to the approaches to Tallinn, destroyed the enemy units covering the city, and by 1400 hours liberated the capital of the Estonian SSR and an important naval base on the Baltic Sea, the city of Tallinn. The soldiers of the 14th /352
regiment of the 72nd rifle division had the great honor of first raising the red flag on the building of the Supreme Soviet of the Estonian SSR. Lt. I.T. Lumiste of the Estonian rifle corps located in the composition of the forward detachment raised the red flag above the ancient tower of Toompea.

On that day the capital of our homeland, Moscow, saluted the troops of the Leningrad front who had seized Tallinn. The formations and units that had distinguished themselves in the battles to liberate the city were awarded the designation "Tallinn."

The workers of Tallin greeted their liberator, the Red Army, with indescribable joy. The residents came out onto the streets in crowds. The joy of the Tallinites became exultation when in response to their greeting the native speech of the soldiers of the Estonian corps was heard. Large groups of inhabitants of the capital gathered on Freedom Square around the tank crews. The turrets of the tanks were gay with the bouquets of live flowers they had brought. The people, delivered from the fascist yoke, felt themselves to be free again.

Among the troops that had distinguished themselves in the battles for Tallin was the 8th Estonian rifle corps. The soldiers and officers of that corps showed what Estonians could do when they fought for their dear Soviet power, for their native land. In the battles at Narva and Tallinn they displayed exceptional courage and utter devotion to the Communist Party and their people. For their excellent combat actions in the liberation of Novosokol'niki, Narva, Tartu, Tallin and other cities the formations and units of the corps were awarded the orders of the Red Banner, Suvorov, Kutuzov, Aleksandr Nevskiy, and the Red Star. Approximately 20,000 soldiers and officers were decorated with government awards. Later, on June 28, 1945, the Estonian national formations and units were changed to Guards.

The workers of Estonia helped the Red Army to advance in the territory of the republic in every way they could. The workers and employed people offered resistance with weapons in hand to the Hitlerite forces, selflessly saved that which had been created by their hands, their labor. With danger for their lives the workers cleared mines from industrial enterprises, institutions, and residential houses. Thus, in Tallinn and other cities of the republic it was possible to save many industrial buildings, the water supply and the electrical station from destruction.

In the course of pursuing the enemy the troops of the 8th Army were supported by the forces of the fleet, which covered the right flank of the army from the sea and the air. The 1st brigade of motor torpedo boats, which was commanded by Capt. 1st Rank G.G. Oleynik, landed assault landing forces of naval infantry on islands and in ports located on the shore of the Gulf of Finland. On September 20 an assault landing group alighted on the island of Bol'shoy Tyuters; the following days assault landing groups of naval infantry cleared the ports of Kunda and Loksa of the enemy, and on September 23 they seized the island of Nayssar in force. At the same time the air force of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet operated on the sea communications of the enemy, hindering his evacuation from Estonia.

The advance of the 2nd Shock Army also developed successfully. In two days it progressed 40-60 kilometers to the west and by evening of September 22 broke through to the line of Lelle [transl. from Russ.]- Vandra - Surre-Jaani.

After the seizure of Tallinn the troops of the Leningrad front, not allowing the retreating enemy to collect himself, continued to progress victoriously to the southwest, completing the liberation of the Estonian SSR. The 8th Army pursued the enemy rapidly in the general direction of Haapsalu, and the 2nd Shock Army toward Parnu and Viljandi. Before the ships of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet was the objective of clearing the islands in the Gulf of Finland of the Hitlerites in cooperation with the 8th Army, and preventing the evacuation of the enemy's manpower and equipment from the ports of Estonia.

During the battles for the liberation of the Estonian SSR newspapers and leaflet-"lightning cables" widely popularized the combat feats of the soldiers. The outstanding fighters were presented cards of congratulation. This strengthened the offensive impulse of the soldiers.

Pursuing the enemy, on September 24 the troops of the 8th Army seized /353
the city and port of Haapsalu and by September 26 cleared the entire western shore of Estonia, from Paldiski to Virtsu, of the enemy. The city and port

of Paldiski was liberated by an assault landing force of naval infantry of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet on September 24. On September 23 the 2nd Shock Army seized the cities of Parnu and Viljandi in force and in further progress to the south and southwest met only insignificant resistance from the enemy's unncordinated rear guards. By September 26 its forces occupied Ainazi and Salacgriva and approached Mazsalatsa [transl. from Russian] where they joined the troops of the 3rd Baltic front. On September 27 the 2nd Shock Army was removed to the Reserve of Headquarters of the Supreme High Command.

The rapid progress of the Leningrad front in the southwestern direction caused the command group of the 18th German Army, fearing the Soviet Union's breakthrough to the lines of retreat of the army, to begin an September 23 to rapidly withdraw its left flank units to the "Sigulda" line. On the same day the troops of the left flank of the 3rd Baltic front went over to the pursuit of the retreating enemy and reached Mazsalatsa on September 24.

On the following day, overcoming numerous obstacles in the roads, they progressed in the southwestern direction at the rate of 20-25 kilometers per day and broke through by September 26 to the "Cesis" line. On September 27 the enemy covering units left that line as well. Our troops approached the "Sigulda" defensive line directly on a front from Peterupe to Nitaure. Here they met strong enemy fire resistance. In the zone of the 2nd Baltic front, where the Hitlerites resisted particularly stubbornly, after seizing the "Cesis" line our forces overcame four more intermediate lines and by September 27 also broke through to the "Sigulda" defensive line.

Thus, as the result of the ten-day offensive the Soviet troops liberated the mainland part of Estonia and a large part of Latvia, throwing the enemy back to the "Sigulda" line.

However, our forces could not split the main forces of army group "North" and the German command group was able to withdraw them in relative order from Estonia and from the "Valga" and "Cesis" lines to the area of the Riga beachhead. This occurred because the initial blows of the 2nd and 3rd Baltic fronts were found to be insufficiently powerful to breach the

"Valga" and "Cesis" defensive lines in the planned time. The lack of effectiveness of these strikes was largely due to deficiencies in the artillery preparation, the extremely negligible deployment of close support tanks, and also weak knowledge of the grouping and defense of the German fascist forces. To complete the breach the front command group had not only to strengthen their strike grouping, but also to transfer their blows to new directions. All of this led to slow speeds of breaching and simultaneously permitted the enemy command group, exploiting the favorable conditions of the terrain, to create a new defensive position in the rear after leaving the next position, and to maintain the solid defensive front of its forces.

By the end of September a considerable part of the Baltic was still in the hands of the fascists. The Moonzund [transl. from Russian] Archipelago also remained occupied, which ensured the freedom of operation of the enemy fleet in the Gulf of Rigaand in the central section of the Baltic Sea. For this very reason the Hitlerite command group attempted as before to consolidate on the Riga beachhead and the Moonzund Archipelago, and strengthened the defenses there. At the end of September the main forces of army group "North" were concentrated in the Riga direction, of which 17 divisions were occupying the defense north of the Western Dvina, on the "Sigulda" line, and 14, including 3 Panzer divisions, south of the river (up to Auce). Shortening the front line north of the Western Dvina allowed the enemy there to strengthen the density of his forces on the defense.

CHAPTER 12

THE LIBERATION OF THE SOVIET BALTIC REPUBLICS - LATVIA, LITHUANIA AND ESTONIA. THE DEFEAT OF THE ENEMY IN THE ARCTIC.

3. The advance in the Memel and Riga directions. Clearing the Baltic region of the fascist invaders.

The successful advance of the Soviet forces in July through September /354
1944 led to significant changes in the strategic situation in the entire Baltic direction. Above all, the defeat of the German fascist forces in the Baltic hastened Finland's withdrawal from the war, with which country a truce agreement was completed on September 19 in Moscow.[1] According to the conditions of the agreement the Soviet fleet and air force obtained the opportunity to deploy in the Finnish waters and at the airfields of the southern and southwestern shores of Finland. This facilitated the development of the military activity of our fleet in the central sector of the Baltic Sea. At

[1] Finland' withdrawal from the war is elucidated in Chapter 5.

the end of September the submarines of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet began to move out to the southern sector of the Baltic Sea for actions on the enemy's sea communications. With the breakthrough of the Red Army to the western shore of Estonia favorable conditions were created for the liberation of the island sector of the republic. The seizure of the Moonzund Archipelago would close the entrance to the Gulf of Finland through the Irben Strait to the enemy fleet and permit the landing of our assault landing forces in Kurland, in the rear of the enemy's Baltic grouping.

Changes in the strategic situation, particularly the concentration of the main forces of army group "North" in the area of the Riga beachhead and the Riga "corridor" required that the main blow of our forces be transferred from the Riga to the Meml direction, and also that operations be developed with the goal of liberating the Moonzund islands. Therefore Headquarters of the Supreme High Command set new objectives before the fronts in the course of the advance on the Riga direction.

According to Headquarters' directive of September 24, the 1st Baltic front was to conduct regroupings of the forces of the right wing (the 4th Shock, 43rd, 51st and 5th Guards Tank Armies) from the Riga direction to the region of Siauliai, and from there to strike a blow in the general direction of Memel, break through to the shore of the Baltic Sea, in the sector of Palanga - Memel - the mouth of the Niemen River, thereby cutting off the line of retreat of the enemy's Baltic grouping to East Prussia. The offensive was scheduled to begin on October 1-2, 1944. The troops of the 3rd and 2nd Baltic fronts were assigned the following mission: continuing the advance in the Riga direction, to liberate the capital of Latvia and clear the shore of the Baltic Sea to Liepa. The commanders of the 2nd Baltic front, without halting the advance north of the Western Dvina, was to transfer the left flank 3rd Shock and 22nd Armies to the sector of the front south of the Western Dvina and relieve the troops of the 1st Baltic front up to and including Auce.[1]

---

[1] IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #9493, pp. 176, 177.

The 3rd Baltic front, with the purpose of supporting the 1st Baltic front, was to strike a blow with the right flank 39th Army from the area of Raseiniai on Taurage, and south of the Niemen to prepare and effect a strike in the Gumbinnen direction in order to deny the enemy the opportunity to throw part of his forces from there to the Memel direction.[1]

The troops of the Leningrad front, with the support of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet, were to clear the Moonzund islands of the German fascist invaders.[2] The Red Banner Baltic Fleet, furthermore, was assigned the objective of cutting off the enemy's sea communications and blockading Riga from the sea. /355

In order to ensure the surprise of the new advance on Memel, it was prepared within a limited period of time and in secret. In six days the command group of the 1st Baltic Front transferred three combined-arms and one tank army, two detached tank and one mechanized corps, and also a large number of reinforcement resources from the right wing to the left and center at a distance of 80 to 240 kilometers. The regrouping also touched two other armies, since it was necessary to greatly narrow their zones. The scale of the regrouping can be judged from figures such as these. In six days troops were transferred numbering approximately half a million persons, and having 9,300 guns and mortars and 1,340 tanks and assault guns.

This regrouping, which was a rare example of the movement of almost the entire forces of a front to a new direction, was the most important part of the preparations for the Memel operation. Its successful execution was the result of the capable leadership of the front commander and precise planning by the front headquarters. Measures to misinform the enemy, particularly those connected with the imitation of preparations for an advance on Riga from the southeast, as well as the offensive operations of the 3rd and 2nd Baltic fronts in the Riga direction, kept the enemy from immediately discovering the regrouping of the Soviet troops.

---

[1] IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #9493, pp. 214-215.

[2] Ibid, p. 178.

In the period of preparations for our offensive in the Memel direction the plans of the German fascist command group also changed. It decided to conduct an operation to improve the operative position of army group "North." The 3rd Panzer Army was to strike two blows on Siauliai in converging directions from the areas north of Jelgava and southwest of Siauliai. This would lead to a shortening of the front line and would, furthermore, provide an opportunity to seize the Riga - Jelgava - Siauliai line of communication. The Hitlerite command group planned to reinforce the 3rd Panzer Army with divisions that could be freed when the forces were withdrawn from the "Sigulda" line to the Riga perimeter. In accordance with this plan the withdrawal from the "Sigulda" line was scheduled for October 12, the seizure of the Riga perimeter for October 17, and the start of the offensive for November 3-4, 1944.

The German fascist command group observed the signs of the concentration of Soviet forces in the area of Siauliai only on October 2, that is, one day before the start of the offensive.[1] In connection with this it rejected its original plan and began to withdraw its forces from the "Sigulda" line on the evening of October 5.[2] After that it planned to create a strong defense on the front from Engure to the Niemen. The enemy began to transfer the 5th and 7th Panzer divisions and certain units of the "Great Germany" division that were occupying the defense southwest of Jelgava, to the Memel direction.

The commander of the 1st Baltic front resolved to breach the enemy defense in two sectors located at a distance of 38 kilometers from one another. The 6th Guards, 43rd, 51st and 5th Guards Tank Armies were to strike the main blow. On the combined flanks of the 6th Guards and 43rd Armies in a 19 kilometer breakthrough sector 29 rifle divisions, that is, approximately 50 percent of the entire forces of the front, were concentrated, and the artillery density was brought up to 250 guns and mortars to 1 kilometer of the breakthrough frontage. The 6th Guards Army, which struck

---

[1] IML. Docs. and Maters. of the . . . Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #13588, pp. 42, 43.

[2] Ibid, pp. 25, 37, 39.

a blow on Telsiai, was to develop the advance in the northwestern direction, and the 43rd Army, having struck a blow on Rietavas and Memel, in the western and southwestern directions. The 5th Guards Tank Army under the command of Lt. Gen. of Tank Forces V.T. Vol'skiy was brought into the breach at the boundary of the 6th Guards and 43rd Armies after they overcame the main zone of the enemy defense. It was assigned the objective of breaching the second /356
zone on the move by the end of the first day and developing the advance to the west.[1] To fill the breach that formed between the 6th Guards and 43rd Armies as the result of the further advance in diverging directions, the second echelon of the front, the 51st Army, was brought in at their boundary. This ensured the buildup of forces in the Memel direction and supported the 6th Guards Army in creating an inner perimeter of envelopment of the severed army grouping.

The second blow was to be struck by the 2nd Guards Army in the Kelme-Tilsit direction; the breach of the enemy's defense was planned in a 12 kilometer sector where 11 rifle divisions were concentrated, and artillery density was brought up to 130 guns and mortars to 1 kilometer of breakthrough frontage. Before the troops of that army was the task of breaking through to the Niemen and thereby covering the main forces of the front from enemy counterstrikes from the south.

On the decision of the commander of the 3rd Belorussian front, Gen. I.D. Chernyakhovskiy, the 39th Army was to breach the enemy defense with the forces of 6 rifle divisions in a 6 kilometer sector south of Raseiniai and support the 2nd Guards Army with a blow on Taurage in moving out to the Niemen. The 39th Army was then to cross the Nieman where the main forces of the 3rd Belorussian front were concentrated for a strike in the Gumbinnen direction.

Thus the decisions made called for close cooperation both between the armies of the 1st Baltic front and between the combinied armies of the adjacent fronts.

Changes took place in the enemy grouping in the Memel direction immediately before the start of the operation. In all approximately eight

[1] Archive of MD USSR, col. 235, inv. 2074, div. 79, pp. 30-33.

infantry divisions occupied the defense in the sector from Auce to the Niemen, of which approximately five divisions were before the 1st Baltic front. However, on October 4 the 14th Panzer, 121st, and 389th infantry divisions, which had previously occupied the defense northeast and east of Riga, appeared there. Furthermore, during the operation the enemy could throw seven or eight new divisions, including up to four Panzer divisions, against the 1st Baltic front. In spite of that the troops of the 1st Baltic front considerably exceeded those of the enemy: in men by 2.5 times, in guns and mortars by almost 11 times, and in tanks and assault guns by over 3 times. In the breakthrough sectors an even greater superiority had been achieved.

While on September 24 the troops of the 1st Baltic front were beginning to prepare for the offensive in the Memel direction, the troops of the 3rd and 2nd Baltic fronts north of the Western Dvina were attempting to breach the "Sigulda" defensive line. As a result of the fact that in approaching this line the command group and headquarters of the fronts, particularly the 3rd Baltic front, did not have at their disposal full information on the state of the enemy defense and its forces, and no special measures were conducted to organize the breach, they did not succeed in overcoming the line on the move. After brief preparations the command group of the front again attempted to effect a breach first on an army scale, then on a frontal scale. But these attempts were likewise unsuccessful. However, the constant attacks of our troops contained the enemy forces on the "Sigulda" line, which made it possible to strike a heavy blow in the Memel direction.

According to the instructions of Marshal of the Soviet Union Govorov, on whom Headquarters placed the control of the operations of the 3rd and 2nd Baltic fronts after October 1,[1] necessary changes were added to the plans of the front commanders and preparations were begun to breach the enemy defense with the forces of both fronts. The breach was planned for October 7. However, subsequent events made fundamental changes in these plans.

The advance of the troops of the 1st Baltic front in the Memel direction /357 began October 5 with reconnaissance in force, which was preceded by powerful

[1] IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #9493, p. 208.

20-minute artillery and air preparation. The reconnaissance detachments, operating in the breakthrough sectors, had already penetrated the enemy defenses to 2-4 kilometers in one to one and a half hours. Conditions were created to bring the main forces into the battle. In two hours the rifle corps were already operating at a depth of 5-7 kilometers in the direction of the main strike. By the end of the day the 6th Guards Army, commanded by Col. Gen. I.M. Chistyakov, and the 43rd Army, progressed to 14-17 kilometers, widening the breach to 76 kilometers on the front. On that day the 2nd Guards Army under the command of Lt. Gen. P.G. Chanchibadze breached the enemy defense on an 18-kilometer front and progressed to a depth of up to 7 kilometers.

The 3rd Airborne Army, which in spite of bad weather conducted 483 airplane flights on October 5, gave considerable support to the advancing troops of the front. Inflicting assault attacks on the retreating enemy units, it gave them no opportunity to consolidate on new defensive lines.

Success on the first day was achieved due to the capable organization of the advance, and also to the decisive actions and heroism of the soldiers. Carrying on battles in a forested, swampy terrain where the enemy arranged ambushes, the Soviet fighters displayed initiative and resourcefulness, and quickly oriented themselves to the situation.

In spite of successfully overcoming the main zone, on the first day the mobile groups of the armies and the front were not brought into the breach. This occurred largely because due to the unfavorable meteorological conditions the artillery and air preparation of the attack began only in the second half of the day, and after the main zone was breached no time remained (considering the short fall day) to bring major tank formations into the breach.

On October 6 the offensive was renewed with new force. The 5th Guards Tank Army was brought into the battle at the boundary of the 6th Guards and 43rd Armies. Simultaneously the mobile groups of the armies were also brought in: in the zone of the 6th Guards Army the 19th tank corps commanded by Lt. Gen. of Tank Forces I.D. Vail'yev, and in the zone of the 2nd Guards Army the

1st tank corps under the command of Lt. Gen. of Tank Forces V.V. Budkov. Rain and thick mud greatly hindered the advance. Nonetheless the troops of the front, overcoming the ferocious resistance of the enemy, progressed to 13-25 kilometers by the end of the day and completed the breach of the tactical zone in almost the entire sector of the offensive. The troops of the 39th Army of the 3rd Belorussian front, which went over to the offensive on that day, breached the defense with the support of the 1st Airborne Army on a front of up to 7 kilometers and penetrated to 14 kilometers in one day.

The Soviet tank crew members accomplished many feats that day. The tank battalion of the 117th brigade of the 1st tank corps under the command of Maj. V.Z. Babi in a sudden night attack shot down a strong enemy screen set up in the path of our tank corps. In this 3 assault guns were destroyed, 19 guns were wrecked, 4 armored transports and 9 automobiles burned, and approximately 250 enemy soldiers and officers killed and wounded. The 159th tank brigade of the same corps burst into the little town of Kraziai in a flanking maneuver, and destroyed the headquarters of the enemy's 5th Panzer division located there.[1]

Due to the success of the Soviet troops in the Memel direction the command group of army group "North," fearing encirclement, began rapidly withdrawing its forces operating northeast of Riga on the night of October 6. This led to a change in the plan of operations of the 3rd and 2nd Baltic fronts. From the morning of October 6 their troops went over to pursuit of the enemy, and progressed 10-14 kilometers that day. Thus even on October 6 along with the offensive of our troops in the Memel direction successful /358
operations in the Riga direction also developed, which decreased the enemy's possibilities of maneuvering. At the same time the troops of the Leningrad front in cooperation with the Red Banner Baltic Fleet liberated the islands of Muhu and Hiiumaa (Dago) and made an assault landing on the island of Saaremaa (Ezel').

The commander of army group "North" reported to headquarters that the situation had become critical and that to hold the lines occupied the group

[1] Archives MD USSR, col. 3290, inv. 531606, div. 1, p. 119.

would need considerable reinforcements. However, the German fascist high command could not send a single division from East Prussia, because the major grouping of the 3rd Baltic front was threatening them in that direction. Thus due to the correct strategy of the Soviet command group in effecting offensive operations in several directions (Moonzund, Riga and Memel) with simultaneous preparation of an attack in the Gumbinnen direction as well, the German forces were trapped in a huge space and the enemy was deprived of the opportunity to transfer reserves to the direction most important to him.

In the following two days the troops of the 1st Baltic front continued to pursue the enemy. On October 7 on the right wing of the front the 4th Shock Army also went over to the offensive. Having no significant reinforcing means, in two days it progressed only 11-13 kilometers. The 6th Guards Army, advancing in the northwestern direction, overcame approximately 42 kilometers and broke through to the area of Ilakiai. On October 7 at the boundary of the 6th Guards and 43rd Armies in the area of Telsiai the 51st Army under the command of Lt. Gen. Ya. F. Kreyzer was brought into the battle, and by the evening of October 8 it had broken through to the area of Seda, having filled the breach between the armies. At that time the 43rd Army reached the first rear defensive line in the approaches to Memel. Its rapid progress was promoted by the active operations in this direction of the 5th Guards Tank Army, particularly the 29th tank corps commanded by Maj. Gen. of Tank Forces K.M. Malakhov. On October 7 the corps breached the intermediate defensive line on the move, progressing 60 kilometers in a day, and on October 8 it seized Plungé and broke into the enemy's position in the immediate approaches to Memel.

On October 7 the 2nd Guards Army completed the breach of the 2nd zone of the enemy defense, progressing up to 20-22 kilometers. By evening of October 8 the main forces of the army broke through to the region of Shilale, in doing which the 1st tank corps, forcing the Jura River, breached the enemy's first rear defensive line. The 39th Army of the 3rd Belorussian front, overcoming the ever-growing enemy resistance, reached Taurage on the right flank by evening of October 8, and Jurbarkas on the left flank.

In the four days of the advance of the Soviet forces the enemy defense in the Memel direction was breached to a depth of 60-90 kilometers and the total width of the front reached 200 kilometers. The German fascist forces suffered great losses there, and the 551st infantry division was totally destroyed.

In these battles, which completed the liberation of the entire territory of the Lithuanian SSR, the 16th Lithuanian rifle division commanded by Col. A.I. Urbshas operated successfully in the Kelme - Tilsit direction in the composition of the 2nd Guards Army.[1] Its soldiers, wishing to clear their homeland of the occupiers as quickly as possible, displayed great military skill and heroism. Thus, for instance, with accurate fire Lance Corp. G.S. Ushpolis repelled several enemy counterattacks, knocking out three tanks and an armored transport of the enemy. For this feat G.S. Ushpolis was awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union. On October 31, 1944 the division was awarded the order of the Red Banner, and later, for its participation in the liberation of the city and seaport of Klaipeda, received the designation "Klaipeda."

In the Riga direction at the beginning of October the troops of the 3rd and 2nd Baltic fronts reached the second intermediate position in the approaches to the capital of Latvia. The troops of the Leningrad front in /359
cooperation with the Red Banner Baltic Fleet seized a large part of the island of Sarema.

The right flank armies of the 1st Baltic front then developed the offensive to the northwest, the armies of the center in the direction of the sea coast, and the left flank armies in the downstream direction of the Niemen. However, on the right wing of the front due to the increased resistance of the enemy, who had filled in his battle order with divisions transferred from near Riga, this progress was negligible. In battles on October 9 and 10 the 4th Shock Army had no success, and the 6th Guards Army progressed only

[1] Col. A.I. Urbshas took command of the division in September 1944.

12 kilometers. Due to the 4th Strike Army's falling behind, the 6th Guards Army was forced to stretch its front from Vieksniai to Skuodas, that is to 70 kilometers, which decreased its offensive opportunities. The troops of the 51st Army operated more successfully, progressing 44 to 60 kilometers to the west in two days, and breaking through by October 10 to the front of Skudas - Rutsava and to the sea coast north of Palanga.

The 5th Guards Tank Army, as before, played a leading role in the advance in the Memel direction. On October 9 it forced the Minija River, and on October 10 it seized the city of Kretinga and broke through to the sea coast in the region of Palanga. Simultaneously the troops of the army conducted battles with the enemy in the northeastern approaches to Memel. The 43rd Army also developed the advance successfully, engaging in encounters in the immediate approaches to Memel after forcing the Minija River. On the left wing of the front the 2nd Guards Army, continuing to pursue the enemy in the southwestern direction, broke through to the Shilale - Taurage front. A part of the forces of that army moved out to the Taurage - Jurbarkas front to relieve the 39th Army, which was to advance south of the Niemen. The rapid progress of the ground forces during these days was promoted by the 3rd Airborne Army. In connection with the improvement in the weather it considerably increased its activity, conducting 2,727 airplane flights on October 9 and 10.

With the breakthrough of our forces to the sea coast the main forces of army group "North" found themselves cut off, losing their ground link with East Prussia. Due to the successful operations of the 5th Guards Tank Army, the overall advance on the Memel direction developed so rapidly that the enemy was unable to utilize the prepared rear defensive lines, from which the first two were breached by the Soviet forces on the move. However, our troops were unable to seize Memel immediately, since the lines of one enemy infantry and two Panzer divisions that had retreated there and the 58th infantry division transferred by sea seized the previously prepared defense in time.

In the approaches to Memel the enemy had created several defensive positions consisting of a number of continous trenches. In the most important

directions fortress-type ports with reinforced concrete installations were built, each of which was a group of pill-boxes connected by underground communications passages.[1] Furthermore, the German fascist command group had drawn artillery from the coastal defense and military ships brought into the port of Memel into the defense of the city. The 43rd Army could not overcome such fortifications on its own, and the front did not have the opportunity to help it, because its main forces had been changed over to the completion of the main objective - the destruction of army group "North," which had been driven to the sea.

In the Riga direction from October 6 through 9 the troops of the 3rd and 2nd Baltic fronts, pursuing the retreating enemy and not allowing him to consolidate on prepared lines, overcame two defensive zones and three intermediate positions. Progressing 7-9 kilometers per day, on October 10 our forces broke through to the forward edge of the 1st zone of the Riga defensive perimeter. The period of direct battle for the capital of the Latvian SSR began.

The German fascist command group, attempting to hold the regions of the /360
Baltic still remaining in its hands, attached great importance to the defense of Riga. On October 9 north of the Western Dvina six enemy infantry divisions occupied the zone of defense; on the south bank of the river, southeast and south of Riga, approximately five infantry divisions occupied the defense. The density of the enemy forces in the immediate approaches to Riga was very high. Nevertheless, on that day the commander of army group "North" placed before the high command the question of the need to retreat to the Tukums line. However, the Hitlerite headquarters did not agree with this.

In accordance with the instructions of Headquarters of the Supreme High Command of October 6 the troops of the 3rd and 2nd Baltic fronts were to strike the main blows on the combined flanks and liberate Riga. The 3rd

[1] Archive of MD USSR, col. 398, inv. 9308, div. 711, pp. 131-132.

Baltic front, which by that time had received the entire zone of advance north of the Western Dvina, was to strike the main blow with the left flank 1st Shock Army along the north bank in the direction of the eastern part of the city, with the right flank 67th Army in the direction of the northern and central parts of the city, and with the 61st Army across the isthmus between the lakes through the northeastern outskirts of the city. The 2nd Baltic front, having regrouped all of its forces south of the Western Dvina, was to strike a blow with the 10th Guards Army along the south bank of the river on the enemy troops occupying the defense in the southwestern sector of Riga. The right flank 130th Lettish rifle corps of the 22nd Army also supported the blow in the direction. It had the assignment of cutting off the Riga-Jelgava road, having advanced flanking Riga from the south, and breaking through from the southwest into the rear of the enemy forces occupying the defense around the city.

In the battles for the capital of the Latvian SSR the addresses of the Military Councils of the fronts had a strong effect on the morale of the Soviet troops. In the address of the Military Council of the 3rd Baltic front confidence was expressed that "at this decisive moment soldiers, sergeants, officers and general will display new examples of heroism, military skill and loyalty to their military duty." "In the name of our Soviet Motherland," the Military Council summoned them, "in the name of our military honor, forward, to Riga!"[1]

Breaking through on October 10 to the forward edge of the first zone of the Riga perimeter, the troops of both fronts attempted to overcome it on the move, but they were stopped. In the second half of the day they renewed the offensive and in several sectors penetrated the enemy's position. However, in several of them as a result of fierce counterattacks, the Hitlerites were able to restore their previous positions. The troops of the right wing of the 3rd Baltic front were compelled to leave the beachhead on the right bank of the Gaui River in the area of the railroad bridge. A group of wounded soldiers (approximately 40 men) did not retreat to the

[1] Archives of MD USSR, col. 242, inv. 2235, div. 101, p. 67.

north in time and fell into the hands of the fascists. When on October 12 our forces again forced the river, the mutilated bodies of the Soviet soldiers were found there. This horrible sight provoked a burst of indignation in the soldiers and commanders.

On October 11 our troops deeply penetrated the first zone of the city perimeter in the direction of the fronts' main blows. The commander of army group "North," Scherner, again turned to high command with an insistent request for a retreat from the area of Riga to the Tukums defensive line. This time he received permission to begin the retreat, but only on the evening of October 12. However, all of the Red Army's increasing blows did not allow the enemy to hold the occupied position for even a day. By the morning of October 12 the Soviet troops completely seized the first zone of the city perimeter, and in the afternoon they reached the second zone and penetrated it in some sectors.

On that day on the right wing of the 3rd Baltic front our assault landing detachment overcame Lake Kiś in wheeled amphibians and landed in the area of the city park, seizing a beachhead up to one and a half kilometers along the /361 front. This considerably facilitated the seizure of the right bank section of Riga. By 2300 hours of October 12 our troops had cleared Meshaparks of the enemy and entered the eastern section of the city. By dawn of October 13 they had completely liberated the right bank sector, that is the greater part of Riga, and began preparations to force the river, since during their retreat the Hitlerites had blown up all of the bridges.

South of the Western Dvina, by that time, the troops of the 2nd Baltic front drove the enemy out of the intermediate positions. On October 14 the 10th Guards Army engaged in battle in the immediate approaches to the southwestern sector of the city, and the 130th Lettish rifle corps cut off the Riga-Jelgava road. A considerable part of the Riga garrison, finding itself threatened with encirclement, fled. This helped the 10th Guards Army to complete the liberation of the west bank sector of the city on October 15.

In the battles for Riga the 245th rifle division (commander Hero of the Soviet Union Maj. Gen. V.A. Rodionov, Chief of the Political Section Col.

A.Sh. Chekushin) particularly distinguished itself, bursting into the northern outskirts of the city, as did the 212th rifle division under the command of Col. V.G. Kuchinev (Chief of the Political Section Col. A.E. Onoprienko), which was the first to enter the city from the eastern side. Two-time order-bearer Sgt. Maj. A.I. Popov of the 212th division raised the red flag on the spire of a four-story house on Brivibas Boulevard.[1] On that day, October 13, Moscow saluted the troops of the 3rd Baltic front who, in cooperation with the units of the 2nd Baltic front, had liberated capital of Latvia. The formations and units that had distinguished themselves in the battles were awarded the honorary designation "Riga."

The expulsion of the enemy from Riga meant, essentially, the liberation of the Soviet Baltic. The soldiers of the 130th Lettish rifle corps displayed valor and courage in the battles for their native cities and villages, for their capital. They were among the first to enter the territory of the Latvian Republic and liberated dozens of inhabited areas. "We are proud," wrote the newspaper "Soviet Latvia," "that in the battles for the Soviet Motherland, in the battles to liberate Riga, the Lettish corps distinguished itself..."[2]

For their excellent military operations in September and October 1944, 3,418 soldiers and officers of that corps were decorated with high government honors. On November 3 the corps was awarded the order of Suvorov II Degree, and the 308th Lettish rifle division the order of the Red Banner. It was of them, the brave heroes, who multiplied the military glory of the red Lettish riflemen, that N.S. Khrushchev spoke at a meeting in Riga on June 11, 1959: "In the years of the Great Patriotic War the Lettish people, together with the other brother peoples of the Soviet Union, selflessly fought against the invaders for their native land, for Soviet power."[3]

The Hitlerites had inflicted severe wounds on the Latvian capital. The port installations, the bridges across the Western Dvina, the electrical

---

1 Archive of MD USSR, col. 242, inv. 2235, div. 37, p. 40.

2 "Sovyetskaya Latviya," 14 October 1944.

3 "Pravda," 12 June 1959.

plant and the "VEF" electrotechnical plant were ruined, the buildings of the main post office and the main automatic telephone station were demolished and burned, and the city water supply was put out of operation. The fascist barbarians had removed all of the equipment of industrial enterprises, plundered museums, institutes, the ancient library on City Hall Square, and the world-famous resorts of the Riga seacoast.

On October 22, 1944 in the capital of the Latvian Soviet Socialist Republic a mass rally was held, devoted to the liberation of the city from the German fascist invaders. On Esplanade Square gathered approximately 100,000 workers and soldiers of the Lettish rifle corps and other formations /362 of the Red Army. Representatives of the workers, peasants and intelligentsia warmly greeted the members of the CC CP(b) of Latvia and the government of the Latvian SSR, and thanked with their whole hearts the Communist Party, Soviet government and Red Army for ridding them of fascist tyranny. The mass rally of the workers of the capital of Latvia was a clear demonstration of the friendship of the Lettish people with Russia and other peoples of the Soviet Union.

After the liberation of Riga and the breakthrough of the troops of the right wing of the 2nd Baltic front to the sea, on the orders of Headquarters the 3rd Baltic front was disbanded. The 1st Shock and 14th Airborne Armies were transferred from its composition to the 2nd Baltic, and the 61st Army to the 1st Baltic front. The 1st and 2nd Baltic fronts, having received considerable reinforcements, were to destroy the German fascist grouping that had been driven to the sea on the Kurland Peninsula and in the area of Memel.

According to Headquarters concept, to complete this mission the 2nd Baltic front was to strike a blow from the area of Dobele in the western direction; the 1st Baltic front was to strike a blow from the area of Ilakiai with its main forces in the northern direction, and with its remaining forces to seize Memel and liberate the north bank of the Niemen in the area of Tilsit from the enemy. The blows of the two Baltic fronts coincided in time with the advance of the 3rd Belorussian front in the Gumbinnen direction, which was to eliminate the possibility of a transfer of German forces to Kuland. The beginning of the advance was scheduled for October 16.

By this time the enemy had two infantry divisions and six detached battalions on Syrve Peninsyla (the southern part of Saaremaa Island), which were supported from the sea with fire from naval guns. On Kurland Peninsula between Tukums and Liepaja approximately 33 divisions of army group "North" had been driven to the sea. The beachhead in the area of Memel was defended by units of two infantry and two Panzer divisions, and before the left wing of the 1st Baltic front in the Tilsit direction units of two Panzer divisions, one motorized division and four infantry divisions included in the composition of the 3rd Panzer Army occupied the defense. Further south, before the 3rd Belorussian front, in the first line of defense operated 9 infantry divisions of the 4th Army of army group "Centre." The Hitlerites planned on trapping the greatest possible number of Soviet forces on the Kurland Peninsula. At the same time they also attempted to hold the Syrve Peninsula, providing their fleet with freedom of operation in the Irben strait.

In accordance with the assigned objectives, the 2nd Baltic front struck its main blow on its left wing with the 3rd Shock and 42nd Armies and part of the forces of the 22nd Army from the region of Dobele in the western direction, and an auxiliary blow with the 1st Shock Army along the sea coast to Tukums with the general objective of breaking through to the Tukums - Auce line.[1] The main efforts of the 1st Baltic front were directed toward defeating the severed army group "North." With this goal the 6th Guards Army made strikes from the area of Vayarde on Skrundu [transl. from Russ.] and Saldus, and the 51st Army from the area of Skuodas on Liepaja. The 61st and 5th Guards Tank Armies were transferred to reinforce the troops of the front in that direction.[2] The troops of the front operating in the Memel and Tilsit directions, holding positions on the sea coast and along the Niemen, gave the enemy no opportunity to join the blockaded grouping. The 3rd Belorussian front struck its main blow from the area of Vilkaviskis on Insterburg with the objective of breaking through to the Gumbinnen - Goldap line. This blow diverted the forces of the enemy's East Prussian grouping, which was to promote the advance of the Baltic fronts in Kurland.

---

[1] Archive of MD USSR, col. 239, inv. 2224, div. 851, p. 84.

[2] Ibid, col. 235, inv. 2074, div. 857, pp. 25, 31.

On the morning of October 16 the Baltic fronts went over to the offensive. The troops of the right wing of the 2nd Baltic front operated most successfully. The 1st Shock Army under the command of Lt. Gen. N.D. /363
Zakhvatayev breached the main zone of defense on the first day of the offensive, repelling approximately 16 enemy counterattacks. In the following days, under the conditions of an almost impassable terrain, it continued to progress in force, 10-25 kilometers per day on the average. On October 18 its troops forced the Lielupe River and seized the city of Kemeri, and on October 19 they broke through to the enemy's defensive line in the approaches to Tukums, where they were halted. On the left wing of the front the enemy offered furious resistance. Having considerable forces there and exploiting the advantages of the forested, swampy terrain, he held off our advance at a previously prepared Tukums - Gardene line.

In the Liepaja direction the Hitlerites also held the defense very stubbornly, as a result of which the main assault grouping of the 1st Baltic front progressed 2 to 6 kilometers in the days of the offensive. There the enemy undertook fierce counterattacks in which forces up to an infantry division with 50-60 tanks took part.

The advance was renewed on October 27. By the end of October 31 the troops of the Baltic fronts were conducting battles on a line running west of Kemeri - Gardene - Letskava - excluding Priekule - south of Liepaja. None of their further attempts to breach the defense and split the enemy grouping pinned to the sea were successful. Although the Soviet Supreme High Command was concerned that the Kurland grouping be liquidated rapidly, it could not assign additional forces for that purpose, particularly reinforcement means, since the Soviet troops were still faced with the completion of more important strategic missions for the rout of the German fascist forces in East Prussia and Western Poland. Because of this the battle for Memel was dragged out, and it was liberated only in January 1945. The Kurland enemy group remained blockaded on the peninsula until the end of the war, and capitulated in May 1945.

While the advance was developing in the Riga and Memel directions the troops of the Leningrad front jointly with the Red Banner Baltic Fleet conducted an operation to clear the Moonzund Archipelago of the enemy. To execute this comparatively minor but complex operation approximately two months were required (from September 27 to November 24), and while the landing of the assault landing group and their seizure of almost the entire archipelago took 9-10 days, the battle for the Syrve Peninsula dragged on for one and a half months. This occurred because a miscalculation had been made at the planning stage of the operation. The command group did not then attach the necessary importance to the organization of Syrve Peninsula, which was the key to the Gulf of Riga. Nor was attention given to the fact that the natural conditions of the peninsula allowed for the possibility of its lengthy defense even with small forces. The experience of 1941 when a small group of brave Soviet spirits held it for over two months testified to this. In order to breach the deeply echeloned enemy defense it was necessary to considerably reinforce our troops with military equipment. Furthermore, its supply was not planned in advance, and was additionally complicated by the difficulties of transport by sea. The main forces of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet - cruisers and torpedo boats - could not take part in the operation due to the great danger of mines and the impracticability of the naval bases on the coast of Estonia, which had been wrecked by the enemy.

By the time the assignment was received (September 25) the troops of the Leningrad front broke through to the coast of Moonzund and the Gulf of Riga; the conditions were created for the liberation of the islands where the enemy had not had time to prepare a strong defense. However, having at his disposal a fleet dominating the Baltic Sea, he could strengthen the garrison of those islands.

The Moonzund islands had great significance for the enemy; they covered the flank and rear of the Hitlerite forces in the Baltic, and supported the blockade of the Gulf of Finland. The loss of these islands not only led to the isolation of the Riga grouping from the sea, but also created a threat of the landing of a Soviet assault force in Kurland, i.e., in the rear of the Baltic grouping, which then still held the Riga area. The German fascist /364

command group observed with alarm that "holding Riga depends on keeping the islands of the Moonzund Archipelago."[1]

In this situation it was necessary to immediately begin operations with the purpose of liberating the islands. According to the original decision of the commander of the front, on September 26 the 8th Army was to seize the islands of Vormsi and Muhu, and on September 27 to make an assault landing on the islands of Saaremaa and Hiiumaa.[2] However, as the result of the difficulties of redeployment, especially due to the dense mine obstacles, the assault landing means of the fleet did not arrive at the assigned time. This made it necessary to make certain changes in the plan of operations.

Having received instructions for the preparation of an assault landing operation, the commander of the fleet, Adm. V.F. Tributs, resolved to seize with the forces of the fleet the island of Vormsi, which controlled the passages to Moonzund from the Gulf of Finland. This mission was completed on September 27. The two small assault landing groups alighted on the island and cleared it of the enemy, after which navigation in the strait between the mainland and the island of Vormsi became safe. By September 29 the light forces of the fleet designated for the assault landing operation (55 motor torpedo boats, 8 motor gunboats, 40 tenders and approximately 30 other small vessels) concentrated in Rohukjula, Virtsu and other ports, where they were to take on the assault landing forces of the 8th Army: the 109th and 8th Estonian rifle corps. The fleet also assigned the 260th detached brigade of marine infantry to participate in the first assault wave.

Before the ships with the assault landing forces cast off the political section of the 1st brigade of motor torpedo boats conducted a meeting with the workers of the political sections of the divisions of rifle corps, at which a report on the theme "Experience of party-political work in supporting assault landings on islands" was heard and discussed. The political section

---

[1] IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #13586, p. 586.
[2] Archive of MD USSR, col. 2k7, inv. 1227, div 78, p. 175-176.

of the brigade designated groups of communists to conduct educational work directly with the assault team members. The publication by the political directorate of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet of "Standard Operating Procedure for Fighting Assault Personnel," where their duties in landing assault troops were set forth in detail, was of great assistance to the agitators.

By that time on the Moonzund Islands, in addition to four police guard battalions of the enemy the 23rd infantry division was also located, and at the beginning of October units of the 218th infantry and reinforcement means began to arrive from Riga; that is, the enemy's forces were increased over two-fold. The enemy supported the defense on the islands with the light forces of the fleet (launches and ammunition lighter) as well as two torpedo boats based at Kuressare and Kihelkonnu. The Hitlerites mined the southern exit from Moonzund and the approaches to Parnu. In the course of the operation, in repelling our advance the fascist command group frequently drew on the 2nd battle group of the German fleet, consisting of four cruisers and several squadron destroyers operating in the eastern section of the Baltic Sea.[1]

According to the concept of the operation it was proposed first to make assault landings on the island of Muhu from the 8th Estonian rifle corps (boarding the vessels in Virtsu)and on the island of Hiiumaa from the 109th rifle corps (boarding the vessels in Rohukjula), then simultaneously from two directions (from the islands of Hiiumaa and Muhu) to the island of Saaremaa, and to clear it of the enemy no later than October 5. Thus the plan of the assault landing operation called for the successive seizure of the islands, striking the main blow on the island of Saaremaa, where the enemy's main forces were located. /365

In accordance with this plan, on the evening of September 29 the first wave was effected on 12 motor torpedo boats and 90 amphibians of a special purpose battalion. An assault force of 950 men landed. The next echelons

---

[1] IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War. Inv. #13588, p. 86; inv. #13589, pp. 188, 379, 446.

of the Estonian rifle corps then began to land. The motor torpedo boats with the forward detachments of the assault landing force, commanded by Col. Khn. N. Virit, were met upon reaching the shore with a hail of enemy fire. In spite of this the personnel of the detachment displayed exceptional courage and heroism. Thus, for example, Jr. Sgt. N.N. Matyashin and Lt. A.G. Repson, who leapt first from the cutters into the sea, drew many fighters after them. Having reached the shore, Lt. Repson led the assault team members into the attack. The enemy made every effort to throw the Soviet fighters back into the sea. But they steadfastly held the beachhead they had seized and by their efforts secured the landing of the detachment on the island and its successful progress. Komsomol members N.N. Matyashin and A.G. Repson were awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union. Pressing the enemy in the western and northwestern directions, by the morning of September 30 the assault landing group had already cleared the island.

Military operations for the island of Hiiumaa became more complex and drawn out. Due to unfavorable weather it was necessary to postpone the landing to October 2. The first subunits of our assault landing force came under heavy enemy fire. But under the action of the air force and guns of the Soviet ships the enemy fire was suppressed, and the assault landing group of the 109th rifle corps that had alighted had completely liberated the island of Hiiumaa by the evening of October 3. The remnants of the German forces retreated to the island of Saaremaa. Having lost the islands of Vormsi, Muhu and Hiiumaa, the enemy withdrew his assault landing craft and cutters from Moonzund, mining the Soela strait as he did so.

At dawn of October 5 units of three divisions of the 109th and 8th Estonian rifle corps with artillery support from the islands of Hiiumaa and Muhu landed successfully on Saaremaa Island and began to develop the advance in the southwestern direction. In the course of five days they overcame 90-100 kilometers and on the morning of October 10 they reached the enemy's main defense on the Syrve Peninsula. Here on a narrow isthmus the width of which reached 2.5-3 kilometers the enemy had created a strong antitank and anti-infantry defense. Entrenching on that line, at the cost of great losses the Hitlerites held the peninsula for another month and a half.

The attempts undertaken by our forces on October 10-14 to break in the enemy defense did not have positive results due to a shortage of heavy artillery and shells. Having received reinforcements, on October 19-21 the troops breached the first defensive line, but they were unable to overcome the remaining lines, because the naval guns of the 2nd battle group of the German fleet offered powerful resistance.

The Soviet troops renewed the offensive on November 18, after which they were supplied with the necessary artillery and ammunition. The enemy, supported by two cruisers and several squadron destroyers, defended furiously. The resistance of these ships partially weakened the Soviet air force with successful attacks. Overcoming the enemy's ferocious resistance, our troops breached the last defensive line and by morning of November 24 had completely cleared the peninsula.

With the seizure of the islands of the Moonzund Archipelago the Red Banner Baltic Fleet again gained the opportunity to control the access to the Gulfs of Finland and Riga. Simultaneously the conditious improved for the fleet's operations on the enemy's communications in the Baltic Sea.

The victory of the Armed Forces of the USSR in the Baltic had enormous political and strategic significance. As the result of the successful completion of the operation, almost the entire territory of the Soviet Baltic republics was cleared of the occupiers, with the exception of a small section /366 of the Latvian SSR. The Red Army inflicted heavy damage on army group "North." Of 59 formations included in its composition, 26 were routed and 3 were totally destroyed. The main forces of that group - 37 divisions and 1 brigade - were isolated by the Soviet troops in Kurland,[1] and 3 divisions were blockaded in Memel. All of the enemy formations that had remained intact suffered heavy losses.

The defeat of the German fascist invaders in the Baltic led to a new change in the strategic situation on the Soviet-German front. Army group

[1] The later fate of this grouping is described in the fifth volume of this edition.

"North" lost its previous strategic significance and could no longer exert a serious influence on the course of the armed struggle. With the loss of the Baltic, Hitlerite Germany was deprived of an advantageous military beachhead from whence it had threatened with flank blows our forces operating in the direction of East Prussia and Poland, and which ensured it freedom of operation in the Gulfs of Finland and Riga. The operational-strategic situation of the enemy's East Prussian grouping, over which now hung the threat of flank attacks on the part of our Baltic grouping, which had broken through to the Baltic coast,also became considerably worse. Having lost the Baltic, Germany lost an important base for provisions and raw materials.

The situation that had developed considerably eased conditions for the advance of the 3rd and 2nd Belorussian fronts to East Prussia, and also for maneuver by the ships and air force of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet. Their operations developed on a thousand-kilometer front. During the advance a number of simultaneous and sequential operations were effected, and each front operated, as a rule, in a specific operational direction. However, in several of them, for example the Riga direction, the operation was conducted by a group of fronts, the actions of which were coordinated by representatives of Headquarters of the Supreme High Command. The successful solution of operative tasks was ensured by the close cooperation of the ground forces, air force and navy.

The most interesting feature of the operations of the Soviet troops in the Baltic was the transfer in the course of the offensive of the main efforts of the 1st Baltic front from the Riga to the Memel direction. This required a major regrouping of forces and equipment of the front to a distance of up to 120-140 kilometers. Thanks to the capable operative control of the troops the regrouping and preparation of the new operation in the Memel direction were conducted in secret and in short periods of time, which ensured the surprise of the attack and the success of our forces.

The offensive operations in the Baltic also had serious shortcomings, as a result of which the strategic goal of the advance was not fully achieved:

army group "North" avoided a conclusive defeat, and its main forces withdrew to Kurland, where they occupied the defensive until the end of the war. The main cause of this was that in planning the operations the striking of deep frontal attacks to split army group "North" and its elimination by units were not called for. In the beginning of the September offensive our fronts did not inflict decisive damage on the enemy at the tactical and immediate operative depth, and this enabled him to retreat according to a previously developed plan to prepared defensive lines. The insufficient effectiveness of the initial attacks was also due to the low numerical strength of our divisions, limited reserves of ammunition, the extremely negligible number of close-support tanks assigned, and the poor knowledge of the enemy's grouping, the nature of his defense. Essential deficiencies in the control of forces also existed. /367

The advance of the Red Army in the Baltic occurred under difficult conditions of the coastal sector of the Northwestern theater of military operations. The forested, swampy terrain with a great number of rivers and lakes enabled the enemy to create a multi-zoned defense developed to its entire depth to the coast of the Baltic Sea. This slowed the rate of the offensive and at the same time gave the enemy the opportunity in some directions to avoid our blows and the complete destruction threatening him.

In the battles for the Baltic in close cooperation with the Russians, Belorussians, Ukrainians and representatives of other peoples of the USSR bravely fought Letts, Lithuanians and Estonians. They had walked a difficult combat road from the outskirts of Moscow, from Velikiye Luky and Orel to the shores of the Baltic Sea, and with their heroic feats magnified the glorious traditions of the Lettish riflemen, the Lithuanian and Estonian red warriors of the Civil War period. Thus the Baltic was freed through the joint efforts of all of the peoples of the Soviet Union. The party and government highly valued the successes of the troops of the Baltic and Leningrad fronts. Over 332,000 soldiers, sergeants and officers were awarded orders and medals.[1]

---

[1] Archive of MD USSR, col. 33, inv. 43794, div. 85, pp. 9, 15; div. 86, p. 149; div. 88, pp. 48, 54.

CHAPTER 12

THE LIBERATION OF THE SOVIET BALTIC REPUBLICS - LATVIA, LITHUANIA AND ESTONIA. THE DEFEAT OF THE ENEMY IN THE ARCTIC.

4. The completion of military operations in the Arctic.

After Finland's withdrawal from the war the situation in the northern /367
sector of the Soviet-German front changed sharply. According to the truce agreement the troops of the Finnish army were to withdraw beyond the line of the Soviet-Finnish border of 1940.

By the time that military operations with Finland ended the Karelian front consisted of the 14th, 19th, 26th, 32nd, 7th and 7th Airborne Armies (Map 4) was in operation in the sector between the Barents Sea and Lake Ladoga. The front was commanded by Gen. K.A. Meretskov, Military Council member was Lt. Gen. T.F. Shtykov, and Chief of Staff was Lt. Gen. A.N. Krutikov.

In the sector from the Barents Sea to the city of Ukhta the troops of the 20th German Mountain Army numbering approximately 200,000 men were deployed. The front line here had remained unchanged since autumn 1941. In the sector from Ukhta to Lake Ladoga the Finnish troops withdrew at the end of September in accordance with the truce agreement beyond the line of the national boundary. Under these circumstances the German fascist command group, fearing the breakthrough of the Soviet forces into the flank and rear of the 20th Mountain Army from the south, began to withdraw its forces from the Kandalaksha and Ukhta directions to the west, into the northern sections of Finland.

By the end of September the 19th and 26th Karelian Armies, pursuing the retreating enemy, broke through to the national border in the sector west of Kirovsk and southwest of Ukhta. By that time the troops of the left wing of the Karelian front and the troops of the Leningrad front operating on the Karelian isthmus broke through to the Soviet Union's national border with Finland. West of Murmansk the enemy strongly held the lines he occupied. The enemy command group attached great importance to holding the areas of Petsamo and Kirkenes (in Northern Norway). Here nickel and copper /368 used by German industry were mined. The ships of the German navy were based at the year-round ports of the Barents Sea.

The region where our troops were to advance was an arctic coastal zone of mountain tundra. The coast of the Barents Sea there is broken by numerous narrow gulfs (fjords), which penetrade dozens of kilometers into the mainland. The sharply jagged terrain, the many mountain rivers, swamps and lakes, the poorly developed network of roads and the harsh climate made military operations difficult for all arms of service. The meteorological conditions were also extremely unfavorable, especially for the air force. In October there was frequent rain and snow in the Arctic, and strong winds blew from the sea.

In three years the enemy had constructed in the Petsamo - Kirkenes direction a well-developed and deeply-echeloned defense consisting of three zones equipped in the main directions with permanent installations. The

features of the terrain in combination with the fortifications that had been erected created favorable conditions for defense for the enemy and hindered the advance of the Soviet forces.

The 19th mountain rifle corps of the 20th German Mountain Army[1] (Map 12) occupied the defense in the Arctic. Its composition included over 53,000 men and 753 guns and mortars 75 mm caliber and greater. The formations of the corps were trained to wage battle under the conditions of the Northern theater of military operations. This corps had the objective of preventing the breakthrough of the Soviet forces to the regions of Petsamo and Kirkenes. The military operations of the enemy's ground forces were supported by 160 airplanes of the 5th Air Force and naval forces based at the ports of Northern Norway.[2]

On September 26, 1944, Headquarters of the Supreme High Command gave instructions to the Karelian front to prepare an offensive operation with the forces of the 14th Army, drawing on front resources, and clear the region of Petsamo of the enemy.[3] To complete this assignment formations of the Northern navy were also drawn upon.

The commander of the front assigned the 14th Army the mission of striking a blow on Petsamo and, in cooperation with the formations of the Northern Fleet, surrounding and destroying the main forces of the 19th mountain rifle corps. After that, continuing the advance in the western and northwestern directions, the army was to seize the area of the nickel fields and completely liberate the region of Petsamo. Simultaneously instructions to prepare and support the operations of the ground forces were received by the air force of the front and the Northern Fleet.

---

[1] After the retreat from the Kandalaksha and Ukhta directions the 18th and 36th mountain rifle corps of that army were concentrated in the territory of Norway.

[2] IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #17936, p. 723.

[3] Ibid, Inv. #9493, pp. 184-185.

To fulfill the assigned mission the 14th Army was reinforced with arriving formations. By the start of the advance it numbered five rifle corps (two of them light), which included eight rifle divisions, six brigades (including one tank brigade), and one fortified area. In the army there were 97,000 men, 2,103 guns and mortars 76 mm caliber and greater, and 126 tanks and assault guns. Its operations were to be supported by the main forces of the 7th Airborne Army of the front as well as the air forces of the Northern Fleet, which had 1,000 airplanes in all.[1] Our forces exceeded the enemy's by 1.8 times in men, 2.7 times in guns and mortars, and 6.1 times in aircraft.

The commander of the 14th Army, Lt. Gen. V.I. Shcherbakov, made the decision to strike the main blow with the rifle corps from the area south of Lake Chapr in the general direction of Luostari - Petsamo, and with the /369
light corps to deeply circle the right flank of the enemy. The army's objective was to rout the opposing units and, developing the advance in the northwestern direction, in cooperation with the brigades of marine infantry of the Northern defensive region advancing from Sredniy Peninsula, to encircle and destroy the enemy grouping in the region southwest of the inhabited area of Titovka Reka and liberate Petsamo. The troops were then to develop the advance with the goal of completing the rout of the enemy and liberating the entire region of Petsamo. This decision ensured that blows would be struck in the most vulnerable spot in the German fascist grouping and made it possible to bring the main forces of the army by the shortest route to the area of Luostari and Petsamo.

In accordance with the general plan, to support the 14th Army the commander of the Northern Fleet, Adm. A.G. Golovko, decided to breach the defense on the isthmus of Sredniy Peninsula using units of marine infantry with the support of shore and naval artillery and also an amphibious assault force, which he planned to land on the shore of Malaya Volokovaya Bay. After that the marine infantry was to seize Titovka Reka - Petsamo road, cut off the enemy's lines of retreat from the line of the Zapadnaya Litsa River, and,

---

[1] IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #17936, p. 723.

joining the troops of the 14th Army, develop the advance on Petsamo. The surface ships, submarines and air force of the fleet were assigned to disrupt the marine communications of the enemy along the northern coast of Norway, in the sector of Varanger-fjord - Hammerfest, and blockade the ports of Petsamo and Kirkenes.

The specific natural and climatic conditions of the Arctic presented special requirements for the logistical support of the troops. Due to the absence of railroads the delivery of material resources was effected by truck, water transport and horses. Reindeer were also used. By the start of the offensive in the 14th Army there were up to 3 ammunition allotments, 2-3 fuel issues, provisions for 7 days and fodder for 14 days. In addition a supply of provisions for 10 days was created in the supply depots in the Murmansk area. The personnel of the army received winter equipment - three-quarter length sheepskin coats, fur hats, warm underclothing and gauntlets. The soldiers were also supplied with alcohol burners and chemical heaters. In the starting area hospitals were set up, planned for 17,000 wounded and sick.

Operative, political and logistical preparations for the operation were completed within the designated time. The soldiers and commanders were full of resolution to rout the German fascist forces and throw them out of the Soviet Arctic.

The offensive of the 14th Army began on the morning of October 7. After artillery preparation the formations of the 131st and 99th rifle corps breached the main zone of defense, forced the Titovka River on the move and seized beachheads on its west bank. Because of complex meteorological conditions the air force began its military operations only in the second half of the day. On October 8 and 9 the units of the assault group of the army, developing the advance, broke in the second zone of defense. The left flank 126th rifle corps, circling the enemy from the rear and meeting no strong resistance, broke through by evening of October 9 to the area of the road junction 9 kilometers west of Luostari.

As the result of three days of battle the troops of the army, in spite of the fierce resistance and frequent counterattacks of the enemy in separate sectors, breached the tactical zone in the direction of the main blow and created conditions for an advance on Petsamo and Luostari. The enemy, having borne heavy losses, was forced to retreat under the blows of our troops in the western direction to Petsamo and Luostari. The right flank formations of the 14th Army went over to his pursuit.

On the night of October 10 the ships of the Northern Fleet landed an assault force on the south shore of Malaya Volokovaya Bay - the 63rd brigade of marine infantry under the command of Col. A.M. Krylov, which attacked the flank of the enemy units occupying the defense in that area. On the following morning on the isthmus of Sredniy Peninsula the 12th brigade of marine infantry under the command of Col. V.V. Rassokhin went over to the offensive. Breaking the enemy's resistance on Musta-Tunturi Ridge, it joined the units of the 63rd brigade. Both brigades began to move successfully toward Petsamo. /370

In the direction of the main blow the troops of the 14th Army, advancing rapidly from the east, southeast and west, seized the important road junction of Luostari on October 12 and continued to develop the advance in the western and northwestern directions. On October 14 they engaged in battle for Petsamo. Having overcome the enemy's stubborn resistance, on the night of October 15 with the support of units of the Northern Fleet, formations of the assault group of the army forced the Petsamo-ioki River and seized the important center of defense, Petsamo. A large part in the liberation of the city was played by the assault force landed by the Northern Fleet in the port of Linakhamari (10 kilometers north of Petsamo). By evening of October 15 our troops had progressed to a depth of 50-60 kilometers and broken through to the line of Lakes Nyasyukkyayarivi, Lyuppeyarvi, and Pil'guyarvi [transl. from Russian]. In the course of these encounters the 14th Army, in cooperation with the ships and units of the Northern Fleet with the support of the 7th Airborne Army, inflicted great damage on the units of the 19th mountain rifle corps and threw them back to the west and northwest of Petsamo and Luostari. Favorable conditions were created for the development of the advance to the border of Norway.

In this situation the commander of the troops of the front clarified the objectives of the 14th Army, demanding that with rapid operations it rout the remnants of the 19th mountain rifle corps and the arriving reserves of the 20th Army. In the event of the retreat of the enemy forces to the territory of Norway and Finland the army was to develop pursuit in the directions of Kirkenes and Nikel'-Nautsi and complete their rout. The Northern Fleet was to prevent the evacuation of the enemy by sea with operations on marine communications and an amphibious assault landing, and also to support the advance of the ground forces.

On October 18 the army renewed the offensive. Northwest of Petsamo units of the 131st rifle corps crossed the national border and developed the advance on the Norwegian city of Kirkenes, seized the inhabited areas of Sturbukt and Tarnet on October 22. At this time the main forces of the army entered Akhmalakhti and Nikel', cut off the Kirkenes - Nautsi road and broke through to the national border of Norway. Forcing the lakes west and northwest of Akhmalakhti they seized the Norwegian inhabited areas of Fossgord and Trangsund. As the result of these operations the enemy grouping was divided into two parts, one of which was retreating to the north and the other to the southwest.

On the order of the commander of the front the main forces of the 14th Army were to advance on Kirkenes and Neyden, and two rifle corps (one of them light) in the southwestern direction toward Pitkyayarvi - Nautsi. Fulfilling this assignment, on October 25 after stubborn fighting our troops occupied a major center of defense, the city and port of Kirkenes - the main supply base of the 20th Army in the Arctic. On October 27 the units of the 126th light rifle corps advancing in the northwestern direction seized Neyden. The units operating in the southwestern direction broke through on the same day to the area of Nautsi. On October 29 the Soviet troops had completely liberated the Petsamo region from the German fascist invaders.

The population of the northern regions of Norway warmly greeted the Soviet troops and helped them however they could. Thus, for example, during the fighting in the approaches to Kirkenes, the Norwegian fishermen M. Hensen, T. Palo, P. Nielsen and others conveyed soldiers of the Red Army in their motor

boats across the Elvenes-fjord (southeast of Kirkenes). Fisherman F. Must led a battalion of marine infantry to the Germans' rear along a path not shown on the map, and provided the soldiers with a boat to investigate the entrance to the fjord and establish if there were mine obstacles there. In the fighting in the city itself, youths and girls provided first aid for the wounded under enemy fire and carried them out to safe places.

In connection with the expulsion of the German fascist occupiers from /371
the northern regions of Norway the Norwegian government located in London sent a special message to the government of the USSR, in which the operations of the Red Army were rated highly and it was stated that the liberation of the country would lead to the further strengthening of friendship between the peoples of the Soviet Union and Norway. The Soviet military powers did not interfere in the internal affairs of the Norwegian people. In Northern Norway they rendered great assistance to the local authorities in restoring the ruined economy.

On November 9, 1944 Headquarters of the Supreme High Command ordered the Soviet forces to go over to the defense on the line west of Kirkenes - Pityayarvi - Nautsi, having covering and reconnaissance units on the line of Neyden - Virtaniemi (southwest of Nautsi).[1]

In the aims of rapid liberation of the country from the occupiers the re-formation of the Norwegian armed forces began in the territory that had been cleared of the enemy on the orders of the Norwegian government.

Under the yoke of the foreign invaders the people of Norway throughout the war had related with great sympathy to the heroic struggle of the Soviet people against the Hitlerite horde, and rejoiced at every success of the Red Army. The Norwegian patriots accomplished many heroic feats in the struggle against fascism. They demolished military plants and arsenals, sank military ships and vessels transporting ammunition and military stores, destroyed communications, and thwarted mobilization into the Quisling army.

---

[1] IML. Docs. and Materials of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #9493, pp. 265-266.

It is well known that during the period of the war the Hitlerites had created concentration camps in Norway where Red Army soldiers wounded in battle and taken prisoner were kept under unbearable conditions. The patriots of Norway attempted to help them in spite of deadly danger. Thus, for instance, Norwegian citizens, the husband and wife Maria and Reinhold Estrem, risking their lives, helped prisoners to arrange escapes from fascist concentration camps. M. Estrem organized a collection of food and clothing among the population of the little town of Os and delivered all of it to the camps. "Our Russian mama" the Soviet prisoners of war called Maria Estrem.[1]

After the end of the Second World War the Soviet troops, having completed their liberating mission, left the territory of Northern Norway. The workers saw them go with feelings of warmth. The Norwegian newspaper "Aftenposten" wrote then, "The Russians were the first to come to us and the first to leave us. They had finished their business. The Norwegians will never forget what the Russians did for them and for the common cause of victory over the enemy."

The victories of the Red Army in the Arctic had great military and political significance. The Soviet troops completely cleared the occupied part of the territory of the Murmansk region, the economically important Petsamo area and the ice free ports on the Barents Sea. The Red Army rendered assistance to the Norwegian people, liberating the northeastern regions of the country from the German fascist occupiers.

---

[1] In October 1958, on the invitation of the Soviet Committee of War Veterans, Mr. and Mrs. Estrem visited the USSR. In Moscow warm reunions took place with the former prisoners at the concentration camps, who had remained alive thanks to the concern of M. Estrem. On November 11, 1958 the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet awarded Maria and Reinhold Estrem the Order of the Patriotic War First Degree. On February 2, 1962 14 other Norwegian citizens were awarded orders and medals of the Soviet Union for the courage they had shown in rendering assistance to Soviet prisoners of war.

In the course of military operations a major group of enemy troops was routed. The formations of the 19th mountain rifle corps lost up to 75 percent of their personnel and all of their military equipment. The enemy fleet lost its bases on the coast of the Barents Sea, as a result of which its activity on Allied communications in the northern seas decreased. /372

The successes in the Arctic, along with the victories in Karelia, on the Karelian isthmus and in the Baltic region, promoted the consolidation of relations between the Soviet Union and the countries of Scandinavia. They exerted an enormous effect on the development of the liberation struggle of the Norwegian people against the Hitlerite occupiers and their underlings, the Quislings. "The Norwegian people," the Chairman of the Communist Party of Norway Emil Levlien said at the XIX Congress of the CPSU, "keep deep in their hearts a feeling of warm gratitude toward the Soviet people and the Soviet Army for defeating the Hitlerite army, for the direct liberation of the northern part of our country from the fascist occupiers."[1]

With the liberation of the Petsamo region the long fight of the Red Army in the Far North ended. On December 5, 1944 the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR instituted the medal "For the defense of the Soviet Arctic." It was awarded to all participants in the defense of the Arctic - the servicemen of the Red Army, Navy and NKVD forces, as well as individuals of the civil population who had taken direct part in the defense.

[1] Greeting to the XIXth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union from Foreign Communist and Worker's Parties. Moscow, Izd-vo "Pravda," 1952, p. 77.

CHAPTER 13

THE DEFEAT OF THE GERMAN FASCIST FORCES IN HUNGARY AND ITS WITHDRAWAL FROM THE WAR

1. Hungary on the eve of liberation

In the fall of 1944 the Soviet troops in the Southwestern theater of /373
military operations, having successfully completed their mission in Rumania and Bulgaria, broke through on a wide front on the Rumanian-Hungarian, Rumanian-Yugoslav and Bulgarian-Yugoslav borders and began offensive operations in the territory of Hungary, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia. The Soviet Supreme High Command concentrated its main efforts here on defeating the German fascist forces in the territory of Hungary, which by that time was the only ally of Hitlerite Germany in Europe. However, while the Red Army liberated Rumania and Bulgaria in a very short time, the military operations in Hungary dragged on for six months. This was due to the fierce resistance of the large group of German fascist forces in Hungary and the political situation in the country.

The result of over three years of participation by Hungary in the war against the Soviet Union was the total national and economic enslavement of the Hungarian people to fascist Germany, increased exploitation of the working class and the peasantry, and the loss of hundreds of thousands of men on the Soviet-German front. The ruling classes of Hungary had established a cruel dictatorship and in the 25 years of the existence of Horthy's fascist regime had suppressed any attempts at resistance by the people. Attempting to preserve the reactionary social order, they determinedly remained oriented toward the German bayonets and held the army firmly in their hands.

The Hungarian bourgeoisie, landholders and their political parties had taken the side of the German fascists from the very start of Germany's war against the Soviet Union, plunging the people into the anti-Soviet war. It is true that after the defeat of the Hungarian forces on the Central Don in the winter of 1943 the belligerent passion of the ruling classes had cooled and hesitation had begun among them. Nevertheless they continued to lead the country along the path of war.

For some time the Hungarian bourgeoisie was able to poison with chauvinism considerable strata of the urban bourgeoisie, the peasantry, the intelligentsia and even some of the workers. It was particularly aided in this by the right wing of the Social Democratic Party (Peyerists). K. Peyer[1] [transl. from Russian] and his backers supported the anti-Soviet war from the first days and began a struggle against the Communists. /374

Another large political organization of Hungary, the Smallholders Party, representing the interests of the kulaks, part of the middle peasantry, a certain part of the intelligentsia and the middle strata of the city, practically ceased its activity in 1941 and renewed it only in the summer of 1943. Attempting to lead the movement for independence that was beginning in the country, this party demanded a break with Germany. The main goal of the party was the struggle to preserve the existing regime. Its leadership was oriented toward the ruling circles of England and the USA and enjoyed their support. In the fall of 1943 the Smallholders Party and the Social Democratic

[1] K. Peyer, who strangled the Hungarian Revolution of 1919, was the most eminent representative of the right wing of the Social Democratic Party and its leader during the war.

Party completed a political alliance for joint action. However, they avoided unity of action with the Communist Party and its ally, the National Peasant's Party, in every way they could.

Only the Communist Party of Hungary, which had been underground for many years, branded the war even in its first days as aggressive and predatory on the part of the fascist bloc. In its central publication and in special pamphlets the Communist Party called on the progressive forces of the nation to unite for an independent, democratic Hungary, to break with the Hitlerites, to reject the Three Powers Pact,[1] overthrow the anti-national government and form a genuinely national government, to immediately concluded peace and to execute land reforms.[2] Advancing slogans of liquidation of the large landholder system and dividing the landholders' lands among the peasants, the Communist Party thereby combined the struggle against the war of invasion with the anti-fascist struggle. The Communist Party of Hungary gave a start to the patriotic movement for the independence of the country.

Working under the extremely difficult conditions of the underground, the Communist Party capably combined legal with illegal forms of activity (anti-war demonstrations in October 1941 at the eternal flame of Battyani [transl. from Russ.] and the graves of Kossuth and Tanchich [transl. from Russ.], and the utilization of legal newspapers.) The police literally hunted the communists. Hundreds of party members were thrown into prisons, and many were executed, including the secretary of the Central Committee Z. Shenkherts and the prominent party officials F. Rozha and E. Shagvary [names transl. from Russ]. In spite of great losses in the party cadres, the Central Committee of the party located in Hungary did not cease its operation. The Foreign Committee of the party, which consisted of political emigrants living in the USSR, rendered effective assistance to the anti-fascist struggle in the country. It conducted systematic propaganda and transmitted information through the "Kossuth" radio station, which operated in the territory of the Soviet Union.

---

[1] The pact, which was concluded in September 1940 between Germany, Japan and Italy, to which Hungary was added, signaled the final formation of the bloc of fascist states of the aggressors.

[2] See Dezhyo Nemes. "The Liberation of Hungary." Moscow, Izd-vo Inostrannoy Literatury, 1957, p. 46-48.

The National Peasant's Party, which united the poor peasantry and a segment of the progressive intelligentsia, supported the struggle of the Communist Party.

Even in 1942 the Communist Party advanced a developed program for a united national front. It devoted enormous attention to the unity of action of labor union worker-communists and Social Democrats, to declaring economic demands, and conducting strikes. In a number of regions the unity of the working class had essentially already been formed in the pre-war years. Under war conditions the joint struggle of the communists and Social Democrats at enterprises continued to develop. The workers' actions began with economic demands, but they inevitably became connected with antiwar actions. On a nationwide scale unity of the Communist and Social Democratic Parties could not be achieved for a long period of time.

The main cause of the delay in the formation of a national front to /375 struggle against fascism was the traitorous position of the right-wing leaders of the Social Democratic Party and the Smallholders Party, who did not wish to establish unity of action with the communists. The development of the mass people's movement was also restrained by the cruel terror and pernicious fascist propaganda to which the Hungarian people had long been subjected.

The formation of a national front was also prolonged in connection with the incorrect decision of the CC Communist Party of Hungary in June 1943 to formally dissolve the party. This measure was executed, as is explained in a Hungarian Communist Party document, in order "not to hinder the broad anti-fascist union of the workers with the petty bourgeoisie and bourgeois elements."[1] At the same time the Central Committee announced that the party would continue the struggle under a different name. Several weeks later the illegal Communist Party stepped forward in the political arena under the name of the Peace Party. The Hungarian communists continued their activity. But the decision to formally dissolve the Communist Party, which had a quarter-century history of heroic struggle, was erroneous, because it did not promote unification of the forces of the Hungarian people. The communists spoke out as before against war. They were

[1] PI Archivun. Röpiratgyüjtemeny III, 1/1944/IX/1755-1.

the organizers of strikes, sabotage of the economic and military enactments of the Horthy government, and daily conducted anti-fascist agitation and propaganda. The communists proposed to the leadership of the Social Democratic Party and the Smallholders Party that they jointly organize nationwide armed resistance. However, the latter did not accept this proposal, since they calculated on Horthy and his government ensuring Hungary's withdrawal from the war "at an appropriate moment."

Before the approach of the Soviet forces to the border of Hungary the Hungarian people offered resistance to fascist Germany and the regime of Horthy largely by sabotaging military-industrial enterprises and refusing to supply agricultural products, organizing diversions at plants and on railroads, conducting strikes, and frustrating the military measures of the Horthy government.

The conditions for the activities of the supports of the antifascist movement in Hungary became still more complex in the spring of 1944. On March 19 the Hitlerites openly occupied the country and demanded that Horthy form a new government acceptable to them. Horthy did so, placing D. Sztojay, who had long been ambassador to Berlin, at the head of the government. Under the dictation of the Gestapo the government banned the Social Democratic Party and the Smallholders Party, and arrested a considerable number of the leaders of those parties, as well as many members of Parliament.

However, repression did not change the situation. Sabotage continued. Attempts to create a solid political base for the Sztojay government by organizing a reactionary "Unity" party, which was to include pro-German elements of the semi-government party "Hungarian Life," the "Renewal of Hungary" party and the "Crossed Arrows" party,[1] suffered failure.

Immediately after the occupation of the country by the German fascist troops the Peace Party turned to all patriots with a summons: "In the hour of

[1] "Crossed Arrows" was a party of Hungarian fascists, "Nilaskeresztes part" (Nilashists).

deadly peril the entire nation must unite in a single Hungarian front and take part in the common struggle."[1]

In the situation that had developed the leaders of the Social Democratic Party and the Smallholders Party agreed with the proposal of the communists of cooperation. In May 1944 they joined in the united Hungarian Front. Of the three parties of the Hungarian Front only the Peace Party possessed actively operating illegal organizations. After that time the peoples' resistance increased considerably; however, on the fundamental question - preparations for an armed struggle - the Social Democratic Party and the Smallholders Party did not support the communists, who were calling for the organization of a partisan movement. /376

The formation of the united Hungarian Front was an important event in the life of the country. In a joint address by the three parties the Hungarian people learned of the basic demands of the Hungarian front's program - the expulsion of the German invaders and their minions, completion of a peace with the Allies and the creation of the bases for a democratic and free Hungary.[2]

In spite of the refusal of the Social Democratic Party and the Smallholders Party to develop preparations for an armed struggle, the Hungarian Communists began to form partisan detachments. The first appeared in Hungary in September and October of 1944. At the end of September in the Salgotarjan coal basin military operations against the German fascist occupiers were led by a partisan detachment under the command of S. Nogrady. In the mountains of Buk operated the partisan group of M. Syony, and in the mountains of Northern Transylvania fought three partisan detachments. In Budapest and its outskirts armed groups consisting largely of young laborers and employed people fought successfully. The group formed by the Ujpest communists was distinguished by particular activity. In Miskolc under the guidance of communists a partisan group was organized which, in addition to military activity,

---

[1] Quot. from D. Nemes. "The Liberation of Hungary," p. 65.

[2] PI Archivum. Röpiratgyüjtemeny III, 18(1944) n/2373-1.

conducted propaganda work at the war plants of Miskolc and Diosgyor. The largest was the Ferenc Rakotsy partisan detachment, which completed a number of major diversions in the Hitlerites' rear.[1]

Although the operations of the Hungarian partisans were of a limited nature, nevertheless they exerted a great political and moral effect on the workers. The very fact of the existence of partisan detachments and the fame of their activity promoted increased resistance by the Hungarian people. But on the whole antifascist armed resistance in Hungary did not acquire wide scope.

The major defeats of the German fascist forces on the Soviet-German front in the summer of 1944, the withdrawal of Rumania and Bulgaria from the war on the side of Hitlerite Germany, and the opening of the second front in Western Europe fundamentally changed the military-political situation in Hungary. In connection with the events in Rumania, on August 25 the Hungarian government discussed the question of the country's further participation in the war. This discussion reflected the fear and confusion in the ruling circles. One group of members of the government stood for continuation of the war on the side of Germany, another for occupation of the country by English troops. The government passed a resolution not to allow the Red Army to enter Hungary, with the help of the German forces, and to win time in order to give the English forces the opportunity to occupy the country.[2] Such calculations were by no means accidental. The Hungarian government believed that Churchill had not rejected his "Balkan plan" and that as the Soviet troops moved westward he would attempt all the more urgently to forestall their breakthrough into the Balkans. Furthermore, the ruling cliques of Hungary were aware that Churchill knew of their intention to resist the Red Army, but to capitulate before the British forces.

The rapid breakthrough of the Soviet forces to the center of the Balkans and the Danube basin increased the anxiety of the ruling circles of England

---

[1] See A. Magyarorszagi Munkasmozgalom 1939-1945. Communist Party History Institute of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party Central Committee. Budapest, 1958-1959, 150-152 old.

[2] See D. Nemes. "The Liberation of Hungary," p. 27.

and the USA. The second Quebec Conference, which took place in September 1944, at which Churchill and Roosevelt reached agreement on several questions of the conduct of the war, showed clearly which position England and the USA held in relation to the countries of Southeastern Europe. Setting out for the conference, the British Prime Minister said to his military advisors that he was particularly interested in the question of the Balkans. "I was very anxious," he said, "to forestall the Russians in certain areas of Central /377 Europe. The Hungarians, for instance, had expressed their intention of resisting the Soviet advance, but would surrender to a British force if it could arrive in time. If the Germans either evacuated Italy or retired to the Alps I much desired that Alexander[1] should be enabled to make his amphibious thrust across the Adriatic, seize and occupy the Istrian peninsula, and try to reach Vienna before the Russians."[2]

On the first day of the conference Churchill declared, "I had always been attracted by a right-handed movement to give Germany a stab in the Adriatic armpit. Our objective should be Vienna... I had given considerable thought to aiding this movement by capturing Istria and occupying Trieste and Fiume... Another reason for this right-handed movement was the rapid encroachment of the Russians into the Balkan peninsula and the dangerous spread of Soviet influence there."[3]

The Americans were generally in agreement with this decision. "The Conference has opened in a blaze of friendship," Churchill informed Eden in a telegram. "...We are to have all the landing-craft in the Mediterranean to work up in the Northern Adriatic in any amphibious plan which can be made for Istria, Trieste, etc. The idea of our going to Vienna, if the war lasts long enough and if other people do not get there first, is fully accepted here."[4]

However, while the Americans agreed with Churchill's proposal to land British troops in Greece, they tied the development of military operations in Istria to the successful completion of the campaign in Italy. Therefore, at the conference Roosevelt did not give his sanction for an offensive in Istria as long as military operations were still continuing in Italy.

---

[1] The commander in chief at that time of the Allied armed forces in Italy.

[2] Winston S. Churchill. "The Second World War." Vol. VI, London, 1954, p. 131.

[3] Ibid, pp. 133-134.

[4] Ibid, p. 137.

Churchill and his military advisors believed that the Balkans were the shortest route for a breakthrough to Hungary and Austria. However, In September 1944, when the Soviet troops had broken through to the southwestern sector of the Rumanian-Hungarian border and to the Bulgarian-Yugoslav border, only the following routes to Budapest and Vienna remained for the Anglo-American forces: through Greece and further to the north, or through the ports of Trieste and Fiume to the Ljubljanas. Only from there could they break through to Hungary, and then through the "Vienna Corridor" to the central regions of Austria, through Prague to Berlin, and through Munich to Southern Germany.

Such were the plans of the ruling circles of the USA and England in relation to the countries of Southeastern Europe. While the Soviet forces were liberating the peoples of these countries from fascist oppression in heavy battles at the cost of great sacrifices, the English and American imperialists were largely interested in one question - how to "forestall the Russians in certain regions of Central Europe."

This is why the Hungarian government, which was aware of the main features of these plans, passed the resolution to prevent the Red Army from entering Hungary, with the help of the German forces.

The powerful blow of the Soviet forces in Rumania, the withdrawal of that country from the war on the side of Germany and the declaration of war not only in Germany but also on Hungary, led to the fall of D. Sztojan's cabinet. On August 29 a new government was formed, which was led by Col. Gen. G. Lakatos. However, the policy of the Horthy government did not change. On September 7 and 8 the question of withdrawing from the war was again discussed, first by the Crown Council of Hungary, then by the government, but the resolution was not passed. Consequently the ruling circles of Hungary purposely continued to betray the national interests of their country.

The military success of the Soviet forces complicated the political situation in Hungary more and more. /378 In the last third of September the troops of the right wing and center of the 2nd Ukrainian front conducted military operations in the northern part of Transylvania, and the troops of the left

wing broke through to the southeastern border of the country.

Under these conditions the head of the Hungarian government, Horthy, decided to turn to the USA and England with a request to conclude a truce. On September 22 in secret from the Germans Col.Gen. I. Naday set out in an airplane for the Allied Headquarters located at Caserta (near Naples). However, there he was told that "Hungary must address the Russians..."[1] This was due to the fact that at the end of September the Red Army had already entered Hungarian territory and at that time truce negotiations could be begun only with the Soviet command group. Horthy was forced to turn to the Soviet authorities. On October 1 a Hungarian delegation let by Col.Gen. T. Farago arrived in Moscow for the negotiations.[2] It received instructions from Horthy to sign the truce agreement if the Soviet Union would agree to the participation of the Americans and British in the occupation of Hungary and "the free withdrawal of the German forces."[3]

The Hitlerite command group, having learned from two ministers of the Horthy cabinet of the plans of the Hungarian ruling circles to "betray Germany," immediately transferred large tank forces to Budapest.[4] In addition, a special order of October 4 to the troops of army group "South" called for a number of measures to cut off any actions against the German army.[5] Monitoring of the radio and wire communications of the Hungarian commanders and authorities and observation of the Hungarian high command through communications officers were established.

The Hungarian government did not dare to oppose these actions by the occupiers in any way. Furthermore, it did not wish to offer the Germans any resistance. Horthy's clique feared the arrival of the Red Army, since it well understood that that would create conditions for the development of the class struggle in the country, which would ultimately lead to the liquidation of the domination of the bourgeoisie and landholders.

---

[1] Quot. from Nikolaus Horthy. Ein Leben für Ungarn. Bonn, 1953, S. 278-279.

[2] Archives of MD USSR, col. 243, inv. 265388, div. 2, p. 332.

[3] N. Horthy. Ein Leben für Ungarn, S. 282.

[4] IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #13631, p. 191.

[5] Ibid, Inv. #11635, p. 322.

In connection with the worsening of the military-political situation in Hungary and the Red Army's breakthrough to its borders in September 1944, Hungarian communists passed a resolution to seriously improve the work of the party. This had a positive influence on the further political development of the country. The Peace Party declared formal self-dissolution,[1] since it was decided to continue work again under the name of the Communist Party.[2] In a leaflet advising of the self-dissolution of the Peace Party it was stated that the occupation of Hungary and the fact that the war had come to its territory clearly showed the insufficiency of the means and forms of struggle used by the party. In addition to conducting broad educational, political work, it was now necessary above all to mobilize the masses and draw them into the struggle.[3]

In the proclamation of the Communist Party declaring its restoration it was emphasized that in Hungary "the internal struggle against the German invader has fallen strategically behind the struggle of the other peoples of Europe,"[4] and that only a party standing at the head of the working class could be the leader of the people's struggle for freedom. "Throughout Europe, led by Communist Parties, the working class is directing the national liberation struggle of the peoples... and our working class, led by the Communist Party, must show the way at this most crucial point in the history of our class and our country," it was observed in the proclamation. "Worker!" it said further. "The Communist Party calls you to the struggle! Do not wait for special instructions and the arrangement of contacts! Do not work! Strike, sabotage! Go into the street, speak out for peace! Prepare for a general strike and armed struggle against the Germans!"[5] /379

An important event in the political life of Hungary at that period was the proclamation of the Communist Party to the Hungarian people, which was

---

[1] PI. Archivum Röpiratgyüjtemeny III, 16/1944/IX/2362

[2] From that time the Party of Hungarian Communists began to be called the Hungarian Communist Party (HCP).

[3] PI. Archivum Röpiratgyüjtemeny III, 16/1944/IX/2362

[4] Ibid, III, 1/1944/IX/1755-1.

[5] Ibid,

published at the end of September. In it it was stated that the ultimate goal of the communists was the building of Socialism, but the way to it lay through the struggle with fascism and the Hungarian reaction. In the proclamation two indivisible tasks were advanced: "the struggle for an independent Hungary through expulsion of the imperialist occupiers," and "the struggle to create a democratic Hungary by overthrowing the Hungarian reaction." The Communist Party turned the attention of the workers to the need to establish correct relations with the Red Army, which had stepped onto Hungarian soil. Citing the experience of Rumania, Bulgaria and Finland, the party asserted that "the Soviet Union will leave untouched the sovereignty of the Hungarian people, its right to resolve for itself the question of its economic and social system." Addressing the Social Democratic Party and the labor unions, the Communist Party showed the importance of a tight fighting unity of workers - Social Democrats and Communists. It attached great importance to the union of workers and peasants. The Communist Party called the Hungarian Front as well as all workers to active struggle, stressing the need to form a government of the Hungarian Front.[1]

In September considerable changes also took place in the Hungarian Front. On the proposal of the Communist Party it accepted into its composition the National Peasants Party, a loyal ally of the communists. The four parties now united in the Hungarian Front (Communist, Social Democrat, Smallholders and National Peasants) chose an executive committee and began the formation of local organizations.

Serious changes were made in the policy of the Social Democratic Party, in the leadership of which left-wing Socialists, who favored a united front with the Communists, began to predominate. On October 10 the Communist and Social Democratic Parties concluded an agreement on a united front, which considerably strengthened the position of the working class.

On the whole Hungary's political situation by the end of 1944 was unstable. The Soviet command group, taking into consideration the disorder and hesitations in the ruling circles and the operative-strategic situation, made a decision to begin military operations in the territory of the country at once.

[1] PI Archivum Röpiratgyüjtemény, III. 1/1944/IX/1781-1.

2. The expulsion of the enemy from the eastern regions of Hungary in October 1944

After completion of the operation in Rumania the troops of the 2nd Ukrainian front - commander Marshal of the Soviet Union R. Ya. Malinovskiy, Military Council member Col. Gen. of Tank Forces I. Z. Susaykov - broke through at the end of September in the northern part of Transylvania on the line of Prislop - Tirgu-Mures - south of Cluj, in the southwestern sector of the /380
Rumanian-Hungarian pre-war border and on the Rumanian-Yugoslav border up to Bela Crkva (Map 13). The total length of the front line was 800 kilometers.

By the start of the offensive of the Soviet forces in Hungary the 2nd Ukrainian front had received considerable reinforcements from Headquarters Reserves for the rifle divisions, as well as mechanized, cavalry and artillery formations. Its composition included the 40th, 7th Guards, 4th Rumanian, 27th, 53rd, 46th,[1] 1st Rumanian, and 6th Guards Tank Armies, the 18th tank corps, two mounted-mechanized groups[2] and the 5th Airborne Army. In all the front had 40 rifle divisions, 2 fortified areas, 3 tank, 2 mechanized and 3 cavalry corps, and 1 tank brigade. In the front there were 750 tanks and assault guns, 10,200 guns and mortars (not counting guns under 76 mm caliber and rocket artillery), and 1,100 airplanes.[3] Twenty-two Rumanian divisions included in the composition of the 1st and 4th Rumanian Armies were in operative subordination to the commander of the 2nd Ukrainian front.

To the right of the 2nd Ukrainian front the troops of the 4th Ukrainian front broke through at the beginning of October to the watershed of the Carpathian range in a 320-kilometer sector - east of Duklya Pass up to the Rumanian border, that is to the border of the Trans-Carpathian Ukraine. The 4th Ukrainian front included the 1st Guards and 18th Armies, 17th detached Guards rifle corps and the 8th Airborne Army.

To the left of the 2nd Ukrainian front the troops of the 3rd Ukrainian front located in Bulgaria were deployed on the border of Yugoslavia in a 400-kilometer sector from the curve of the Danube south of Orshov to the Bulgarian-Greek border. On September 28 the troops of the front, in the composition of which Bulgarian divisions also operated, began the advance jointly with the People's Liberation Army of Yugoslavia in the general direction of Belgrade.

---

[1] The 46th Army arrived from the 3rd Ukrainian front on September 20.

[2] The mounted-mechanized group of Lt. Gen. I.A. Pliyev consisted of the 4th and 6th Guards cavalry, and 7th mechanized corps. The mounted-mechanized group of Lt. Gen. S.I. Gorshkov included the 5th Guards cavalry and 23rd tank corps.

[3] Archive of MD USSR, col. 240, inv. 73765, div. 41/4, pp. 54-63.

Before the 2nd Ukrainian front army group "South"[1] (commander Col.Gen. Friessner), which included the 8th and 6th German Armies, the 2nd and 3rd Hungarian Armies (29 divisions and 5 brigades in all)[2] and 3 divisions of army group "F," occupied the defense. Army group "South" was supported by the 4th Air Force, which had approximately 550 airplanes.[3]

A part of the forces of the 1st German Panzer Army and the 1st Hungarian Army from army group "A" were positioned before the 4th Ukrainian front.

The formation of the enemy forces according to the defense in the northern part of Transylvania and in Hungary before the 2nd Ukrainian front was not deep. All of the armies of army group "South" except the 6th had single-echelon tactical formation.

A feature of the grouping of enemy forces was the fact that the Hungarian divisions were unconnected and operated in the composition of the German corps. When they were deployed compactly, as was the case in the 2nd and 3rd Hungarian Armies, the commanders of the latter were completely subordinate to the German command group. Furthermore, the Hungarian formations were "drawn to a thread" on the front, far from Budapest. In the depths of the /381
country there were almost no Hungarian troops on which the government could rely if it should risk worsening relations with Germany. Near Budapest the Hitlerite command group concentrated considerable German Panzer forces.

Simultaneously with the concentration of a major grouping of forces the fascist command group ordered that defensive lines be rapidly constructed. The first of these was erected on the right bank of the Tisza, the second along the right bank of the Danube, with a strong bridgehead on the east bank in the area of Budapest. The third line was planned to be prepared on the Hungarian-Austrian border and the eastern spurs of the Maly and Bely Carpathians. Construction was also planned of a defensive line between the city of Erd and Lake Balaton, and further along the Drava River. This line was

---

[1] Army group "South Ukraine," which had operated previously before the 2nd and Ukrainian fronts, was renamed army group "South" on September 23.

[2] Coll. Mats. on the Composition of the Forces of Fascist Germany, 4th Ed., p. 178.

[3] The 4th Air Force also supported the operations of the troops facing the 4th Ukrainian front in the Carpathians with part of its forces.

intended to cover the southwestern approaches to Budapest and also the oil producing region of Nagykanizsa. The enemy's defense was poorly prepared in the respect of engineering. Even the first zone had only two or three trenches with a total depth of 2.5-3 kilometers.

The plan of the enemy command group was to hold Hungary in its hands with aggressive operations. For this it planned to strike two successive blows with the forces of army group "South" in the western regions of Rumania and on the Transylvanian plateau, to defeat the Soviet forces that broke through there, throw them back beyond the Southern Carpathians and close to them the exits to the northern part of Transylvania and to the Mid-Danube Plain.[1] Simultaneously it was decided to begin to withdraw the German forces from Greece, Albania and the southern regions of Yugoslavia, since they were threatened by the troops of the 3rd Ukrainian front and the Bulgarian divisions that had broken through to the Bulgarian-Yugoslav border. In developing its plan the Hitlerite command group proceeded from the erroneous assumption that after such a rapid breakthrough to the west in August and September the Soviet troops would not be able to repel the Germans' counterstrikes and continue offensive operations.

Having evaluated the military-political and strategic situation created by the beginning of October 1944 on the south flank of the Soviet-German front, Headquarters of the Supreme High Command set before the Soviet troops the task of routing the German fascist grouping in Hungary and taking the country out of the war on the side of Germany. This would permit the Red Army to break through to the western border of Hungary and begin an advance in the direction of Vienna and the southern borders of Germany. Headquarters assigned the 2nd Ukrainian front with the cooperation of the 4th Ukrainian front to complete these missions.[2]

According to the concept of Headquarters of the Supreme High Command, the 2nd Ukrainian front, striking the main blow with its center from the area northwest of the city of Arad on Debrecen and Nyiregyhaza and auxiliary blows

---

[1] IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #13631, pp. 265-266.

[2] Almost simultaneously the objectives for an advance in Yugoslavia were also assigned to the 3rd Ukrainian front. These operations of the front are elucidated in Chapter 14.

on the flanks, was to defeat the main forces of army group "South," clear the eastern regions of Hungary of the enemy and complete the liberation of the northern part of Transylvania. Close cooperation with the adjacent fronts was called for, particularly with the 4th Ukrainian. The latter was to rout the enemy in the Carpathians, seize the region of Uzhgorod - Chop, break through to the upper reaches of the Tisza and completely liberate the Trans-Carpathian Ukraine, which was occupied by Hungary. The operations of the 4th and 2nd Ukrainian fronts were coordinated by the representative of Headquarters, Marshal of the Soviet Union S.K. Timoshenko. It should be noted that even before the 2nd, 3rd and 4th Ukrainian fronts were given their assignments, on Headquarters' orders long-range aircraft struck blows on the most important military targets and major railroad centers in the territory of Hungary. The successful realization of the military assignments by the troops of the 2nd and 4th Ukrainian fronts as well as the liberation of the Belgrade region by the troops of the 3rd Ukrainian front in cooperation with /382 the People's Liberation Army of Yugoslavia should create favorable conditions for making a powerful attack on Budapest.

A very important feature of the offensive in Hungary as opposed to the majority of strategic operations of 1944-1945 was the fact that it was prepared directly during the preceding operation. It is well known what organizational difficulties must be overcome for successful execution of such an operation without a pause in operations. It was necessary for the Soviet command group to reinforce the troops, create powerful new assault groupings, accumulate the necessary quantity of material reserves, organize repairs of damaged fighting equipment, arrange the operation of means of communication in alien territory, resolve questions of civil administration in the liberated regions, and so on. But the Soviet command group and troops overcame all difficulties. This became possible thanks to the colossal organizational work carried out at the concluding stage of the previous operations.

The plan of the offensive operation conducted in October in the territory of Hungary, which received the name "Debrecen," was to rout the enemy grouping in the region of Cluj - Oradea - Debrecen and, developing the offensive to the north in the direction of Nyiregyhaza - Chop, to help the 4th Ukrainian front to seize the region of Uzhgorod - Mukachevo.[1]

[1] Archive of MD USSR, col. 240, inv. 73765, div. 41/3, pp. 2, 12-13, 16-17; div. 41/9, p. 4.

Proceeding from a general concept, the commander of the 2nd Ukrainian front decided to strike the main blow in a narrow zone from the area north of Oradea and northwest of Arad in the direction of Debrecen with the troops of the center: the forces of the 53rd Army commanded by Lt. Gen. I.M. Managarov, the 6-th Guards Tank Army under the command of Col.Gen. of Tank Forces A.G. Kravchenko and the mounted-mechanized group of Lt. Gen. I.A. Pliyev. Two armies of the right wing - the 40th under the command of Lt. Gen. F.F. Zhmachenko and the 7th Guards under the command of Col.Gen. M.S. Shumilov - struck a blow on a wide front with the object of breaking through to the Surduc - Apakhid line. The 27th Army under the command of Col. Gen. S.G. Trofimenko and the 4th Rumanian Army were to advance with the goal of seizing the region of Cluj, developing the advance in the general direction of Zalau, and breaking through to the region of Simlaul-Silvaniei. It was planned that the mounted-mechanized group of Lt. Gen. S.I. Gorshkov concentrated in the zone of the 27th Army would be brought into the battle for the line north of Cluj. It was assigned to break through to the area north of Salau no later than the third day of the advance and then to advance on Satu-Mare and Carej. The troops of the left wing of the front - the 46th Army under the command of Lt. Gen. I. T. Shlemin and the 1st Rumanian Army - were to completely clear the entire territory of Yugoslavia on the right bank of the Tisza, thereby securing the left bank of the assault grouping of the front, and to seize a beachhead near the cities of Szeged, Senta and Becej.

The advance was first scheduled for October 3, then postponed until October 6 because the troops of the main assault grouping had not had time to complete the concentration.

The concept of the operation was distinguished by its decisiveness. It is entirely clear that the success in the direction of the main blow, that is, the breakthrough of the troops of the front to the Tisza west of Debrecen, placed under the threat of encirclement the entire enemy grouping opposing the 4th Ukrainian front and the right wing of the 2nd Ukrainian front.

The 2nd Ukrainian front began the operation with a favorable ratio of forces. However, the length of the front line was approximately 800 kilometers.

In this broad zone advanced only 63 Soviet and Rumanian divisions and two fortified areas. There were 12-13 kilometers to each division. The operative density was approximately two times lower than in the Belorussian, L'vov - Sandomierz and Iasi - Kishinyev operations. The terrain of the forthcoming operations was level only south of Oradea. In the remaining sector it had a very rugged, forested mountain relief. This negatively influenced the operations of the Soviet troops. Furthermore, advancing in such a wide zone made control of the troops difficult. /383

An essential feature of the operation was the fact that the troops of the 2nd Ukrainian front were to operate in the territory of three countries. The troops of the right wing were to advance in the northern part of Transylvania where a quite complex political situation had developed. The Rumanian government of Sanatescu and the so-called "historic" parties had conducted a policy here of fanning the flames of national discord. The troops of the center of the front began military operations on the left bank of the Tisza, in Hungary, the government of which was continuing the war against the USSR, which considerably complicated the operations of the Red Army in the territory of the country. Finally, the troops of the left wing of the front were to advance in Yugoslavia, which was our ally, where the population warmly greeted the Soviet troops.

Rear institutions and units conducted a great deal of work to prepare for the operation. The administrative area operated under difficult circumstances. It was necessary not only to satisfy the current needs of the troops at the front, but also to create the supplies necessary to effect a new operation without a pause. The performance of this task was made difficult by the fact that the front had progressed far ahead and the sectors of railroad with Soviet gauge remained 500-600km. behind.Under these conditions the main burden in the supply of ammunitions, fuel and provisions lay on automobile transport. Road troops had to follow the advancing units and quickly repair highways. As the result of the intense but well-organized work of the road troops and autotransport, by October 1 the front depots had sufficient reserves of material resources.[1]

---

[1] IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #17368, p. 23.

On the morning of October 6 after brief artillery and air preparation the troops of the 2nd Ukrainian front went over to the offensive.[1] The greatest success was achieved in the direction of the main blow. The formations of the 53rd Army and the mounted-mechanized group of Lt. Gen. Pliyev breached the enemy defense on the first day and, routing the opposing forces of the 3rd Hungarian Army, had progressed 80-100 kilometers by the evening of the third day and broken through to the region of Kartsaga transl. from Russ. . The 6th Guards Tank Army, having a smaller number of tanks, had no success. Meeting stubborn enemy resistance, it was forced to halt at the southern approaches to the Hitlerites' strong center of resistance, the city of Oradea.

On the left wing of the front by October 8 the troops of the 46th Army had completely cleared the territory of Yugoslavia east of the Tisza, forced the river and seized beachheads near Senta and in the area of Becej. On the right wing of the front progress was negligible. The enemy offered especially strong resistance in the area of Cluj. Our units and formations were forced to constantly repel enemy counterattacks.

The 5th Airborne Army of the front, which was commanded by Col. Gen. of the Air Force S. K. Goryunov, supported the advancing troops in spite of complex meteorological conditions, and in the first three days completed over 1,300 airplane flights.

The commander of the 2nd Ukrainian front, having evaluated the situation, on October 8 ordered that the center of the front be reinforced with troops of the right wing, and that the direction of the main blow of Gen. Pliyev's mounted-mechanized group be changed, turning it to the southeast for a blow /384
from the region northeast of Kartsaga on Oradea from the rear.[2] This decision pursued the goal of seizing this enemy center of resistance, and then continuing the advance in the northern direction. On the left wing of the front it was planned to break through to the Tisza and consolidate strongly there.

---

[1] This refers to the assault grouping of the front going over to the offensive in the Debrecen operation. The troops of the right wing of the 2nd Ukrainian front did not cease offensive operations even after the liberation of Rumania.

[2] Archive of MD USSR, col. 240, inv. 73765, div. 41/3, pp. 35-38.

Developing the advance, on October 12 the mounted-mechanized group, in cooperation with the 33rd rifle corps, liberated the city of Oradea, an important center of communications.[1] At the same time the 6th Guards cavalry corps of the group, advancing in the northeastern direction, reached the city of Debrecen.

The successful operations of the troops of the center led to the disruption of the communications linking the 6th German Army with Budapest and created a threat to the communications of the 8th German, 2nd and 1st Hungarian Armies. This compelled the German command group to begin on October 9 and 10 to withdraw its forces from the sector before the right wing of the 2nd Ukrainian front in the northwestern direction, and somewhat later from the sector before the center and left wing of the 4th Ukrainian front.

Exploiting the enemy's retreat, the troops of the right wing began pursuit. On October 11 the administrative center of Transylvania, the city of Cluj, was liberated, and on October 12 the troops broke through to the line of Rodna - Bistrita - Cluj. The troops of the left wing of the front conducted battles from October 9-11 to expand the beachheads on the Tisza, in an 80-kilometer sector, from Szeged to Becej, and on October 11 they took by storm an important economic and political center of Hungary, the city of Szeged.

Thus by October 12 the troops of the 2nd Ukrainian front achieved great results. They routed the enemy in the Debrecen and Szeged directions, and cleared the left bank of the Tisza south of Debrecen of the enemy. In the following days the military operations of our troops developed ever more successfully. The change in the situation in the zone of the 2nd Ukrainian front gave the commander of the front the opportunity to make a new decision: covered from the west by the troops of the 53rd and 46th Armies, to turn the mounted-mechanized group of Gen. Pliyev from the region of Oradea to the north, in the direction of Nyiredgyhaza - Chop, and thereby to support the rapid breakthrough of the troops of the 4th Ukrainian front to the Bodrog Plain (north of the Tisza). The mounted-mechanized group of Gen. Gorshkov was to "follow the lines of retreat of the Cluj-Szeged enemy grouping,

[1] The 33rd rifle corps included two Soviet divisions and two Rumanian - the Tudor Vladimirescu Volunteer Division and the 3rd mountain rifle division.

surround and destroy it " with a thrust from the area east of Oradea on Carai - Satu-Mare, in cooperation with the troops of the right wing of the front.[1]

In the direction of the main blow, in the area between the cities of Oradea and Debrecen, fierce battles developed from October 13 through 20. Stubbornly holding the defense south of Debrecen, the enemy attempted to stop the further progress of the Soviet troops to the north and hold the main centers of communication of its Carpathian and Transylvanian groupings (Debrecen, Nyire gyhaza, Chop) in order to support the retreat of the 8th German, 1st and 2nd Hungarian Armies.

Overcoming the stubborn enemy resistance and striking blows in converging directions on Debrecen, the troops of both mounted-mechanized groups in cooperation with the 6th Guards Tank Army and the 33rd rifle corps burst into the city by the evening of October 19. On the morning of October 20 Debrecen, the city with the third largest population in Hungary, was cleared of enemy forces. Before retreating from Debrecen the German fascist invaders had blown up a mill, a train car repair plant and other industrial enterprises, destroyed many residential houses, annihilated food warehouses and stores of raw materials. Thousands of people were left without food or shelter.[2]

On the right wing of the front the troops of the 40th, 4th Rumanian and /385
27th Armies, pursuing the retreating enemy, had progressed 110-120 kilometers by the evening of October 20, reached the line of Sziget - Marghita and established direct contact with the right flank units of our troops operating in the Debrecen - Nyiregyhaza direction. On the left wing the troops of the 46th Army, overooming enemy resistance, crossed the Yugoslav-Hungarian border southeast of the city of Baja by the end of October 20.

In the following eight days, after partial regrouping the troops of the front conducted fierce battles in the areas of Nyiregyhaza and Solnok. The

---

[1] Archive of MO USSR, col. 240, inv. 73765, div. 41/3, p. 80.

[2] Ibid, inv. 68719, div. 6, pp. 97-99.

mobile formations, breaking through to the region of Nyiregyhaza, cut off the lines of retreat of the enemy forces operating before the right wing of the 2nd Ukrainian front. The German fascist command group, attempting to withdraw its forces beyond the Tisza, decided to make a counterattack with the forces of the 8th Army from the northeast in the direction of Nagykallo and Ujfekherto, in order to breach the front of our mobile formations. In the region of Polgar three Hungarian divisions were concentrated, ready to strike a blow on the left flank of the Soviet troops that had broken through to the area of Nyiregyhaza. With the goal of supporting the retreat of the German forces the troops of the enemy's 4th Panzer corps conducted counterattacks in the area of Solnok.

On October 23 the enemy went over to the offensive. The retreating 17th and 29th German army corps broke through from the northeast to the area of Nagykallo and Ujfekherto and joined the 3rd Panzer corps, which was advancing eastward from the area of Polgar. The communications of the mounted-mechanized group of Gen. Pliyev, which had moved out to the north, to the Tisza, were cut off. A different situation was created in the area of Nyiregyhaza. After five days of fierce battles in that direction our troops were forced to leave Nyiregyhaza on October 27. In the Solnok direction military operations developed considerably more successfully. On October 25 the 53rd and 7th Guards[1] Armies liquidated the remnants of the counterstrike in the area of Solnok, cleared the east bank of the Tisza, and by the evening of October 28 had seized three beachheads on the opposite bank of the river, in the area of Solnok. This was a major success. The enemy's defense on the Tisza had been breached.

By this time the troops of the right wing of the front (the 40th and 4th Rumanian Armies) had crossed the Rumanian-Hungarian border, having completed the liberation of the northern part of Transylvania.

On October 21 the troops of the left wing occupied the cities of Baja and Sombor, and by the end of October 28 had seized a large beachhead in the

[1] The 7th Guards Army was transferred from the right wing and had completed a 450-kilometer march.

area between the Tisza and the Danube, from 20 to 100 kilometers deep and up to 120 kilometers on the front. The enemy, whose main attention at that time was fixed on the area of Nyiregyhaza and Solnok, was unable to offer serious resistance then.

The most important result of the Debrecen operation was the liberation of the northern part of Transylvania and almost the entire Hungarian left bank of the Tisza, with a total area of over 27,000 square miles and a population of over 2,300,000 persons. The troops of the 2nd Ukrainian front progressed in the 23 days of the advance from 130 to 275 kilometers in depth, broke through to the Tisza along almost its entire length, forced the river on a wide front and seized a large beachhead; in the area of the city of Baja the 46th Army broke through to the Danube. By the end of the operation the front ran along the line of Chop - Ujfekherto - Solnok - Baja. The Soviet government and the command group of the 2nd Ukrainian front valued the military actions of the troops in this operation very highly. For heroism and military skill displayed in the battles in October 1944 35,522 soldiers, officers and generals of the front were decorated with government awards.[1]

During the Debrecen operation the cooperation of the 2nd and 4th Ukrainian fronts was successfully realized. The troops of the latter, which began the Carpathian - Uzhgorod operation on September 9, broke through by the end /386 of the month to the Soviet-Czech border, seized Radoshitskiy and Russkiy Passes and continued offensive operations. The mission of the troops in October was to overcome the Carpathians and break through to the areas of Uzhgorod and Mukachevo.

However, in the first half of October the successes of the 4th Ukrainian front were insignificant. The enemy, exploiting the forested, mountainous terrain, which was convenient for defense, and also strong engineer constructions in the pass sectors of the mountain range, offered desperate resistance. The right flank 1st Guards Army, which was commanded by Col. Gen. A.A. Grechko, was forced by October 18 to halt the advance temporarily. In that period the

[1] Archives of MD USSR, col. 240, inv. 48078, div. 28, p. 371.

18th Army commanded by Lt. Gen. Y.P. Zhuravlyev flanked the Uzhok Pass with its right flank corps, cut off the road to that pass with a strike on Stavna and forced the enemy to retreat from it, and with its left flank corps seized the Veretskiy Passes and progressed some distance to the south. On the left wing of the front the 17th detached Guards rifle corps commanded by Maj. Gen. A.I. Gastilovich, fought unsuccessfully in the area of Kereshmez [transl. from Russ.] until October 14. But on October 15 the enemy began to withdraw his troops. This was caused by the fact that the breakthrough of the forces of the 2nd Ukrainian front into the area of Debrecen - Nyiregyhaza had created a serious threat to the rear services of the 1st Hungarian Army.

The 17th Guards rifle corps and after it the left flank corps of the 18th Army began pursuit. On October 17 the 17th corps had already reached the city of Sziget, and seized it the following day. The operative situation in this zone of the front changed sharply. Seeing the hopelessness of further struggle, the commander of the 1st Hungarian Army, Col. Gen. B. Miklos, went over to the side of the Red Army and surrendered. The German command group hastened the withdrawal of that army.

The 17th corps pursued the enemy most rapidly. On October 23, progressing along the north bank of the Tisza, it had already seized the city of Khust, and on October 25 it broke through to the line of Irshava - Sevlyusk. By that time the troops of the center and left flank of the 18th Army broke through to the line of Poroshkov - Svalyava. Thus the decisive events were begun by the left wing of the 4th Ukrainian front. By their breakthrough to these lines the Soviet troops created a threat to the rear services of the 1st German Panzer Army, which was opposing the right wing of the front.

Continuing to pursue the enemy, on October 26 the corps of the 18th Army liberated Mukachevo, and the following day the center of the Trans-Carpathian Ukraine, Uzhgorod. On October 28 the formations of the 17th Guards rifle corps seized the city of Chop. The operations of the troops of the front in October were supported by the 8th Airborne Army under the command of Lt. Gen. of the Air Force V. N . Zhdanov.

By the moment that the Debrecen operation of the 2nd Ukrainian front was completed the troops of the 4th Ukrainian front completed the Carpathian-Uzhgorod operation, broke through to the line of Starina - west of Uzhgorod - Chop, having a border along the Tisza with the 2nd Ukrainian front. The successful operations of the 4th Ukrainian front were predetermined to a decisive degree by the brilliant operative effect of the main thrust of the 2nd Ukrainian front from the region northwest of Arad flanking Oradea on Debrecen.

As a result of almost two months of fighting the Trans-Carpathian Ukraine under Hungarian-German occupation was liberated. The population greeted the soldiers and officers like blood brothers. From the depths of the soul of the long-suffering people burst the age-old desire to be united with their older brother, the people of the Soviet Ukraine. On November 26, 1944 the first Congress of the People's Committees of the Trans-Carpathian Ukraine was held in Mukachevo. Expressing the hope of the popular masses, the Congress passed a manifesto. In this historic document it was stated, "Torn off for centuries from its mother-homeland the Ukraine, the Trans-Carpathian Ukrainian people was doomed to poverty and extinction... The riches of our people, acquired by blood and sweat, went to the Magyar and other foreign oppressors...

"Supported by the inexorable will of the entire people, expressed in /387
the petitions and resolutions of the workers, peasants, intelligentsia and clergy of all cities and towns of the Trans-Carpathian Ukraine that the Trans-Carpathian Ukraine be united with the Soviet Ukraine, the First Congress of People's Committees of the entire Trans-Carpathian Ukraine resolves:

"1. To unite the Trans-Carpathian Ukraine with its great mother the Soviet Ukraine and leave the composition of Czechoslovakia;

"2. To request the Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic and the Supreme Soviet of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to include the Trans-Carpathian Ukraine in the composition of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic."[1] This resolution was examined by the governments

[1] "The Unification of the Ukrainian People in the Single Ukrainian Soviet State (1939-1949)" Collection of Documents and Materials. Kiev, Gospolitizdat UkrSSR, 1949, p. 169, 171.

of the USSR and the Czechoslovak Republic. On June 29, 1945 a Treaty was concluded between the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the Czechoslovak Republic on the Trans-Carpathian Ukraine, on the basis of which the Trans-Carpathian Ukraine entered the composition of the Soviet Ukraine.

The Debrecen operation exerted a great influence on the further change in the political situation in Hungary. The blows of the Soviet troops in the first days of the operation and the inevitability of the total defeat of the Hungarian army compelled the Hungarian delegation that arrived in Moscow on October 11 to accept the preliminary terms of a truce agreement between the USSR, the USA and England on one side and Hungary on the other.

In the first point of the terms laid down by the Soviet command group it was emphasized, "Hungary remains an independent sovereign state; other states do not interfere in its internal affairs."[1] The Soviet Union, determining its attitude to the enemy state that had expressed a desire to end the war, held to the principle of preserving its sovereignty. In the agreement on the preliminary terms of truce concluded by both sides Hungary was directed to immediately evacuate its forces from the occupied territory of neighboring countries. To monitor the fulfillment of the agreement, it was stated in that document, the three Allied governments - the USSR, England and the USA - would send their military representatives to Hungary, who would act in the capacity of an Allied military mission under the chairmanship of the Soviet representative. Hungary was to immediately end its connection with Germany, and declare war on it, the Soviet Union agreeing to assist Hungary.[2]

On October 15 in Budapest an announcement by Horthy was broadcast, in which it was stated that as Germany had already lost the war it was essential that Hungary should consider its own interests. Horthy said that he had addressed the USSR, the USA and England with a request that a truce be concluded. In spite of this agreement, Hungary did not withdraw from the war at that

---

[1] Quot. from D. Nemes. "The Liberation of Hungary," p. 85.

[2] IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #11635, p. 367.

time. Horthy and the Hungarian government not only had not worked out a specific plan for the country's withdrawal from the war, they had not even issued the order to the Hungarian forces to cease resistance to the Red Army. At the moment when the government of Hungary was making this very important resolution it did not have a single division at its disposal in the region of the capital. The Hitlerites had three divisions there. Moreover, they could rely on the support of the fascist "Crossed Arrows" organization, which was led by F. Salashi[transl. from Russ.]. On October 16 the Germans removed Horthy from power and proposed that he resign in writing from the position of Regent in favor of the leader of the Nalashists, Salashi. For this his family was promised immunity. Horthy gave his assent, after which the Hitlerites sent him with his family to Germany under surveillance. Immediately after this the German occupiers formed a new government of representatives of the "Crossed Arrows" organization led by Salashi, who immediately gave the /388 order to the Hungarian army to continue the struggle against the Soviet forces.

Horthy's announcement of October 15 and Salashi's coming to power were reflected in the Hungarian army. Some of the officers and a considerable number of soldiers supported Horthy's announcement on the need to cease the war against the USSR and conclude a truce. This was seen in the refusal of a part of the soldiers and officers to take an oath to the Salashi government, in the increased number of incidents of desertion, of soldiers, officers and even generals going over to our side,[1] specifically the commander of the 1st Hungarian Army. However, the Hitlerite command group and Salashi were able to keep the morally shaky army in their hands. They achieved this by cruel repressions against officers and soldiers with anti-German views, the further Germanization of the Hungarian military authorities and staff, the inclusion of Hungarian units and subunits in German formations, and their subordination to the Germans, the intensification of propaganda on "the horrors of Bolshevism."[2] Thus, if under Horthy at least the appearance of the independence of the Hungarian army was preserved, under Salashi it was totally subordinated to the Hitlerites.

---

[1] Archive of MD USSR, col. 240, inv. 16392, div. 12, p. 348.

[2] Ibid.

Instead of turning the army against the occupiers and relying on the help of the Red Army, expelling them from Hungarian soil, Horthy betrayed the national interests. He created all the necessary conditions so the Germans would isolate him for "disloyalty to the alliance," dismiss him from the Regency in favor of Salashi, form a government acceptable to Germany, and suppress attempts at insubordination on the part of a segment of the Hungarian army. Therefore the Red Army was faced with the task of liberating the Hungarian people from the fascist yoke, fighting not only against the German fascist forces, but also against the Hungarian forces, which had remained in German-Salashist subordination.

In connection with the Red Army's entrance into Hungary and the altered situation in that country, on October 27, 1944 the State Defense Committee of the USSR passed a resolution which was of great significance for the establishment of the correct relationship of the Soviet troops to the population of Hungary. The resolution obliged the Military Council of the 2nd Ukrainian front to explain to the Hungarian people that the Soviet Union had entered that country not with the purpose of acquiring any part of its territory or changing the existing order, but only because of military necessity, "not as the conqueror, but as the liberator of the Hungarian people from the German fascist yoke."[1] The control of organizations of civil administration inthe liberated territory and their supervision was entrusted to the Military Council. The Soviet military administration should not change any existing Hungarian organs of power, the economic and political system. All of the rights of the Hungarian citizens and private associations as well as the personal property belonging to them were taken under the protection of the Soviet military authorities.

In accordance with the instructions of the State Defense Committee, the Military Council of the front turned to the Hungarian people with a special appeal. All organs of the Soviet military command and political sections began a great work to realize the SDC resolution, which was for them the main guiding document for the entire period of military operations in the territory

---

[1] Archive of MD USSR, col. 240, inv. 16392, div. 12, pp. 1-2.

of Hungary. Particular attention with this was turned to the need to prevent the arisal of irregular relations between the troops and the population. The Military Council of the 53rd Army wrote in its address to the soldiers, "We must bring down the feeling of vengefulness toward the enemy on the heads of those truly responsible for this bloody war... We must not confuse the working population of Hungary, twice enslaved by German and Hungarian fascism, with the criminal Hungarian government."[1]

In the order of the commander of the 2nd Ukrainian front of October 30 it /389 was stated, "The enemy must be beaten and exterminated with exceptional hatred, but we must treat the peaceful population with fairness."[2] In accordance with the order of the commander of the front, commanders, political organs and party organizations took measures to increase Komsomol meetings, conferences of commanders of units and subunits, and speeches by propagandists. To assist the agitators, articles were placed in front, army and division newspapers about the model behavior of a soldier of the army of a socialist state abroad.

Simultaneously group and individual talks were held with Hungarian workers, and brochures and leaflets in the Hungarian language were distributed. From October 19 the political directorate of the front began to publish an informational leaflet, the newspaper "Khirado," where material from the Soviet Information Bureau and TASS was placed. Agitation material was translated through public address stations. Several appearances by well-known Hungarian public figures were organized, who called on the Hungarian army to cease their senseless resistance. In the address of public figures of the city of Debrecen it was stated, "Brother Hungarians! How long will you bear the cursed German yoke? Do not allow our cities, villages and the pride of our country, our capital, to suffer the fate of Debrecen... Turn your arms against the German oppressors. Do not fear the Russians. The Russians will help you if you go over to their side."[3]

Gradually the population became convinced of the falsity of the fascist tales about the Red Army. On November 10 the central intelligence division of the Salashi police reported with concern on the high level of discipline

---

[1] Archive of MD USSR, col. 240, inv. 14233, div. 4, p. 476.

[2] Ibid, inv. 73765, div. 41/3, p. 156.

[3] Ibid, inv. 68719, div. 6, pp. 97-99.

of the Soviet soldiers. The authors of one report of the Hungarian government military commission, intended for internal use, comparing the facts of the behavior of Soviet and German troops in the zone of military operations and their attitude toward the population, were forced to admit, "From this directly opposite behavior the population is reaching conclusions in favor of the Bolsheviks..."[1]

The correct policy of the Soviet government imbued with the spirit of internationalism, promoted the further and more rapid development of the democratic forces of Hungary. The Hungarian Communist Party began to grow quickly after the entrance of the Red Army into the eastern regions of the country. The Communists emerged from the underground and began to form the new legal organizations of the liberated territory. Such organizations appeared in all cities and large inhabited areas even in the first month of military operations in Hungary. Labor unions began to be re-formed, changing at once into mass organizations. In October the Hungarian emigre communists returned to Hungary from the Soviet Union. At the end of October in the city of Szeged they formed a center for direction of the party organizations in the liberated territory. Contact was established with the underground Central Committee of the party, located in Budapest.

Thus even in the first month of military operations of the Red Army in Hungary the internal progressive forces had already begun to establish a democratic order in the liberated territory. The entrance of the Soviet troops into Hungary was a powerful push, strengthening the struggle of the popular masses and Hungarian communists in still-unliberated regions as well. There in October - December the workers spoke out resolutely against the forced evacuation and mobilization into the army and refused to participate in defensive work. In the rear of the German and Hungarian forces the partisan detachments increased their operations. Favorable conditions were created in the country for the development by the Communist Party of a political struggle for the formation of a people's democratic republic.

---

[1] Quot. from D. Nemes. "The Liberation of Hungary," p. 114.

3. The encirclement of the Bucharest grouping of enemy forces

With the defeat of the major grouping of enemy forces in the eastern and northeastern regions of Hungary, the first stage of the liberation of that country ended. The main content of the second stage was the seizure of Budapest and Hungary's withdrawal from the war. This objective was fulfilled in the period from October 29, 1944 through February 13, 1945 by the troops of the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts,[1] in the composition of which Rumanian and Bulgarian formations also fought. /390

[1] The troops of the 3rd Ukrainian front began to operate in the territory of Hungary after November 24, 1944.

Up to the start of the Budapest operation the situation continued to remain favorable for the Soviet forces. The main forces of the 2nd Ukrainian front after completion of the Debrecen operation were located in the center and on the right wing. Before the troops of the front operated army group "South," which after reinforcement numbered 35 divisions in its composition, including 9 Panzer and motorized divisions, and 3 brigades.[1]

The most considerable enemy forces, predominately German, were operating in the Nyiregyhaza - Miskolc direction, that is against the troops of the right wing and center of the front. Here the enemy concentrated 21 divisions and 3 brigades; of these 11 formations were in the first echelon. The remaining forces, largely Hungarian divisions, occupied the defense before the left wing of the front. In the region of Budapest there were few forces. Therefore at the end of October and the beginning of November, as became known later, the transfer began of enemy forces from the left wing and center to the west bank of the Tisza, in the Budapest direction.

The main forces of the 3rd Ukrainian front, having completed the Belgrade operation, regrouped in the region of Temesoara - Petrovgrad - Pancevo. Only the 75th rifle corps of the 57th Army came out to the left bank of the Danube, in the sector from the city of Baja to Sombor. In the first days of the Budapest operation the front did not participate in it.

The defense plan of the enemy forces in the territory of Hungary included several defensive lines stretching from north to south. The defense in the region of Budapest was prepared particularly thoroughly. To defend the city from the east the enemy built three horseshoe-shaped defensive zones, the flanks of which abutted the Danube north and south of the Hungarian capital. The first of the three zones ran at a distance of 25-30 kilometers from the Danube.[2]

Having appraised the situation that had developed, particularly the shaky political position of the ruling clique of Hungary and the weakness of

---

[1] Collected Materials on the Composition of the Forces of Fascist Germany, 4th Ed., pp. 174-179.

[2] Archive of MD USSR, col. 240, inv. 52495, div. 91, pp. 213-216.

the enemy's defense before the left wing of the 2nd Ukrainian front, on October 28 Headquarters of the Supreme High Command sent to the commander of the 2nd Ukrainian front a directive in which it advised that the 46th Army and the 2nd Guards mechanized corps go over to the offensive on October 29 between the Tisza and the Danube with the purpose of breaching the enemy's defense on the west bank of the Tisza and bringing the 7th Guards Army beyond that river. The 46th Army, reinforced with the 2nd and 4th Guards mechanized corps, was then to strike a blow on the enemy defending Budapest.

Thus the plan of the operation was to strike a frontal blow in the direction of Budapest and seize it with relatively small forces. The remaining armies of the front (with the exception of the 4th Rumanian and the 40th) were to force the Tisza and seize beachheads on its west bank.

By the start of the offensive the forces of the 2nd Ukrainian front /391 exceeded army group "South" in infantry by 2 times, in guns (without anti-tank and anti-aircraft) and mortars by 4-4.5 times, in tanks and assault guns by 1.9 times, and in aircraft by 2.6 times.

In the second half of the day on October 29 the troops of the left wing of the front went over to the offensive and on the same day breached the enemy's defense in the area between the Tisza and the Danube. In the evening of November 1 the mechanized corps were brought into the battle and, progressing rapidly forward, broke through by the evening of November 2 from the south to the approaches to Budapest. The German fascist command group immediately threw a Panzer corps to the region of the city. The attempts of our troops to break into the city on the move did not meet with succes. Under these conditions, on November 4 Headquarters indicated to the commander of the 2nd Ukrainian front that attacking Budapest in a narrow sector with the forces of only two mechanized corps with a negligible amount of infantry could lead to unjustifiable losses. It was essential, Headquarters emphasized, to immediately bring the 7th Guards, 53rd, 27th and 40th Armies out to the west bank of the Tisza, begin an advance on a wide front and rout the Budapest enemy grouping, striking a blow from the north and the northeast. The

troops of the left wing of the front (46th Army, 2nd and 4th Guards mechanized corps) should support the right wing and center, striking a blow from the south.[1]

To fulfill Headquarters' instructions an attempt was undertaken to split the enemy grouping east of Budapest with a new frontal attack by considerable forces, then to flank the city from the north and, striking a blow from the north, northeast and south, to then seize the city. During this advance, which lasted ~~10~~ 16 days (from November 11 through 26), many inhabited areas were liberated, but the main objective assigned by Headquarters remained unfulfilled. In the direction of the main blow the troops of the front broke through to the approaches to Budapest from the east, and those on the right wing into the area east of Miskolc, and directly approached the mountains of Buk and Matra. Until December 5 our troops consolidated on the lines that had been gained.

In the period from December 5 through 9 the 2nd Ukrainian front again attempted to seize Budapest, but this time not by a frontal attack, but by flanking from the north and west. However, these attempts also were unsuccessful, although as a result of the offensive the troops considerably improved their position. The troops of the center of the front broke through to the valley of the Ipel River and to the Danube north of Budapest, enveloping the Budapest grouping from the northeast. The 46th Army forced the Danube with great losses and approached the defensive line of Margarita in the sector southwest of Erda. The 27th Army entered the region of Miskolc.[2]

---

[1] IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #9493, p. 255.

[2] In the military-historical literature by the Margarita defensive line is usually meant the sector of the defense from Erda to Lake Balaton. This is inaccurate. The German command group in one of its documents names the following sectors of this line: 1 - from the Drava River to the southwestern end of Lake Balaton; 2 - from the latter to the bend in the Danube near the city of Bacs (including, evidently, the three zones of defense of Budapest from the east - Ed.); 3 - from that bend in the Danube to the boundary with army group "A," that is, to the Czech-Hungarian border. (IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #11635, p. 413.)

The incomplete success of the advance on Budapest had a number of causes. Heavy precipitation, mud, late delivery of ammunition due to extended lines of communication, the fatigue of the troops, who had been advancing constantly for four months - all of this made military operations extremely difficult. But subjective causes also had an effect. The difficulty of forcing the Danube directly at the southern outskirts of Budapest, where the enemy had gathered considerable forces, had been underestimated. As a result of this the 46th Army, developing the advance in the northeastern direction, encountering a strong enemy defense, the Margarita line, was not able to overcome it. The unsuccessful operations of the 2nd Ukrainian front were also due to a great extent to underestimation, due to poor reconnaissance of the enemy's opportunities for maneuver. The organization of control of artillery was also insufficiently precise, and tanks were employed in small groups. /392

During the period when the troops of the 2nd Ukrainian front were attempting to seize Budapest, the troops of the 3rd Ukrainian front conducted an operation from November 7 through December 9 to force the Danube and seize a large tactical beachhead. The front was command by Marshal of the Soviet Union F.I. Tolbukhin, Military Council member was Col. Gen. A.S. Zheltov, Chief of Staff was Col. Gen. S.S. Biryuzov. The feature of the operation was the fact that the forcing was begun without planned preparation 175 kilometers south of Budapest at the time when the enemy's main forces were confined at Budapest by the operations of the forces of the 2nd Ukrainian front.

By the start of the operation the 3rd Ukrainian front had in its composition the 57th and 4th Guards Armies, the 18th tank corps and the 17th Airborne Army. However, in a 120-kilometer sector south of Sombor along the Danube as before only the 75th rifle corps of the 57th Army was operating, commanded by Lt. Gen. M.N. Sharokhin. The remaining forces of the army were approaching the region of its concentration. Opposing the 75th rifle corps the enemy had relatively small forces at his disposal. Having appraised the situation, the commander of the 3rd Ukrainian front decided to begin the forcing of the Danube with the forces of the 75th rifle corps, not awaiting the full concentration in the starting region by the troops of the front or even of the entire 57th Army.

On the night of November 7 in the region of Apatina and on the night of November 9 in the region of Batiny, reconnaissance in force was successfully conducted by the reinforced rifle companies of the 74th and 233rd rifle divisions. Using means at hand, the companies forced the Danube unexpectedly for the enemy and seized two small beachheads on the opposite bank. In the following four days the commander of the 75th rifle corps, Maj. Gen. A.Z. Akimenko, attempting to expand and combine the beachhead, conveyed the main forces of both divisions across the river.

Desperate battles developed which did not cease day or night. In several places the river broke through the dike and submerged the approaches to the enemy positions. Our units bore considerable losses in men. The situation demanded the rapid transfer of fresh forces to the beachhead. But the single pontoon bridge, two ferry crossings and the road leading to them across the swampy terrain were constantly fired upon and bombed by the enemy. Because of this the crossings operated only at night. On November 13 the 64th rifle corps was brought into the battle. In the following 10 days both corps completely concentrated their forces on the beachheads (the 64th on the Batiny, the 75th on the Apatina) and by November 23 had united them.

Neither the flooding of the river nor the break in the dike and submersal of the approaches to the enemy positions could hold back the advance of our troops. Under enemy fire, ... soldiers and officers, up to their chests in cold water ... stormed the German fortifications. In the battles for the beachhead many units and subunits distinguished themselves, specifically the battalion under the command of Capt. G.N. Dolgopolov of the 19th rifle division. The enemy, entrenched at a height, met the advancing battalion with artillery and mortar fire. The soldiers were forced to go to ground. Then the commander of the division, Maj. Gen. P.E. Lazarev, ordered Capt. Dolgopolov to circle the enemy from the right over the flooded terrain and to seize the enemy observation point with a surprise attack. Fulfilling the order, the soldiers and officers walked two kilometers, waist-deep in water, carrying machine guns, mortars and ammunition. The surprise attack of the battalion on the enemy's flank decided the outcome of the battle. The Hitlerites retreated, leaving many dead soldiers and officers on the battlefield.[1]

---

[1] Archive of MD USSR, col. 243, inv. 32283, div. 12, p. 461.

After the expansion of the Batry and Apatina beachheads and their merger the commander of the front ordered that the second echelon of the 57th Army (6th Guards rifle corps) and one mechanized brigade be brought into the battle, as well as the 21st Guards rifle corps of the 4th Guards /392
Army, which was commanded by Lt. Gen. I.V. Galanin.[1] The 4th Guards Army went out to the first echelon of the front to the right of the 57th Army. This sharply altered the situation on the beachhead. By the evening of November 26 it had been widened to 50 kilometers on the front and 14-17 kilometers in depth. Such a size of the beachhead made it possible to deploy large forces on it and ensure the relatively normal operation of the crossings on the Danube. Exploiting this success, by December 9 the troops of the front broke through to the region south of Lake Velencei and to Lake Balaton. Here, meeting the enemy's previously prepared defense, they were compelled to halt the advance temporarily. The breakthrough of the troops of the 3rd Ukrainian front to Lakes Velencei and Balaton created a threat of an attack on the rear of the enemy grouping defending Budapest.

The troops of the 3rd Ukrainian front were supported by the 17th Airborne Army, which was commanded by Col. Gen. of the Air Force V.A. Sudets. In spite of the fact that in the first ten days of December the weather was unsuitable for flying, the bombers and fighters inflicted considerable damage on the German and Hungarian forces. The Danube military flotilla also assisted the advance. Its ships landed tactical assault groups in the regions of Iloka, Ger'ena [transl. from Russ.], assisted with fire in the forcing of the Danube and the seizure of beachheads, and secured crossings on the river in the areas of Apatin, Mohača and Dunafyol'dvar [transl. from Russian].

By the middle of December the following situation had developed in the zone of advance of the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts. In the period from December 12 through 18 the troops of the right wing of the 2nd Ukrainian front reached the pre-war Hungarian-Czech border, and crossed it south of the city of Rozhnyava [transl. from Russ.]; the troops of the center broke

[1] After November the commander of this army was Gen. G.F. Zakharov.

through to the line east of the city of Ozd and south of the slopes of the Matra Mountains, and to the south bank of the Ipel' River to Balassagyarmat. On the left wing of the front the 6th Guards Tank Army seized a beachhead on the Ipel' River in the region of Sahy. The 7th Guards Army with the 7th Rumanian army corps occupied the front before the outer defensive perimeter of Budapest, and to the left, along the Danube, was deployed the 18th detached Guards rifle corps. In the composition of the forces of the front there were 39 rifle divisions, 2 fortified areas, 2 cavalry, 2 tank and 2 mechanized corps.[1] Fourteen Rumanian divisions were also in operative subordination to the commander of the front. Against the troops of the 2nd Ukrainian front operated part of the forces of the 1st Panzer Army, the 1st Hungarian Army, the 8th German Army and part of the forces of the 6th German Army - 26 divisions in all, including 4 Panzer, 3 motorized, and 2 cavalry divisions.[2]

In the zone of the 3rd Ukrainian front after it went over to the defensive on December 9 the line of the front did not change until December 20. The sector from the Danube to Lake Velencei was occupied by the 46th Army, which was added to the composition of this front on December 12; between Lakes Velencei and Balaton the 4th Guards Army occupied the defense, south of Lake Balaton to the Drava River the 57th Army, and along the north bank of the Drava the 1st Bulgarian and 3rd Yugoslav Army. In the composition of forces of the front (not counting the Bulgarian and Yugoslav divisions facing the enemy army group "F") were 31 rifle divisions, 1 fortified area, 1 brigade of marine infantry, 1 cavalry, 1 tank and 2 mechanized corps.[3] Facing the 3rd Ukrainian front were part of the forces of the 6th Army, the 3rd Hungarian Army, the 2nd Panzer Army and part of the forces of army group "F" - 25 divisions in all, of them 5 Panzer, 1 motorized and 2 cavalry divisions, as well as 1 motorized and 1 cavalry brigade.[4] Thus in all there were 51 German and Hungarian divisions and 2 brigades, including 9 Panzer and 4 motorized divisions, and 1 motorized brigade, before the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts.

---

[1] IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #11635, p. 414.

[2] Ibid, Inv. #9608, p. 609.

[3] Ibid, Inv. #11635, p. 414.

[4] Ibid, Inv. #9608, p. 609.

The enemy defense before the 2nd Ukrainian front was not everywhere /394 identical. Before the right wing on the Hungarian-Czech border there were previously fortified positions. Against the left wing of the front the enemy relied on lines prepared along the Ipel' and Danube Rivers, and also on the outer defensive perimeter of Budapest. The enemy defense was somewhat weaker only north of Budapest in the area of Sahy, where it was constructed hastily. Before the 3rd Ukrainian front the Hitlerites had completed the defense on the Margarita line. It was most developed in the sector between the Danube and Lake Balaton. Here there were three zones. The first and most important consisted of two positions 5-8 kilometers in depth. The second was located at a depth of 6 to 15 kilometers from the forward edge of the first zone. The city of Szekesfehervar was transformed to a strong center of resistance. The third zone ran 20-35 kilometers from the forward edge of the first zone. Forces were positioned most densely in the main defensive zone. The tank divisions were located predominantly in the second and third zones. Only a small number of them occupied the sectors of the main zone.

The intentions of the German fascist command group were to prevent the further progress of the Soviet troops to the west and not to allow them to encircle its Budapest grouping. For this the Hitlerites constantly perfected the defense, especially in the sector of the Danube to Lake Balaton

The idea of Headquarters of the Supreme High Command relative to the further joint operations of the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts was to surround the Budapest enemy grouping and rout it with the simultaneous blows of both fronts. This idea was expressed in Headquarters' directive of December 12, 1944.

The 2nd Ukrainian front received the assignment to strike a blow from the region of Sahy in the general direction of Soldiny, break through on the left (north) bank of the Danube in the Nesmey [transl. from Russ.]- Esztergom sector, and to prevent the retreat of the enemy's Budapest grouping to the northwest. At the same time the front was to attack Budapest with a part of its forces from the east with the purpose of seizing the city. The 3rd Ukrainian front was to strike a blow from the region of Lake Velencei to the north in the direction of Bicske, break through to the right (south) bank of

the Danube in the Esztergom - Nesmey sector and cut off the lines of retreat of the enemy's Budapest grouping to the west, and to advance from Bicske on Budapest with a part of its forces and seize it in cooperation with the 2nd Ukrainian front.[1] The boundary line between the fronts was established along the Danube.

In accordance with Headquarters' plan the commander of the 2nd Ukrainian front ordered the 53rd, 7th Guards and 6th Guards Tank Armies to breach the defense in the region of Sahy and north of the bend in the Danube, destroy the opposing enemy and develop the attack in the northwestern, western and southwestern directions, break through to the line of Nemce - Nesmey, and surround the Budapest grouping in cooperation with the 3rd Ukrainian front. The 30th rifle corps of the 7th Guards Army, the 7th Rumanian army corps, and the 18th detached Guards rifle corps were by the end of December 23 to seize Pest, the eastern part of the Hungarian capital. The troops of the right wing of the front - the 4th Rumanian, 40th and 27th Armies - were to rout the enemy in the border regions of Hungary and Czechoslovakia and to liquidate the salient on the front line in the region of the Matra Mountains by the end of December 23. The troops of the front were then to advance in the Rozhnya, Zvolen', and Komarnensk [transl. from Russ.] directions and break through by December 25-28 to the territory of Slovakia, to the south slopes of the Lower Tatra and further to the southwest, up to the Nitra River.

The decision of the commander of the 2nd Ukrainian front had an essential feature: it was proposed that the 6th Guards Tank Army be used in the first echelon of the assault grouping to breach the enemy defense and then advance rapidly in the northwestern direction, in order to support the operation of /395
the troops of both fronts encircling the enemy's Budapest grouping. Under these conditions this was very important, because the enemy could strike a heavy blow from the region northwest of Budapest on the circling flank of the troops surrounding Budapest. The 6th Guards Tank Army was then to advance on the Nitra and on December 25-28 to seize the region of Gimes - Nitra - Vrable.

---

[1] IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #9493, pp. 335-337.

Advancing on the Nitra, the tank army would receive the opportunity to break through to the routes leading from the region of the Moravian Gate[1] to Budapest and, in cooperation with the mounted-mechanized group of the front advancing from the region of Komarno, to strike a blow on Bratislava.

The commander of the 3rd Ukrainian front decided to breach the enemy's defense on the Margarita line in two narrow sectors east and west of Lake Velencei and, developing the breach in depth and in the direction of the flanks, surround and defeat the enemy's Budapest grouping in cooperation with the 2nd Ukrainian front. With this the 46th Army was to be deployed in a front to the northeast and east for the advance in cooperation with the mobile formations on Budapest, and the creation of an inner perimeter of envelopment. Only one rifle corps of the 4th Guards Army was to advance to the north; the remaining forces of the army were deployed in a front to the northwest and west with the goal of creating an outer perimeter of envelopment. The 2nd Guards and 7th mechanized corps operated as army mobile groups. The 18th tank corps was intended to be brought into the battle east or west of Lake Velencei. In either case it was to break through to the region of Bicske and, after being brought in, to the region ot Esztergom by the end of the second day in cooperation with the troops of the 2nd Ukrainian front. To the 5th Guards cavalry corps was entrusted the mission of developing the success of the 7th mechanized and 18th tank corps and breaking through to the outer perimeter of envelopment.

On the morning of December 20 the troops of the 2nd Ukrainian front went over to the offensive. The 6th Guards Tank Army, having breached the enemy defense, began to move rapidly out in the northwestern direction. By the end of the first day of the operation it had progressed 32 kilometers, seized the important road junction of Levice and approached the Grona River in the region of Kal'nitsa [transl. from Russian]. On the first day of the advance the 7th Guards Army passed around Mt. Byorzhon' [transl. from Russ.] located south of Sahy from the north and south and, progressing 15 kilometers, broke through to the valley of the Ipel' River. The fascists had equipped strong points on the

[1] The saddle between the West Carpathians and the Czech-Moravian height.

slopes of the mountains and attempted to hold back the advance of the units of the 7th Guards Army with heavy fire. Our troops smashed the enemy centers of defense and inflicted heavy damage on the enemy.

The German fascist command group attempted to block the further progress of the Soviet troops. On December 21 units of three Panzer divisions of the enemy, with infantry support, made counterstrikes: the main strike from the region of Sakalosha [transl. from Russ.] in the general direction of Sahy and an auxiliary strike from the region of Niemcza to the south. They succeeded in breaching the front of the left flank formations of the 7th Guards Army and breaking through by the end of December 22 to the region of Tompy, from where two days before the 6th Guards Tank Army had begun the advance. The enemy planned to cut off its communications but, however, placed its own left flank under the attack. The commander of the 2nd Ukrainian front exploited this. On December 21 he ordered the commander of the 6th Guards Tank Army, covering itself from the north, to strike a blow with its main forces to the south along the east bank of the Grona River and, in cooperation with the 7th Guards Army, to surround and destroy the entire enemy grouping in the area between the Ipel' and Grona Rivers.

On December 22 part of the forces of the tank army broke through to the rear of the enemy's assault grouping. The sharp turn of that army to the south gave an acute character to the struggle in the area between the Ipel' and Grona Rivers, all the more so as by December 24 the entire tank army found itself in the rear of the enemy grouping, which had made a counterstrike. Conducting fierce battles and destroying the enemy's manpower and equipment, the formations of the 6th Guards Tank and 7th Guards Armies moved out to the south. On December 26 they approached the Danube north of Ezstergom and /396
joined the troops of the 3rd Ukrainian front, which had broken through on that day to the region of Ezstergom from the south.

By December 27 the enemy grouping that had broken through to the area of Tompy, and also all of the remaining enemy forces operating in the area between the Ipel' and Grona Rivers, were encircled, and in two days they were destroyed. At the end of December the 7th Guards Army broke through to the Grona River in the sector from Lesice to its mouth, seizing a small beachhead in the

region south of Soldina. By that time the commander of the front took the 6th Guards Tank Army out to his reserves.

The Budapest group of forces of the 2nd Ukrainian front (the 30th rifle corps of the 7th Guards Army, the 7th Rumanian army corps, and the 18th detached Guards rifle corps) did not perform the mission assigned to it, to seize the eastern part of Budapest. The forces were found to be clearly inadequate. From December 26 through 31 this group progressed with heavy fighting only 4-12 kilometers and reached the city.

On the right wing of the front in 10-11 days of the offensive our troops, overcoming stubborn enemy resistance, liquidated the salient in the front in the region of the Matra Mountains and crossed the Czech border there as well. In the zone of advance of the 2nd Ukrainian front they completely cleared the territory of Hungary of the enemy.

The troops of the 3rd Ukrainian front also began the advance on December 20 with a favorable ratio of forces and equipment. In the direction of the main blow they exceeded the enemy by 3.3 times in manpower, by 4.8 times in guns, and by 3.5 times in tanks and assault guns. In aircraft the forces of the adversaries were almost equal. On December 20-22 a fierce battle went on in the first two defensive zones, that is in the enemy's tactical zone of defense. Already by the end of the first day, when the assault group of the front had progressed only 5-7 kilometers, the enemy began to go over to counterattacks with infantry and tanks. The counterattacks increased still more on the second day, particularly from the region of Szekesfehervar. The Hitlerites placed very great importance on holding this important center of defense.

Not satisfied with bringing the second echelon of the corps into battle, to complete the breach of the tactical zone of the enemy's defense on December 21 the commander ordered that the army mobile groups be brought in - the 2nd Guards and 7th mechanized corps, and the 18th tank corps on the following day (in the zone of the 46th Army). The assigned mission was fulfilled by the end of the third day of the operation in the entire zone of advance of the

assault group of both armies with the exception of the sector in the region of Szekesfehervar and west of that sector.

The drawn-out nature of the breach of the enemy defense was due to the following factor. The rifle divisions had no close-support tanks or, in the majority of cases, second echelons, while in the battles for the first and second zones of defense the enemy used a considerable number of tanks. The mechanized troops brought into the battle could not overtake the infantry and were forced to operate in its battle order. The operations of the rifle and mobile troops were not supported to a sufficient degree by artillery fire.

On the fourth day of the operation, December 23, the assault group of the front completed the breach of the entire strongly fortified and deeply echeloned enemy defense, penetrating it to 30 kilometers and broadening that breach to 100 kilometers along the front. On that day our troops occupied the city of Szekesfehervar. In breaching the defense on the Margarita line and in the battles for Szekesfehervar, the Soviet troops joined in fierce encounters with enemy tanks, repelled enemy counterattacks and overcame furious resistance.

Having overwhelmed the enemy defense between the Danube and Lake Velencei our troops hastened their advance. On December 24 the 10th tank corps seized the major road junction of the city of Bicske, and two days later broke through from the south to the Danube and occupied Ezstergom. The encirclement of the Budapest enemy grouping was complete. On that day the 46th Army in cooperation with the 2nd Guards mechanized corps engaged in fighting in the streets of Budapest.

While the 46th Army was fighting in the inner perimeter of envelopment, /397
on December 26 the 4th Guards Army and the 5th Guards cavalry corps broke through to the line of Tarjan - east of Zamoy - southwest of Szekesfehervar and formed the outer perimeter of envelopment at a considerable distance (30-45 kilometers) from the inner perimeter. By the end of December 31 the outer perimeter of envelopment ran along the line of Nesmey - west of Zamoj - Lake Balaton. In the sector of Lake Balaton - Drava River the front remained unchanged.

The advance of the ground forces was supported by the 17th Airborne Army, which in 11 days conducted 5,000 airplane flights.

Thus the 3rd Ukrainian front fulfilled its assignment to encircle the Budapest grouping and created an outer perimeter of encirclement on the assigned line. It did not succeed in occupying the eastern part of the capital, where the enemy offered very strong resistance.

The most important result of the military operations of the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts in the last ten days of December was the encirclement of the enemy's Budapest grouping (7 infantry, 2 Panzer, 1 motorized and 2 cavalry divisions, 3 artillery brigades, up to 30 detached regiments, battalions and various battle groups of Germans and Hungarians with total numerical strength over 188,000 men)[1] and the completion of the liberation of the central part of Hungary. By the end of December the forces of the encircled grouping occupied an all-round defense in the outskirts of Budapest. The enemy command group prepared to defend the city stubbornly. Several days before the encirclement, foreseeing its likelihood, it created considerable reserves of provisions and ammunition in the city. The Hitlerites were not concerned by the circumstance that senseless defensive operations in such a large city could lead to huge losses among its population of over 1 million persons. The "national" government also did not think of the fate of the inhabitants of Budapest. Salashi and his ministers had fled to the northern regions of the country, from where they soon crossed into Austria. The fascists tried to drive away the residents of the city, but their attempt was unsuccessful. When the occupiers ordered that Chepel' [transl. from Russian], the industrial area of the capital of Hungary, be evacuated, the population, according to the illegal newspaper "Sabad nep," "met this order with deep resentment, took down and tore up the notices, and later, meeting at the council building, broke windows, protesting against the order to evacuate, and arranging demonstrations against the Germans and Nilashists."[2] The soldiers supported the citizens of Budapest. The local authorities were forced to revoke the order for evacuation.

---

[1] Archive of MD USSR, col. 240, inv. 32305, div. 2, p. 52.

[2] Quot. from D.Nemes. "The Liberation of Hungary," pp. 114-115.

4. Repulsion of the enemy's counterattacks and liquidation of the encircled grouping in Budapest.

Having encircled the Budapest grouping of the enemy at the end of December, the Soviet troops immediately began to liquidate it. However, due to events on the outer perimeter of envelopment this process dragged on until February 13, 1945.

In January 1945 the German fascist command group tried to organize a counteroffensive near Budapest with the goal of routing the troops of the 3rd Ukrainian front on the west bank of the Danube, clearing the blockade of the encircled grouping and renewing the defense on the Danube. In January the enemy struck three blows on the troops of the front. On January 2 a blow was

struck on the right flank of the 4th Guards Army from the region southeast of /398
Komarno in the general direction of Bicske - Budapest. The assault group included the 4th Panzer corps of the SS comprised of five Panzer and 3 infantry divisions. An auxiliary blow (forcing the Danube in the region of Shyutte [transl. from Russ]) was executed by one infantry division, advancing along the Danube on Ezstergom. At the same time the German fascist forces encircled in Budapest undertook an attempt to break through to meet the grouping attempting to lift the blockade.

Up to the start of the Hitlerite forces' transition to the offensive no essential changes had taken place in the composition of the 3rd Ukrainian front. In the sector of the outer perimeter of envelopment between the Danube and Lake Balaton in a ~~120~~ 126-kilometer sector, the 4th Guards Army, including five rifle corps (13 divisions, 1 fortified area) and 1 mechanized corps, occupied the defense. The army had a single-echelon tactical order of battle. In the reserve were a mechanized corps, a rifle division and units of reinforcements. The front reserve was deployed in the zone of the army - the 5th Guards cavalry, the 18th tank and 1st Guards mechanized corps. The air force designated for support of the operations of the 4th Guards Army numbered 953 airplanes (against 775 enemy airplanes).

By the start of the advance the enemy exceeded the 4th Guards Army in manpower by 1.7 times, in tanks and assault guns by 2.4 times; in guns and mortars it was exceeded by our forces by 2.4 and 3.4 times respectively.

Front and army reconnaissance did not reveal the enemy's intention to strike a blow on the right flank of the army in time. The main forces of the 4th Guards Army at that time were concentrated on its left flank, where on January 1 attempts were made to liquidate the salient in the enemy's defense in the sector south of Mor. On the right flank the troops of the army, which had just gone over to the defensive, had not had time to consolidate.

On the night of January 2, 1945 after brief but powerful artillery preparation the Hitlerites went over to the offensive, and by dawn they had breached the defense of the right flank 31st Guards rifle corps, which had not had time to

dig even one continuous trench in the stony ground. Simultaneously in the direction of the auxiliary blow the enemy forced the Danube and made an assault landing in the region of Shyutte. Bringing his main forces into the battle in the morning, the enemy developed the advance in the direction of Bicske. By the end of January 6, that is in five days of advancing, at the cost of great losses he had progressed to a depth of 25-37 kilometers and broken through on a front of east of Ezstergom - Dorog - north of Bicske - Fel'syogalla - Bankhida [transl. from Russ.] . On this line, thanks to the heroism of the Soviet troops, their stubborn defense, and also the capable maneuvering of reserves, particularly the units of the 18th tank corps, the Hitlerites were stopped. The entire path of the enemy forces was sown with broken weapons, tanks and the corpses of German soldiers and officers. In one day alone, January 3, our infantrymen , artillerymen and anti-tank gunners destroyed 40 enemy tanks.

The Soviet soldiers very often emerged the victors even from an unequal battle. Twenty-eight soldiers of the 34th Guards rifle divisions under the command of Sr. Sgt. M.S. Starikov defended a small railroad station. Near the station were two brick two-story houses, one of which the soldiers had turned into a strong defended post. Four enemy tanks and six armored transports with infantry were moving toward the Guards. Approaching the house, the fascists opened fire on it and began to circle it from all sides. Guards N.G. Yevstratov, T.S. Lebedenko and V.P. Roskopanskiy, located on the second floor, eliminated a detail of two medium machine guns with accurate fire. Grenades flew at the Hitlerites from the second floor. An enemy tank and an armored transport were burned. The enemy's attack was beaten off. Making use of the temporary lull, on the orders of the commander some of the soldiers moved to the second house, located 100 meters from the first. When the Germans again went into the attack a squall of fire from the two buildings at once was unleashed upon them. This enemy was taken aback, but then opened fire with guns and machine guns on the second house. The Hitlerites resolved to take the building at all costs. That night 15 fascists burst into it. Hand to hand combat began, during which the enemy soldiers were eliminated. After /399
that the group from the second house returned to their comrades. The unequal battle continued and the Guards did not give in. Angered by their failure the

Hitlerites decided to destroy the building that the Soviet soldiers were defending. For four hours a tornado of artillery fire raged over the house. The Guards were in the cellar during the bombardment. They beat off the enemy's attacks with accurate small-arms fire and grenades. For five days the courageous fighters held their positions. When several fascists tried to burst into the house Sr. Sgt. Starikov leaped to the door and killed the German officer and four soldiers. Wounded, he remained with the soldiers and continued to direct the battle. Not the hail of gun and machine gun fire, nor the constant attacks of the superior enemy forces could break the will of the fearless Soviet fighters to resist. Only on the orders of the command group did the Guards retreat, unnoticed by the enemy, taking four wounded comrades. For valor, courage and heroism displayed in the battle for the railroad station Sr. Sgt. Starikov was awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union. The other Guards were decorated with orders of the USSR.[1]

The advance of the 2nd Ukrainian front played an important role in repelling the first blow of the enemy. On the orders of Headquarters of January 4, the 6th Guards Tank and 7th Guards Armies struck a blow from the region of Kamenica along the north bank of the Danube on Komarno with the goal of seizing the crossings on the Danube at Komarno. The tank formations were to break through to the rear of the enemy's Komarno grouping. At the same time a unit of the forces of the 3rd Ukrainian front was to advance from the region of Bicske in the direction of Nesmey - Komarno and jointly with the 2nd Ukrainian front rout the enemy grouping advancing on Budapest.[2]

On January 6 the 6th Guards Tank Army in cooperation with the 7th Guards Army, in a surprise night attack without artillery preparation, breached the enemy defense on the Grona River and rushed toward Komarno. The breakthrough of our mobile forces into this region on January 7 created a threat to the flank and rear of the enemy grouping advancing on Budapest. In order to contain the advance of the 2nd Ukrainian front the Hitlerites were compelled

---

[1] Archive of MD USSR, col. 243, inv. 265386, div. 5, pp. 96-98.

[2] IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #9496, p. 1.

to throw their reserves in there, which they had calculated on sending south of the Danube to develop the advance on Budapest. In the region between the Grona and Nitra Rivers desperate battles began. The enemy succeeded in pressing our forces somewhat. By the end of January 13 they went over to the defensive, consolidating on the Cata - Karva line.

On January 6 the 3rd Ukrainian front held back the fascist forces advancing on Budapest, but due to insufficient forces was unable to go over to the offensive itself. Thus the mission assigned by Headquarters remained, on the whole, unfulfilled. However, the actions of the 2nd Ukrainian front in the Komarno direction had a positive value, since the enemy, fearing the breakthrough of the Soviet forces to the flank and rear of his grouping south of the Danube, was forced to deploy considerable forces to repel our attack and cease the advance on Budapest.

As the result of the first blow the German fascist command group did not achieve significant success. Nevertheless, it did not reject the intention to seize Vicske and develop the advance on Bucharest. Leaving the composition of its groups of forces in the direction of the first blow almost unchanged, it concentrated a new assault group in the region of the salient south of Mor, including three Panzer divisions and one cavalry brigade. From there the Hitlerites intended to attack our troops in the direction of Zamoy, in order to join the main forces advancing from the north on Bicske and to continue the advance on Budapest together with them.

Unlike the first, the enemy's second blow was not unexpected by the Soviet troops. In the sector of the enemy advance the 20th Guards rifle corps /400 under the command of General N.I. Biryukov occupied the defense. The corps was quite well prepared for the defense. Behind its tactical order of battle at a depth of up to 10 kilometers the army reserve, the 7th mechanized corps, was deployed. Therefore in spite of the fact that the enemy had a considerable superiority in forces and equipment,[1] in the five days of the advance (January 7 through 11) he progressed only 6-7 kilometers. The blow of three Panzer divisions was repelled by the 20th Guards rifle corps jointly with the

[1] In men by 3 times, in guns and mortars by 3.6 times and in tanks by 6 times.

7th mechanized corps, without drawing on front reserves. In three days these corps beat off over 30 enemy attacks, destroying over 100 enemy tanks. The concentration in advance of ten tank destroyer, mortar and artillery regiments in the breakthrough sector played a major role. On January 12 the enemy was forced to go over to the defensive.

In repelling the second blow of the Hitlerites in the region of Zamoy the soldiers of the 5th Guards airborne division particularly distinguished themselves. On January 11 the positions of the division were attacked by 100 enemy tanks and two regiments of motorized infantry. At the cost of great losses the fascists seized Zamoy and cut off two regiments from the other forces of the division. But the Soviet soldiers did not flinch. Thus the fighters of the company, under the command of Lt. V.A. Korobiynikov of the 2nd rifle battalion, 11th Guards airborne regiment, repelled the attack of several fascist tanks and infantry. The fighters perished, but they did not allow the enemy to pass[1]. An immortal feat was accomplished by the commander of a platoon of the 1963rd tank destroyer artillery regiment, Jr. Lt. S.I. Yermolayev. Eighteen enemy tanks breached the battle order of the infantry and came out at the positions of the regiment. In a short time nine tanks were burned. However, the artillerymen also suffered heavy losses. Of the entire personnel in the platoon of Jr. Lt. Yermolayev he alone remained alive, wounded, bleeding profusely. A fascist tank moved toward the courageous officer. Yermolayev seized an anti-tank grenade, but because of his seriously wounded arm he was unable to throw it. Then, taking the grenade in both hands, he threw himself under the tank. An explosion resounded, and the tank was knocked out. S.I.Yermolayev was awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union.[2] The daring and brave actions of Soviet fighters made it possible to restore the position of the 5th Guards airborne division.

Thus neither the first nor the second strikes led to the results desired by the Hitlerites; they were unable to break into Budapest through Bichke. However, the enemy command group did not reject the idea of clearing the

---

[1] Archive of MD USSR, col. 243, inv. 265386, div. 5, p. 102.

[2] Ibid, pp. 102-104.

blockade of the Budapest grouping, the position of which was worsening steadily. The forces defending Pest had borne heavy losses. The Hitlerites who had remained alive, having demolished all of the bridges across the Danube, crossed to the western part of the city, Buda. Food ration norms were decreased, and an acute shortage of ammunition was being felt. In spite of the hopeless position of the surrounded forces, the officers still assured the soldiers that help would come to them.

The idea of the last, third strike by the enemy was to breach the defense of the Soviet forces between Lakes Velencei and Balaton, break through to the Danube north of Dunafoldvar and thereby split the troops of the 3rd Ukrainian front into two parts. After this, the enemy planned, covering himself from the south, to develop the advance with his main forces between Lake Velenei and the Danube on Budapest, raise the blockade of the encircled grouping and jointly with it destroy the 46th and 4th Guard Armies of the 3rd Ukrainian front with a blow to the rear[1]. An auxiliary blow would be struck on Bicske. The main forces were then to turn to the south along the Danube and, supported by the 2nd Panzer Army, which was to have struck a blow from the region of Nagykaniza on

---

[1]Archive of MD USSR, col. 243, inv. 266912, div. 1, p. 177.

to the east, and with a part of the forces of army group "F," advancing /401
from the south bank of the Drava along the Danube to the north, to smash the 57th Army of the 3rd Ukrainian front, throw the remnants of the forces of the front back beyond the Danube and seize a beachhead on its east bank.[1]

The enemy skillfully and secretly prepared the advance, confusing the command group of the 4th Guards Army and the 3rd Ukrainian front concerning his plans. The 4th tank corps of the SS was removed from the front north of Bicske, withdrawn to Komarno, loaded on train cars (it was announced to the soldiers that the corps was being sent to the central sector of the Soviet-German front) and moved out through Gyor to the area of Vesprema. These actions were incorrectly appraised by the commond group. It presumed that the enemy had begun to withdraw his tank units to the west, and ordered that "with aggressive operations of scouts and pursuit detachments"[2] he be prevented from breaking away from our forces. Such an appraisal of the enemy's plans only disoriented the officers.

The blow was planned to be struck on the night of January 18 in the sector of the 135th rifle corps, which included only a rifle division and a fortified region, two regiments of the division being positioned north of the enemy's intended breakthrough sector. The enemy's strike grouping numbered 560 tanks and assault weapons. It is natural that given such a ratio of forces and the incorrect evaluation of the enemy's intentions by our command group the 135th rifle corps was in difficult circumstances.

On the first day of the advance the enemy's tank units breached our defense and progressed 16-30 kilometers in depth. The 18th tank and 133rd rifle corps, which were sent to that area, not only were unable to stop the enemy's advance, but they themselves found themselves cut off from their

---

[1] Archives of MD USSR, col. 243, inv. 266912, div. 1, p. 53.

[2] IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #11635, p. 429.

troops. On January 19 the Hitlerites forced the Sarviz canal and, developing the thrust in the eastern direction, broke through by the morning of the following day to the bank of the Danube in the area of Dunapentele, splitting the troops of the 3rd Ukrainian front on the west bank of the Danube into two parts.[1] A tense situation had developed for the troops of the front.

On the orders of Headquarters of January 22, 1945 urgent measures were taken to liquidate the difficult situation that had developed. The 2nd Ukrainian front was ordered to organize a stout defense in the direction of Komarno, and southwest of Budapest to concentrate the 23rd tank corps and no less than one rifle corps in order to inflict a counterthrust no later than January 25-26 between Lake Velencei and the Danube in the direction of Sarosd. The 17th and 5th Airborne Armies were given the assignment to support the 4th Guards Army. The commander of the 3rd Ukrainian front was to reinforce the 18th tank corps with tanks and assault guns and bring the 133rd rifle corps into order. No later than January 25-26 these forces were to make a counterthrust between the Sarviz canal and the Danube in the direction of Sarosd toward the troops of the 2nd Ukrainian front. Simultaneously a defense was to be organized on the east bank of the Danube in the sector of Adony - Dunafoldvar and in the sector of the Sarvis canal - Lake Balaton, and the enemy was not to be permitted to reach the east bank of the river or to go south.[2]

Thanks to the measures taken the situation of our troops improved. In the region east and northeast of Lake Velencei, where the 1st mechanized and 5th cavalry corps occupied the defense, battles flared up. In these battles the 37th Guards regiment of the 11th Guards cavalry division particularly distinguished itself, inflicting heavy damage on the enemy. The regiment was commanded by Maj. M. F. Nedilevich. Heroism indeed belonged to the masses.

---

[1] On the night of January 22 the 18th tank and 133rd rifle corps struck a blow in the southeastern direction and broke out of the encirclement into the zone of the 26th Army.

[2] IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #9496, pp. 19-20.

Two hundred and twenty soldiers and officers were decorated with government awards.[1] /402 Stubborn battles took place not only on the ground, but in the air as well. Thus, for example, on January 22 our pilots conducted 33 air encounters above the field of battle, in which they shot down 36 enemy airplanes. Our two airborne armies completed 1,034 airplanes flights in one day.

In spite of the exceptional heroism of the Soviet troops, at the cost of great sacrifice the enemy succeeded by the end of January 24 in breaking through to Baracske. The enemy found himself 30 kilometers from the grouping encircled in Buda. But in the following two days, progressing another 10 kilometers in the northwestern direction, he finally exhausted his offensive capabilities. East of Pazmand [transl. from Russ.] a salient dangerous for the Hitlerites formed, 5-6 kilometers wide and up to 10 kilometers deep, within which the units of the 3rd Panzer division of the SS and the 1st Panzer division found themselves. The German advance was stopped. Conditions had been created for a counterstrike, as the ratio of forces had changed in the favor of the Soviet forces. In infantry and artillery they exceeded the enemy by 2-3 times, and only in tanks was there an insignificant advantage on the side of the enemy.

By the end of January 26 the preparations of both assault groups to make a counterstrike with the goal of routing the enemy that had broken through to the Danube were completed. To unite the efforts of these groups, as early as January 23 Headquarters ordered that the northern assault group comprised of the 23rd Tank and 104th rifle corps and the 104th rifle corps be transferred to the 3rd Ukrainian front.[2] The advance of the assault groups that began on January 27 developed with desperate enemy resistance, especially in the northern sector. But even here on the first day the enemy was already compelled to give the order to withdraw the troops, and by the end of January 29 the left flank formations of the 4th Guards Army succeeded in liquidating the salient in the area of Pazmand. In the following days, continuing the advance in the

---

[1] Archives of MD USSR, col. 243, inv. 265386, div. 5, pp. 106-110.

[2] IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #9496, pp. 21-22.

direction of the main strike (on Sarosd), the 4th Guards Army also advanced with two corps on Szekesfehervar. In this way it forced the enemy to withdraw part of his forces from the direction of the main blow to the region of Szekesfehervar and facilitated the advance of our troops on Sarosd.

The Corps of the 26th Army,[1] advancing from the south, progressed 12-16 kilometers on the first day and continued to develop their success in the northern direction. On February 2 in the region of the inhabited areas of Adony - Adony-Szabolsz the assault groups of the 4th Guards and 26th Army met, as a result of which the enemy was forced to retreat from the west bank of the Danube. Then turning to the west, both armies and the 135th rifle corps of the 57th Army,[2] which had advanced to the north, broke through by the end of February 7 to the front south of Lake Velencei - Seregejes - north of Enying - Lake Balaton, where on the order of the commander of the front they went over to the defensive. The troops of the right flank and the center of the 4th Guards Army also went over to the defensive on the line of Zamoy and the eastern outskirts of Szekesfehervar.

The overall result of the military operations of the troops of the 3rd Ukrainian front from January 2 through February 7 was the frustration of the enemy's plan to defeat the Soviet forces, raise the blockade on the encircled grouping and renew the defense on the Danube. The success of the defensive operations of the Soviet troops was due to their high maneuverability, timely transfer of reserves (especially tank and artillery-antitank formations and

---

[1] The administration of the 26th Army reported from Headquarters Reserves and united the 30th, 133rd rifle and 18th tank corps. The army was commanded by Lt. Gen. L.S.Skvirskiy, and after January 30, 1945 by Lt. Gen. N.A.Gagen.

[2] The 135th rifle corps was transferred after the Germans' third counterstrike to the 57th Army from the 4th Guards Army.

and units) to the threatened sectors, the rapid creation of defensive lines in the directions of the enemy's possible advance, the support of the airborne /403 armies of both fronts,and the significant reinforcement of the troops of the 3rd Ukrainian front with Headquarters reserves during the period of the enemy's counterattack. In the threatened sectors the numerical strength of the anti-tank artillery frequently reached 40 guns to 1 kilometer of the front. Flexible and capable maneuvering of forces and equipment, especially artillery, armored and mechanized units and formations, made it possible to create an advantage over the enemy in a very short time in the direction of his main thrust. Often, encountering new defensive lines prepared and occupied by Soviet troops, the Hitlerites were forced to cease offensive operations.

The 17th Airborne Army, which dominated the air throughout the entire operation, gave great assistance to the ground forces in repelling the enemy's thrusts. This to no small degree promoted the success of the defensive operations. In spite of unfavorable weather, the formations of the army operated very actively. In January they completed 16,501 airplane flights, while the enemy's aviation made only 4,646 airplane flights. In that month alone our pilots conducted 327 air battles, shooting down 281 enemy aircraft. At the most intense moments of the operation the 5th Airborne Army of the 2nd Ukrainian front also made mass strikes on the enemy, cooperating well with the 17th Airborne Army.

Simultaneously with the intense military operations of the 3rd Ukrainian front on the outer perimeter, battles went on to liquidate the encircled enemy grouping in Budapest. The elimination of the enemy in Pest was carried out by the Budapest group of forces of the 2nd Ukrainian front from December 27, 1944 through January 18, 1945. In Buda the troops of the 46th Army of the 3rd Ukrainian front were forced due to events on the outer perimeter to limit their defense. That is why immediately after the liquidation of the enemy grouping in Pest the Budapest group, with a slightly different composition (four rifle corps and one brigade of marine infantry) received the mission to eliminate the enemy in Buda. This assignment was fulfilled in the period from January 22 through February 13.

The military operations to liquidate the encircled enemy units took place under very difficult conditions. Budapest, which covered the approaches and shortest routes to Austria and the southern regions of Germany, and therefore having great strategic significance, had been turned by the enemy into a strong defended area. In the city 110 centers of resistance and over 200 strong points had been created. The centers of resistance usually embraced one or several blocks, including plants, factories, railroads stations, depots, and large buildings. The strong points consisted of one or two buildings and were distributed between the centers of resistance. For maneuvering of forces and equipment the enemy widely used underground installations: subways, sewer system and catacombs. Every street, every block and many houses were adapted by the fascists for a lengthy defense.

It was announced to the soldiers and officers of the fascist forces that a German grouping consisting of 12 Panzer and infantry divisions was hurrying to their assistance. The overwhelming majority of the personnel of the German units at first believed in the strength of their position. The soldiers of Hungarian units, who were fighting under duress, took convenient opportunities to surrender or, changing to civilian clothes, fought among the population.[1]

On December 29 the commanders of the front, Marshals of the Soviet Union Malinovskiy and Tolbukhin, wishing to avoid totally unnecessary bloodsheed, and also in the aims of preserving Budapest, its population, historical treasures and monuments of culture, delivered the command group of the encircled grouping an ultimatum, in which they offered humane terms of capitulation. The German general officers and soldiers were promised unhindered return after the war to Germany or to any other country of their choice; the Hungarians /404 were promised their immediate return to their homes; and wounded and sick were promised medical treatment. But the fascist command group desired at all costs to continue the resistance. The truce envoy of the 2nd Ukrainian front, Capt. Miklos Shteynmets,[2] was met with fire and killed. The truce envoy of

---

[1] Archive of MD USSR, col. 240, inv. 13765, div. 43/4, p. 46.

[2] Captain Miklos Shteynmets [transl. from Russ.] was a Hungarian by origin, the son of the Hungarian political emigrant Istvan Shteynmets, who was living in Moscow.

the 3rd Ukrainian front, Cap. I.A. Ostapenko, was informed by the Hitlerites of their refusal to capitulate, and as he returned he was treacherously shot in the back. The murder of the Soviet officers was a base crime and a violation of the international right to immunity of truce envoys.

"When the enemy does not surrender he is destroyed." The liquidation of the 188,000-man enemy garrison began. The Soviet troops carried on street fighting, gradually crushed the enemy's strong points, and eliminated his manpower. In these battles, as always, communists fought selflessly, drawing the other soldiers with them by their personal example.

An enemy infantry battalion with tanks was unleashed on the 2nd battalion of the 306th Guards rifle corps of the 109th Guards rifle division. The blow fell on one of the companies, which had not had time to consolidate on the line it had achieved. Under the pressure of superior enemy forces the company began to retreat. The threat arose of the enemy's breakthrough to the right flank of the regiment. Then the party organizer of the 2nd rifle battalion of the Guards, Lt.F.F. Konchitskiy, and a group of communists set up an ambush in one of the houses in the line of movement of the Hitlerites. The fascists were suddenly under submachine and machine gun fire. Bearing heavy losses, they halted, then began to retreat. Lt. Konchitskiy, leading his group, rushed at the enemy. After the courageous communists rushed all of the soldiers of the company. The position was restored.

The artillerymen of the 2nd battalion of the 259th Guards cannon regiment of the 5th Guards artillery division displayed heroism. Gun detachment commander Sgt. N.K. Bovt and his detail carried on fierce battles day and night for seven days. On January 8 the rifle company which was supported by the gun detachment of Sgt. Bovt found itself in a difficult position: fascists positioned in a corner house cut it off from the main forces of the battalion with machine gun and submachine gun fire. The artillerymen came to the rescue of the infantrymen. In spite of heavy fire, they rolled their heavy gun out to an open firing position and from a distance of 200 meters with direct laying they smashed the enemy nest. The company gained freedom of movement.

Overcoming the enemy's desperate resistance, our units and formations moved steadily forward, taking the city blocks one after another. The enemy's position grew worse every day. After January 26 all of his hopes of breaching the ring of encirclement collapsed. Starvation began. After February 1 the soldiers were each issued 75 grams of bread per day.[1]

The command group of the encircled grouping resolved to break out of the ring at all costs. On the night of February 13 approximately 16,000 soldiers and officers broke out with great losses in the northwestern direction and came out to the region of Perbal, where by evening of February 14 they were destroyed. Scattered groups of enemy forces located in Buda were subjected to total defeat. Our troops took approximately 33,000 prisoners. On February 13 the capital of Hungary was cleared of the enemy.

In the liquidation of the enemy grouping a major role was played by the 5th Airborne Army. Although from the air it was difficult to get bearings on the enemy's defenses, our air force made effective attacks on the enemy's strong points. Sniper-pilots who fired from fighter planes on small targets, which they had studied thoroughly before the attack, particularly distinguished themselves. The guidance of groups of aircraft to individual targets was /405 done by air force representatives stationed in the battle order of the rifle troops. The forward edge of our troops was designated by rockets. An air blockade was successfully organized, as a result of which the enemy was deprived of the opportunity to supply his forces in Budapest with the use of air force. This hastened the capitulation of the encircled grouping.

In all, from December 27 through February 14 the troops of the 2nd Ukrainian front destroyed up to 50,000 soldiers and officers of the enemy and took over 138,000 captive.[2]

The Soviet government highly valued the military success of our troops in the Budapest operation. In a decree of June 9, 1945 the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR instituted the medal "For the seizure of Budapest,"

---

[1] Archive of MD USSR, col. 240, inv. 73765, div. 43/5, p. 160.

[2] Ibid, inv. 32305, div. 2, p. 52.

which was awarded to all participants in the battles for that city. Many units and formations received the honorary designation "Budapest."

In the liberation of Budapest, Hungarian soldiers who had gone over to our side participated with the Red Army. At first they were combined into detached companies which in the composition of Soviet regiments stormed the South Depot, Gellert Hill and the area of the fortress. In the last days of the battle for Buda the BudaVolunteer Regiment was formed from these companies, and numbered approximately 2,500 men. Its commander was Lt. Col. Oskar Varihazy. In the battles for Buda the regiment lost approximately 600 men. The participation of the Buda Volunteer Regiment in the liberation of the Hungarian capital had great moral and political significance.[1] Many Hungarian patriots, risking their lives, helped the Soviet servicemen. The couple Layos and Layosne Sabo and the father and son Janos and Arpad Kleys committed a noble deed. In November 1944 they organized the flight from the hospital of the Budapest prison of four Soviet prisoners of war: officers I.N. Kovalenko, N.B. Sultanov, Sgt. Maj. V.A.Soloshenko and Sgt. P.M. Malyshev. All of them had been taken prisoner, being seriously wounded. For 53 days the Hungarian patriots hid the Soviet soldiers in Budapest, which was occupied by the Hitlerites. They were compelled several times to change their sanctuary until the region in which they were hiding was liberated by the Red Army.[2]

As the blocks of Budapest were cleared normal life in them was resumed. The storming of Buda was still continuing, but the residents of Pest had already emerged from the cellars where they had hidden during the fighting and began to clear the streets and squares. In the liberated regions of the city legal district organizations of the Hungarian Communist Party arose, and the Social Democratic Party, labor unions, the Smallholders Party and the National Peasants Party renewed their activities. The population of the city, which had been plundered by the Hitlerites, was very poor. The Soviet command group rendered them all the help within its power. Many Budapest children were saved from death by starvation by Soviet soldiers who shared their bread with them.

---

[1] See Toth Sandor. A Budai Onkentes Ezred tortenete. "Hadtortenelmi Kozlemenyek." 1960. 1 sz, 82, 84, 86-88, 92, 94 old.

[2] See "Krasnaya zvezda," 23 November 1958.

The moral responsibility for the lengthy nature of the battles in Budapest and in all of Hungary, and the destruction of the city, sacrifices and other deprivations borne by the population that were inevitably connected with them, lie not only on the German fascist command group, but also on the ruling circles of Hungary. Even in the first half of October, before Salashi came to power, the Hungarian army (especially the 3rd Army, which was covering the distant approaches to Budapest) could have opened the way for the Soviet forces to the capital, turned their arms against the occupiers and cooperated with the Red Army in their rapid expulsion from the country. From the military point of view this was completely feasible. Such a possibility was also presented from the political point of view, as was indicated by the visit of the Hungarian delegation led by Gen. Farago to Moscow. But the ruling circles of Hungary did not utilize the ultimately favorable coincidence of circumstances /406 to withdraw from the war and doomed the people to unnecessary sacrifices, and the capital to destruction. This occurred because the narrow class selfish interests of the bourgeoisie and landholders took the upper hand over the national interests.

While the Budapest group of forces of the 2nd Ukrainian front was occupied in the liquidation of the enemy group encircled in Budapest, the main forces of the front operating in the territory of Czechoslovakia advanced very slowly. The main reason for this was that a difficult situation had developed on the right wing of the front. Since November the adjacent front had stood at the Cnava River. The enemy, exploiting this, threatened the right wing of the 2nd Ukrainian front from the north.

On December 31 a Headquarters directive followed: "With the goal of bringing the forces of the left wing of the 4th Ukrainian front and the right wing of the 2nd Ukrainian front to the line of the Poprad River and the Grona River,"[1] to strike coordinated blows with the forces of the combined formations of these fronts: the 4th Ukrainian front on Smol'nik - Spiška Nova Ves flanking Koshice, and of the 2nd Ukrainian front on Rožnajava - Dobšina. The fronts set to the fulfillment of this assignment, but advanced slowly.

---

[1] IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #9493, p. 359.

The events in the main direction - the advance of five of our fronts, which on January 12-14 began the East Prussia and Vistula - Oder operations, significantly influenced the situation at the boundary of the 4th and 2nd Ukrainian fronts. The 4th Ukrainian front, advancing through the entire zone, struck a blow on the left wing in the direction of Košice - Poprad - Ružomberok. On January 20 the troops of that front, which had moved 50-60 kilometers, had already broken through to the line of Prešov - Košice. On January 28-29 they seized several cities in the valley of the Poprad River. These successes eased the advance of the troops of the right wing of the 2nd Ukrainian front. On January 26 they broke through to the line of Dobsina - Tisovec - west of Lucenec, and by the end of that month to the front of Brezno and west of Niemcza. In February, up to the completion of the liquidation of the Budapest grouping of the enemy no major changes in the front line on the right wing had occurred.

In all of the operations in the territory of Hungary the organs of the administrative rear functioned in organized fashion. In spite of the enormous difficulties of supplying the troops connected with the extension of communications and the differences in width of the railroad gauge, the rear institutions and units found themselves capable of handling the tasks before them. They mastered the shipment of cargo by railroad with Western European gauge, restored many highways and arranged the operation of automobile transportation well. The Red Army Rear Services Administration and its institutions displayed creative initiative in order to better organize the supply of the troops. Thus, for instance, serious steps were taken to utilize pipelines to supply the troops with fuel. In January 1945 two pipelines began to function through Ploesti - Buzau - Braila - Galat - Reni with daily production of 1,000 tons of fuel. This made it possible to improve the fuel supply of the Ukrainian front.[1] An example of the creative activity of our rear servicemen in the transport of cargo across the Danube in the winter of 1944-1945 is interesting. The drifting ice that began December 25 threatened to cut off all contact between the troops located on the right bank of the Danube and the rear services. The situation was saved by the fact that in the region of the city of

[1] IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #11865, pp. 9-10.

Baja on the foundations of the demolished bridge the rear servicemen constructed an elevated cableway across the river. In 12-13 hours 300-350 tons of cargo were conveyed across it. After the river became icebound the road units of the 3rd Ukrainian front built a crossing road on the ice and laid a light pipeline alongside it. In the last ten days of January 900 tons of fuel were conveyed through it. The selfless labor of the administrative rear supplied the advancing troops with all necessary means for conducting military operations.

On February 13, 1945 the second stage of the military operations to liberate Hungary, which had lasted for 108 days, ended. During that time Soviet troops had forced two major rivers, the Tisza and the Danube, cleared approximately two-thirds of the territory of Hungary of the enemy and liberated its capital, the city of Budapest. Army group "South" had suffered a serious defeat. In spite of the fact that the number of tanks and motorized divisions in its composition was brought up to 16 by January 5 (as opposed to 9 before the start of the Budapest operation), it was unable to complete its main mission - to hold the region of Budapest, rout the troops of the 3rd Ukrainian front on the west bank of the Danube, construct a strong defense on that river and hold the strategically important triangle of Vienna - Budapest - Graz as long as possible. However, by concentrating considerable forces in army group "South" the enemy slowed the speed of the Soviet troops' advance. In the entire period of the operation they progressed only 120-240 kilometers. /407

An important result of the Budapest operation was that our troops forced the Hitlerite command group to transfer a large number of troops to the Southwestern theater of military operations, particularly Panzer and motorized troops. As a result half of all enemy Panzer and motorized divisions operating on the Soviet-German front were south of the Carpathians. And this happenad at the time when the Red Army went over to the offensive north of the Carpathians in the main, Warsaw-Berlin direction!

The German command group attached enormous importance to the concentration of Panzer and motorized divisions in the region of Budapest, believing that they would be ab? to hal+ or even throw back the advancing Soviet

troops beyond the Danube, and it was extremely surprised when this did not happen. Friessner, who commanded army group "South," writes in his book devoted to the events in Rumania and Hungary in 1944 and the beginning of 1945, that the Chief of the General Staff of Ground Forces, Guderian, declared to him during the battles that he "cannot understand why the enemy could not be stopped using the 'armored armada' gathered here (in Hungary - Ed.) on a scale seen nowhere else on the Eastern front before."[1]

The Budapest operation demanded enormous effort of the physical and moral strength of the soldiers, officers and generals of both fronts. Suffice it to say that in no offensive operation in 1944 was it necessary to conduct such desperate defensive battles as in the Budapest operation, and that no encirclement of an enemy grouping and its liquidation had taken so much time.

Great credit in the resolution of the task assigned belonged to the political organs and party and Komsomol organizations. All party-political work during the operation was directed at fulfilling the decree of the State Defense Committee of October 27, 1944, and the order of the Soviet command group. Particular attention was devoted to ensuring that every soldier recognized that in the name of that noble goal he must give all of his strength to defeat the German fascist forces in the territory of the last satellite of Germany. In view of the fact that the retreating enemy left diversionary groups in our rear it was essential to increase vigilance.

Political organs and party organizations attached great importance to the vanguard role of communists in battle. Many examples can be cited of how in a difficult moment of battle communists, standing erect, with a cry of "For the Motherland!" led subunits to the attack.

News of the feats of the Soviet troops on the field of battle, as a rule, rapidly reached the masses of soldiers. In these aims, beside using various forms of oral agitation, battle newsletters, "lightning" leaflets, and "Pass it on" and "Glory to Heroes" leaflets were widely distributed.

---

[1] Hans Friessner. Verratene Schlachten. Hamburg, 1956, S. 205.

While moving into the depths of Hungary our soldiers met Soviet citizens /408 who had been liberated from fascist captivity. Their tales of the outrages and atrocities of the Hitlerites were used by the agitators to breed in the soldiers a burning hatred of the enemy.

Assault groups played an important role in the street fighting in beleaguered Budapest. Commanders and political workers developed in the soldiers of the assault groups such battle qualities as daring, initiative, military cunning, and the ability to act independently when cut off from their subunit.

In January 1945, when west and southwest of Budapest desperate defensive battles developed, party-political work was particularly intensified. Many divisions and some armies, as for example the 7th Guards, had fought in Stalingrad, and had enormous experience not only of offensive, but also of defensive operations. Officers and seasoned fighters led talks: "The tasks of the Soviet fighter on the defensive," "The well-entrenched soldier does not fear an enemy tank." Slogans appeared again: "Not one step back!" "Stand to the death!"

One special feature of the political work among the troops operating in Hungary must be mentioned. At times they were compelled to fight under exceptionally difficult conditions against large enemy forces. This could engender a certain perplexity in the soldiers and even in some of the officers: why after such huge successes in 1943-1944 are we meeting such difficulties? It was necessary to explain to the troops that the troops of the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts, drawing great enemy forces on themselves, were facilitating the fulfillment of objectives in the direction of the Red Army's main thrust in the winter campaign of 1945. When in mid-January the Soviet troops went over to the offensive in the Warsaw-Berlin direction, the newspaper of the 3rd Ukrainian front wrote: "Soldiers of the 3rd Ukrainian! You are right to be proud that your attacks on the German invaders in Hungary were one of the prerequisites for the present offensive of the Red Army (in the Warsaw-Berlin direction - Ed.)"[1]

---

[1] "Sovyetskiy voin," January 23, 1945.

The truly mass heroism displayed by the Soviet soldiers in repelling the enemy's counterstrikes near Budapest and in the battles during the liquidation of the encircled grouping entered the history of the Red Army's liberation struggle as a bright page.

5. Hungary's withdrawal from the war.

During the second stage of the battles for the liberation of Hungary, /408
further serious changes occurred in the political life of the country. After the expulsion of the German fascist forces from the eastern and central regions of Hungary the Communist Party began work under conditions of full political freedom.

On November 9, 1944 a meeting was held of the directing center formed by Communists in the territory cleared of the enemy. Representatives of several large local party organizations in the liberated regions also parti-

cipated. In response to the speeches of certain party workers who proposed that a dictatorship of the proletariat be established, the members of the directing center indicated that the immediate task of the party at that moment was not the building of Socialism, but the total liberation of the country from the occupiers and the creation of a democratic Hungary.

"We want," declared the representative of the leadership of the Hungarian Communist Party, J. Revay [transl. from Russian] at the meeting of communists of the city of Szeged on November 19, "not a bourgeois-capitalist, but a people's democracy, where the democratic liberties of the people are not just /409 a fig leaf, where the land is in the hands of the peasants, where the Hungarian landholders have been liquidated as a class, where the organs of government power are in the hands of the people... Sooner or later the time will come for the final reckoning with the entire Hungarian capitalist class. Without an independent Hungary, without Hungarian democracy, without the division of land, without the transfer of the land into the hands of the peasants, we cannot prepare for that struggle!"[1]

Thus the immediate and following tasks of the Communist Party were determined. For their fulfillment a broad coalition of democratic parties, all antifascist forces and organizations acquired primary importance. Achieving this, the Hungarian Communists stepped forward as the initiator of the transformation of the Hungarian Front into the Hungarian National Front of Independence, which was done on December 2, 1944 in Szeged. The new union included, in addition to the four parties that had previously comprised the Hungarian Front, the bourgeois-democratic party and labor unions.

The Hungarian National Front of Independence, which was a broader organization than the Hungarian Front, set itself more decisive goals. While the Hungarian Front was above all a union for the liberation of the country from the German fascist occupiers, the Hungarian National Front of Independence was trying to achieve not only the total expulsion of the occupiers, but also the

[1] Quoted from "Voprosy istoriyi," 1955, No. 4, p. 100.

establishment of new social systems. Its political platform was the "Program for national rebirth" developed by the Communist Party and published on November 30, 1944 in the newspaper "Neplap." The Communist Party was the only party in the country capable of working out a mobilizing, effective program to establish the life of the Hungarian people on a new basis. This document was accepted by all parties and organizations of the Hungarian National Front of Independence.[1]

On December 3 in Szeged a mass rally of workers was held which approved the program of the Hungarian National Front of Independence. Its main demands were the following: to aid the Red Army in the expulsion of the German occupiers from the country; to call to account the betrayers of the country and war criminals; to disband fascist, pro-German and other antinational organizations; to give the people political liberties, specifically the right to universal, secret, proportional elections; to purge the state apparatus of antinational, traitorous elements. The main social-economic demands were: the execution of broad land reform directed essentially at the liquidation of the feudal system of landholding; the establishment of state control of cartels and major banks; nationalization of oil production, coal and bauxite mines, ore mines and electrical plants; and the implementation of an eight-hour work day.

In the area of foreign policy the program demanded the establishment of close friendship with the Soviet Union and neighborly relations and cooperation with the surrounding countries, as well as with England and the USA. In it was stated," It is essential to end the mania of Hungarian imperialism, the reactionary dream of great Hungary. Once and for all it is necessary to end those urges, the goal of which is to dominate the peoples of the Danube valley..."[2] Finally, the program demanded that a national committee be formed in every inhabited area comprised of representatives of the democratic parties and patriotic antifascists as an organ of the Hungarian National Liberation Front of Independence, that a National Assembly be called to develop a constitution and form a Provisional Government having the support of the National Committees and responsible to the National Assembly.

---

[1] See Felszabadulas. 1944. szeptember 26-1945. aprilis 4. Dokumentumok hazank felszabadulasanak es a magyar nepi demokracia megszuletesenek tortenetebol. Budapest, 1955, 170-176 old.

[2] Ibid, pp. 174-175.

On December 5 this program was accepted by the workers at a meeting in Debrecen. Here, as in Szeged, a national committee was formed. In connection /410 with the liberation of Northern Hungary the center of the Hungarian National Front of Independence moved to Debrecen, but the importance of the Szeged Committee remained as great as before. Both committees - in Szeged and in Debrecen - played an enormous role in calling the Hungarian National Assembly, which was an extremely important landmark in the construction of a new, democratic Hungary. In the period from December 12 through 20 in the majority of large inhabited areas national committees were created. Under their guidance, at official meetings 230 delegates to the Provisional National Assembly were selected.

The first session of the National Assembly was held December 21 in Debrecen. Its composition included representatives of the workers, peasants, democratic intelligentsia, petty urban bourgeoisie and a part of the upper bourgeoisie, which had broken with the Germans. Among the delegates were 72 Communists, representatives of other parties included in the Hungarian National Front of Independence, and also representatives of the labor unions. On the first day the Provisional National Assembly passed a proclamation to the people that it "as the expressor of the national will, as the bearer of Hungary's sovereignty, is taking into its hands the matter of guiding the country, which has been left leaderless." In the proclamation it was stated, "We will give land to hundreds and thousands of landless and impoverished peasants..." Addressing the people and the Hungarian soldiers on the other side of the front, the Assembly called on them: "...Do not submit to the usurper government of Salashi... Turn your weapons against the German oppressors, support the Red Army - the liberator - join the struggle for Hungary's freedom!"[1]

On December 22 the Provisional National Assembly selected the Provisional Government, which was led by Col.-Gen. B. Miklos. The government included two representatives from each of the Social Democratic and Smallholders Parties, three from the Communist Party, one from the National Peasant's Party and four non-party representatives. The majority of members of the government

[1] Quot. from D. Nemes. "The Liberation of Hungary," p. 160.

were not true supporters of the Szeged program, but they could not ignore the circumstances, the demands of the people, specifically the peasants' age-old dream of land. The representatives of the bourgeois and landholders, maneuvering and agreeing to partial reforms, hoped to preserve the economic and political positions of the propertied classes. They did not dare to openly reject the program of the Hungarian National Front of Independence, because they feared to expose themselves to the people. In the first governmental declaration it was stated that the program of the Hungarian National Front of Independence was the government's program of activity. But that, as the events of 1945-1946 showed, was a hypocritical announcement on the part of the right wing of the government and the right wing of the National Assembly.

In its declaration the Provisional Government stated that it was breaking with fascist Germany and would try to achieve rapid completion of a truce with the USSR and its allies. On December 28, 1944, Hungary broke off diplomatic relations with Germany and declared war on it. This act had great internal political and international significance.

The calling of the Provisional National Assembly, the formation of the Provisional Government, the passing by those organs of extremely important laws, were met by the Hungarian people with enthusiasm throughout the entire liberated territory of the country. At mass rallies the population approved the platform of the new government. Leading representatives of the Hungarian emigre bourgeoisie spoke out in support of the government program. Many former diplomatic representatives who had broken their connection with the government after the events of March and October 1944 also supported it.

The establishment of new governmental authority had an enormous influence on the entire life of Hungary. The people's democratic power was directed first of all against imperialism and fascism, against landholder and large /411
capitalists, who had collaborated with the German occupiers.

In the beginning of January a Hungarian government delegation arrived in Moscow. The negotiations conducted January 18-20 were completed with the signing of a truce agreement between the USSR, England and the USA on one

side and Hungary on the other. The agreement contained the following very important positions. Hungary was obliged to provide not fewer than eight infantry divisions with reinforcement means to participate in the war under the general control of the Union (Soviet) High Command, and also to assign the necessary resources (finance, transport, provisions, fuel, etc.). Hungary waived all rights to the territory of Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and Rumania occupied after December 1, 1937 and took upon itself the obligation to return to the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia all material items of value removed from there. The government of Hungary took upon itself the obligation to dissolve all fascist organizations in the country. Until the conclusion of a peace treaty the publication and distribution of literature, the operation of places of entertainment, radio stations and communications were to be done with the agreement of the Soviet Supreme High Command. The agreement called for the restoration of civil administration in all regions of Hungary at a distance of not less than 50-100 kilometers from the front line. The duty of fulfilling the instructions of the Soviet command group was imposed on the civil authorities. Finally, in the 18th and 19th articles of the agreement it was stated that to supervise the fulfillment of the truce conditions an Allied Monitoring Commission was to be instituted under the general control of the Union (Soviet) High Command.[1]

The truce agreement had great significance for the further fate of the country. It laid a strong foundation for the creation of a truly independent, democratic Hungary, liquidated the regime of imperialist occupation of Hungary's neighboring countries and declared the Hitlerite "territorial grants" invalid. Hungary's sovereignty was partially limited during the period of the agreement's effectiveness by the Allied Monitoring Commission, the activity of which was directed at the total eradication of fascism in Hungary and the support of a truly democratic order in the country. In this the Allied Monitoring Commission rendered great assistance to the democratic forces of the country in shaping their authority. The activity of the commission also promoted the establishment of normal relations with the neighboring states.

---

[1] See Foreign policy of the Soviet Union during the Patriotic War. Documents and materials. Vol. III. 1 January-3 September 1945. Moscow, Gospolitizdat, 1947, pp. 76-81.

The enormous significance of the truce agreement consisted in the fact that it helped the democratic forces of Hungary to undermine the positions of reaction within the country. The Hungarian Communist Party, skilfully exploiting the new conditions developed as the result of the liberation of a large part of Hungary by the Red Army, and having achieved the unity of the democratic forces of the country, at that time had already played a decisive part in calling the Provisional National Assembly, in the creation of the Provisional Government and in the passing by these organs of the first, most important laws of the new Hungary.

Under the guidance of the Hungarian Communist Party during the period when the Budapest operation was conducted, mass self-defense of the people was organized against the inhuman actions of the Hitlerites, who were attempting to turn Hungary into a desert zone. In Debrecen, Nyiregyhaza, Solnok, Kecskemet, the fascists destroyed a large number of enterprises, including communal enterprises. They removed all stores of provisions from many cities and inhabited areas. The occupiers stole cattle from villages, including landholders' farms.[1] Both military organs and soldiers and officers robbed the population. In the order to the 6th German fascist army of November 21 /412 Gen. M. Freter-Piko [transl. from Russ.] noted, "Recently robbery of the Hungarian population by German soldiers has acquired a mass character... The soldiers send numerous parcels to their homeland, the contents of which were acquired by plunder. Thus, for example, fur coats, radio receivers, ladies undergarments, bedding, watches and so forth are sent."[2] The fascist command group and the government of Salashi attempted to organize mass forced evacuation of the Hungarians. All men of ages 19 to 49 years were declared mobilized. Youths of 17-19 years were sent under duress to Germany and added to the composition of military units.[3]

This tyranny of the occupiers and their Nilashist minions encountered the resistance of the broad masses of Hungarian workers. In Miskolc, Diosgyor and other cities, workers did not fulfill the orders of the German authorities

---

[1] Archives of MD USSR, col. 240, inv. 16392, div. 12, pp. 269-270.

[2] IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #11635, p. 444.

[3] Archives of MD USSR, col. 243, inv. 62688, div. 2, p. 51.

to evacuate enterprises. When the Hitlerites conducted round-ups with the purpose of driving away the residents, especially workers, they scattered to outlying farmsteads or hid in the forests. The peasants refused to deliver provisions, hid food products and drove cattle into the forests.

The German command group was forced to admit that the order to evacuate was not being carried out. In a report on November 7 to the commander of army group "South," Gen. Friessner, Gen. Freter-Piko wrote, "On the basis of information received and the observations I have made I certify that the order of the Hungarian government to evacuate is being carried out by only a small number of people (referring above all to upper officials, capitalists, and landholders - Ed.)... Those who evacuate, particularly young men, are accused of dragging out the war. Even the gendarmery calls these people "extenders of the war."[1]

Hungarians sabotaged defense works into which they were drawn by the German authorities. The Salashist burgomaster of Budapest admitted that a large segment of the population of the city refused to go to work. In a report of November 22 he stated that not one person from Chepel' had gone out to work, from Pesterszeket in two days only 100 instead of 2,500 persons had gone out, and from Kispest only 400 instead of 2,500. The same picture was seen in the provinces. The fascist "government plenipotentiary in the region of military operations," reporting on incidents of refusal to do defense work throughout the country, certified furthermore that in the territory occupied by the Red Army the population assisted in every way. Another form of the people's resistance was mass desertion from the fascist army, refusal to be conscripted into the German forces, and assistance to deserting soldiers and those who did not want to join the army.[2]

The activity of the Communist Party had yet another important aspect. Leading the matter of forming a new government, the Party ensured relatively normal conditions in the rear of the Soviet forces that were continuing the struggle to finally expel the German fascist occupiers from the western and southwestern regions of Hungary.

---

[1] IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #13509, p. 137.

[2] See D. Nemes. "The Liberation of Hungary," pp. 119-120.

During the Budapest operation a partisan movement began to develop in the enemy's rear. The partisans of the capital frequently interrupted railroad communications on the district railroad in the Budapest - Vaz sector, and attacked groups of German and Hungarian fascists. The Ujpest detachment, which numbered up to 100 persons, was a major partisan detachment in the capital. The detachment particularly successfully countered the destruction of city enterprises by the Germans. In the southeastern parts of the capital operated the Kispest detachment. The Miskolc partisan detachment "Mokan", which included approximately 150 persons, thwarted the removal of equipment from the plants of the Miskolc district by the invaders.[1] A partisan detachment made up of communist miners operated west of the Danube in the area of the Pilis and Bakon' Mountains. In reports of the Salashist authorities it was stated that from September 18 through November 1 alone had been observed 22 incidents of demolition of trains, 34 cases of armed encounters (attacks on posts and patrols), and many disruptions of telegraph communications.

Beside military operations the partisans conducted educational work among the population. Certain detachments, for example the Petofi detachment and the detachment of S. Nogrady [transl. from Russ.], distributed leaflets. According to Hungarian sources, the partisan detachments included 2,000-2,500 persons. And although, as was noted earlier, they did not render fundamental and direct military assistance to the Soviet forces, the moral-political value of their activity was great.

As the result of intense military operations for the liberation of the eastern and central regions of Hungary, the Trans-Carpathian Ukraine and the eastern regions of Czechoslovakia, the Red Army inflicted a decisive defeat on the German fascist forces. From the beginning of October 1944 to mid-February 1945 the Soviet troops routed 40 divisions and 3 brigades of the enemy. In the same period 8 infantry divisions and 5 brigades were totally destroyed.[2]

During that time army group "South" received 37 divisions of reinforcements, including 12 Panzer and motorized divisions, and 8 brigades.[3] Drawing

---

[1] Archive of MD USSR, col. 240, inv. 16392, div. 12, p. 117.

[2] Collected Materials on the Composition of the Forces of Fascist Germany, 4th Ed., pp. 178-179, 194-195, 210-211; 5th Ed., pp. 24-25, 42-45.

[3] Ibid.

such a number of enemy forces on themselves, the troops of the 2nd, 3rd and 4th Ukrainian fronts rendered invaluable assistance to the fronts operating in the main direction.

Particularly fierce battles occurred in the territory of Hungary. In slightly over four months, up to the middle of February 1945, two-thirds of the Hungarian land were liberated. Hungary - the last of Germany's satellites - withdrew from the unjust, predatory war which it had conducted through the fault of the ruling classes. The provisional Hungarian Government broke off military, diplomatic and economic relations with Germany and declared war on it.

The Red Army broke the fetters of foreign oppression, restored the national independence of Hungary, and gave the Hungarian people the opportunity to begin to establish a truly democratic order. In a desperate struggle it destroyed the main forces of the Horthy-Nilashist army and thereby facilitated the creation of a new government apparatus. The presence of the Red Army in Hungary created favorable conditions for the free development of the struggle of the progressive forces against the rule of the landholders and capitalists.

The military operations of the Soviet troops in Hungary thwarted the plans of the British imperialists to preserve a reactionary regime there, as they had done in Greece. The Red Army expelled the fascist horde from the Mid-Danube plain before the Anglo-American command group began to realize their plans to break through to Hungary through Istria and the Ljubljana Gap.

The Soviet government conducted in Hungary, as in other countries liberated by the Red Army, a deeply internationalist policy. It was directed toward drawing the Hungarian people into the struggle against the Hitlerite yoke, to give them the opportunity to decide for themselves the question of the democratization of the country, of its social and governmental order.

In developing the struggle for the establishment of a truly democratic /414
order in Hungary the leading role was played by the Communist Party. After 25 years in the underground it found the strength in itself to carry on tireless activity, in order to begin to form a people's democratic republic

on the wreckage of the Horthy government. In connection with the 40th anniversary of the day of the formation of the Communist Party of Hungary, the CC CPSU wrote in its greeting to the Central Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Worker's Party, "The Communist Party of Hungary carried high the banner of the great teaching of Marxism-Leninism through the harsh years of the twenty-five year rule of the bloody Horthy-fascist regime, and led the national movement for the liberation of the country and the national independence of Hungary, which ended in the establishment of the people's democratic order."[1]

The Hungarian people hold sacred the memory of the Soviet soldiers who fell in the battles for the freedom and independence of their homeland. "Wherever you go in Hungary," said Janos Kadar, "you can see the graves of Soviet soldiers. In them rest heroes, Soviet soldiers who gave their lives for the freedom of our people. We hold their memory sacred and promise that the road to their graves will never be overgrown."[2]

After the liberation of the eastern and central regions of Hungary considerable enemy forces still remained in its western regions. Furthermore, as the events of March 1945 showed, the Hitlerite command group, in spite of the critical situation in the Berlin direction, continued to reinforce army group "South." The Debrecen and especially the Budapest operations of the Soviet forces created the conditions to complete the rout of army group "South" in Western Hungary and for the subsequent advance in the general direction of Vienna.

---

[1] "Pravda," Nov. 20, 1958.

[2] Quot. from "Pravda," April 4, 1960.

CHAPTER 14

THE LIBERATION OF THE PEOPLES OF YUGOSLAVIA. THE RETREAT OF THE GERMAN FORCES FROM ALBANIA AND GREECE.

1. The situation in Yugoslavia. The missions of the Soviet forces.

The Yugoslav people had carried on an heroic struggle against the fascist /41
invaders under the guidance of their Communist Party since the first days of the occupation of the country. Up to 1944 the People's Liberation Army (PLAY) which had grown and been strengthened in severe battles, was in operation, and cleared a considerable part of the country of the enemy. The popular masses desired to totally expel the occupiers and complete the construction of a new, democratic, independent Yugoslavia as a federation of equal peoples.

The growing people's liberation war in Yugoslavia worsened the position of the German fascist army, which was difficult even without that. Under conditions when the Soviet forces could arrive in the Balkans, in Poland, in Germany itself, and the Allies were ready to begin the landing in Northern France, fascist Germany was trying by any measures to reinforce its rear. The Hitlerite command group was especially concerned by the greatly worsened situation in Yugoslavia. In order to free its hands in the Balkans, at the end of May 1944 it organized its seventh major offensive with the goal of inflicting a crushing defeat on the People's Liberation Army of Yugoslavia.[1]

[1] The first six big offensives of the German-fassist troops in Yugoslavia were conducted in 1941-1943. They and the selfless struggle of the Yugoslav peoples at this time are discussed in Volumes 2 and 3 of this edition: Volume 2, pp 198-199, 370-371; Volume 3, pp 515-518

This offensive by the German occupation forces and also by military formations of traitors to the Yugoslav people, was conducted in almost the entire territory of the country. However, the Hitlerites struck their main blow in the Bosnian Krajne in the area of the city of Drvar, where the Supreme Headquarters of the PLAY was located (maps 14 and 15). On May 25 the German command group dropped an airborne assault force of 700 men there. In Drvar resistance was offered to the enemy by the cadets of the officers' school and a guard battalion of the Supreme Headquarters. Units of the 1st Proletarian corps operating in that area achieved the rout of the assault landing group. In the /416
morning of May 26 German tank and mechanized forces arrived. For ten days the Hitlerites hounded the Supreme Headquarters of the PLAY, which disorganized its communications with the troops. The necessity arose of changing the disposition of the Headquarters. On the night of June 4 in the airplane of a Soviet military mission flown by Pilot A.S. Shornikov in two flights to Kupresko Polje (75-80 kilometers west of Sarajevo) Marshal J. Tito, the members of the Politburo of the CC Communist Party of Yugoslavia (CPU) and the main personnel of the workers of the Supreme Headquarters were flown to Bari (Italy).[1] Then they crossed over to the island of Vis near the coast of Dalmatia. The occupiers' attempt to render the peoples' liberation movement leaderless had failed.

Almost all summer the German fascist invaders conducted offensive operations in other regions of the country as well. But the formations of the PLAY and the partisan detachments maneuvered skilfully, avoiding encounters in unfavorable circumstances and engaging the enemy in battle under conditions advantageous to themselves. The German forces suffered great damage. According to a report of the Supreme Headquarters of the PLAY, during the seventh offensive the occupiers lost over 43,000 soldiers and officers. This major offensive by the Hitlerites and their servants, like the previous six offensives, did not achieve its goal.

---

[1] See Soviet Armed Forces in the battle for the liberation of the peoples of Yugoslavia. Moscow, Voyenizdat, 1960, p. 203.

In the summer battles of 1944 the People's Liberation Army and the partisan detachments were strengthened ever more and considerably increased in numbers. The people's forces, which in September numbered approximately 400,000 persons according to Yugoslav calculations, consisted of 15 army corps (50 infantry divisions), 2 operations groups (each of 2 infantry brigades), 16 detached infantry brigades and 130 partisan detachments.[1] The numerical strength of the PLAY divisions varied, from 2,000 to 12,000 persons. As weapons the divisions and partisan detachments had primarily rifles, submachine guns and light machine guns. Artillery equipment was insufficient. In almost all brigades there were only three or four, or in a few up to ten 82 mm caliber mortars. Some divisions had one or two batteries or a battalion of mountain or anti-tank guns. The corps had artillery divisions or brigades of mixed composition at their disposal. On the whole the PLAY was experiencing an acute shortage of armaments, especially heavy. "The partisan forces," reported the political directorate of the 3rd Ukrainian front in September 1944, "impatiently await the arrival of the Red Army, from which they hope to receive weapons."[2]

The people's war against the occupiers was closely interwoven with the class struggle for the revolutionary reorganization of bourgeois-monarchist into a democratic Yugoslavia. By 1944 the revolutionary organs of the people's power had been finally formed and strengthened: the Antifascist Veche of the People's Liberation of Yugoslavia (AVPLY) and the National Committee for the Liberation of Yugoslavia (NCLY), which was given the rights of a Provisional Government. In Bosnia and Hercegovina, Serbia, Slovenia, Croatia, Montenegro, Sandzhaka [transl. from Russ.] , Vojvodina and after 1944 Macedonia, regional Veche and their executive organs were functioning. In the cities and towns existed people's liberation committees. The extent to which the network of organs of the people's power was developed may be judged by Croatia. Here in May 1944 operated 5 regional, 19 okrug, 112 district, 534 communal, 3,029 town, 22 city and 4 local people's liberation committees. In September the rear of the PLAY - the liberated territory of Yugoslavia - was divided into 15 corps regions consisting in turn of military okrugs.[3] The central and local

---

[1] See "Historical Atlas of the Liberation War of the Peoples of Yugoslavia, 1941-1945." Izd-vo "Jugoslavije," Beograd, 1957, Map. 31.

[2] Archive of MD USSR, col. 243, inv. 32283, div. 12, p. 391.

[3] Op. cit., map 31.

organs of the people's power represented and expressed the interests of the people and enjoyed their broadest support. Having acquired considerable /417 experience in economic, cultural and administrative activity, at that time they naturally devoted their main attention to providing the People's Liberation Army with everything necessary to conduct the war against the fascist occupiers and their Yugoslav minions.

At the end of 1943 an historic event occurred in the life of the Yugoslav peoples. In the city of Jajce, in Bosnia, the second session of the AVPLY was held, which declared Yugoslavia a democratic federated state, and the Antifascist Veche of the People's Liberation of Yugoslavia the supreme legislative and executive organ of the country. The session declared the emigrant government an illegal authority and forbade King Peter II to return to the country until the end of the war.[1] The resolutions of the session in many respects predetermined the future political system of Yugoslavia.

In this difficult period the young Yugoslav state had a particular need for cooperation, above all for international recognition. The Soviet government supported it resolutely. It announced that it regarded the resolution of the second session of the AVPLY as positive and promoting the further struggle of the Yugoslav people, as a testimony to the important successes of the new leaders of Yugoslavia in the matter of unifying all of the national forces of the country. Simultaneously the Soviet government expressed its negative attitude toward the activities of D Mihajlovic,[2] who had since 1941 held an essentially traitorous position. At the end of 1943 the government of the USSR resolved to send a military mission to Yugoslavia led by Lt. Gen. N.V. Korneyev, in order to help the Yugoslav people with its struggle against the fascist occupiers. When this decision was being made the troops of the Red Army were 1,200-1,300 kilometers from the dispositions of the Supreme Headquarters of the PLAY. The Soviet military mission, having left Moscow on January 17, 1944 reached the place with great difficulty only on February 23. Unlike the military missions of the Americans or the British, the Soviet military mission was accredited at the National Committee of the Liberation of Yugoslavia. This underlined not only its military but also its political character.

---

[1] These questions are elucidated in Volume 3 of this edition, pp. 516-517.

[2] See Soviet foreign policy of the Soviet Union during the Patriotic War. Docs. and Maters. Vol. I. 22 June 1941-31 Decm 1943. M., Gospolitizdat, 1946, pp. 435-436.

Along with political support, the Soviet Union also rendered the Yugoslav patriots material aid. Marshal Tito told Gen. Korneyev of the serious supply situation in the Yugoslav fordes. "Now," he said, "we are feeding the soldiers twice a day, and in two or three weeks, if there is no help, we will have to feed them only once a day."[1] On July 5, 1944 Tito wrote to Stalin, "We greatly need many more weapons and provisions than the Allies have sent us up until now. .. Considering England's position in relation to Serbia, where they (the British - Ed.) are attempting by every means to strengthen the position of the king's followers, that is of the Chetniks transl. from Russ., and to weaken our position, we cannot count on any effective assistance from the Allies... We need your very greatest help."[2]

Even before the receipt of this letter the Soviet command group had taken energetic measures to aid the PLAY with arms, equipment, provisions and medical supplies. By its decision of May 8, 1944 a special base was formed in the Vinnitsa region, in the little town of Kalinovka, from where airplanes of the 5th division of long-range aircraft conveyed cargos for the PLAY. Since Kalinovka was located at such a distance from Drvar that the transport planes were unable to reach the assigned site and return in one night, the government of the USSR also decided to organize an air base at Bari (in the liber- /418
ated territory of Italy.)[3] From these two bases from May through September Soviet airplanes transferred 920 tons of various cargos to Yugoslavia: arms, ammunition, clothing, footwear, communication equipment, and medical supplies. In August and September over 80 Soviet doctors and nurses and 80 Yugoslav radio operators trained in the USSR[4] were supplied to the PLAY through the base in Bari. The radio operators were supplied with radio equipment to organize communications between units, formations and the heads of the PLAY. The aid of the USSR increased still more after the breakthrough of the Red Army to

---

[1] Quot. from Soviet Armed Forces in the battle for the liberation of the peoples of Yugoslavia, p. 47

[2] IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #14579, pp. 110-111.

[3] Ibid, p. 134. Due to the delays of the British authorities the base in Italy was organized only toward mid-June 1944 (AVP USSR, col. 06, inv. 6, p. 4, div. 23, pp. 4-5; col. 07, inv. 9, p. 58, div. 25, pp. 67-68; inv. 9a, p. 62, div. 4, pp. 22-24.)

[4] Ibid, pp. 135-136.

the Yugoslav border, and the creation of a base in the Rumanian city of Krajov, in immediate proximity to the regions of operations of the partisan formations. Thus the Soviet Union strengthened its sincere, friendly relations with the Yugoslav people with actions.

In 1943 the governments of the USA and England totally supported the emigre government of Yugoslavia and its military representatives within the country. In 1943, when it became obvious that PLAY was gaining one victory after another, that the king and the ministers, having fled the country, had lost all contact with the people and found themselves isolated, and that Mihajlovic was collaborating with the occupiers, the American-English ruling circles were forced to change their position. Understanding that the ratio of forces in Yugoslavia had formed in favor of the communists, they decided to establish contact with the leaders of the people's liberation movement. In the fall of 1943 military missions of the USA and England arrived at the Supreme Headquarters of the PLAY and the partisan detachments.

But the governments of the United States and England did not refuse to support the Yugoslav reaction. On December 9, 1943 the Secretary of State of the USS, C. Hull, announced officially that "the USA will render assistance on the basis of the law of transmission on loan or lease armaments both to the partisans and to the Chetniks in Yugoslavia..."[1] Hull indicated that England had taken a similar line, and the United States was in complete agreement. It should be noted that this was not entirely the case. While the government of England recalled its military mission from Mihajlovic's headquarters in 1944, the USA left its military mission there until 1945, that is until the moment of the Chetniks' total defeat. One thing is beyond question: both governments, the USA and England, agreed on the main point. They desired to subordinate the people's liberation movement to themselves and restore in Yugoslavia a bourgeois-monarchist regime. Churchill's government took "measures to attempt to form an alliande between Tito and the forces located in Serbia (referring to the detachments of Chetniks - Ed.) and also with all supporters of the Royal Yugoslav government..."[2] With this very

---

[1] Quot. from "Izvestiya," Dec. 11, 1943.

[2] W.S. Churchill."The Second World War", Vol. VI, p. 68.

purpose, onthe demand of the British the emigre government of B. Puric was removed. The formation of a new government was entrusted to I. Subasic, who recognized in words the heroic struggle of the PLAY and officially proposed that all antifascist forces of Yugoslavia unite. The military missions of the western allies stepped foward in the role of intermediaries between the leaders of the people's liberation movement and the emigre government.

From June 14 through 17, 1944 on the island of Vis negotiations took place between Tito and Subasic, who had arrived there accompanied by the British ambassador R. Stevenson. The western powers hoped to achieve an agreement that would make it possible in the future to liquidate the NCLY. For this very reason Subasic proposed the unification of the National Committee of the Liberation of Yugoslavia and the Royal Government. However, the representatives of the NCLY rejected this proposal and presented their own terms.

As the result of the negotiations an agreement was concluded calling /419
for the formation of an emigre government made up of persons who had not been compromised during the years of the war. Its main task was to organize aid to the People's Liberation Army. The government of Subasic was obliged to issue a declaration recognizing the NCLY and all of the democratic victories achieved under its guidance, and also to condemn traitors and collaborators.[1] The NCLY agreed in turn to publish an announcement of cooperation with the Subasic government and to emphasize in it that until the end of the war it would not raise the question of the country's ultimate governmental system. In spite of the fact that the representatives of the NCLY consciously made some concessions to Subasic, on the whole the Tito-Subasic agreement was a major foreign policy success of the people's liberation movement. Whatever goals the king's circle and its British masters might be pursuing, the agreement objectively recognized the revolutionary changes in Yugoslavia. It meant that in the future the actual existing power in the country, the National Committee of the Liberation of Yugoslavia, would be taken as the basis for the reorganization of the government.

---

[1] See V Congress of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, Zagreb, 1948, str. 138-139.

This great victory of the NCLY was achieved to a great extent thanks to the support of the Soviet Union. On June 15 the government of the USSR informed Subasic that it would welcome a union of all of the forces fighting in Yugoslavia against fascist Germany and the traitors to the people A. Pavelic, M. Nedic, D. Mihajlovic and L. Rupnik. The Soviet government announced its readiness to "support a Yugoslav government formed with the abovementioned goal on the basis of agreement with Marshal Tito, who has already achieved considerable success in uniting the peoples of Yugoslavia and has, indeed, actual power in the country." [1]

In a letter to the People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs of the USSR on July 5, 1944 Marshal Tito thanked the Soviet government "for its diplomatic support and material aid" and expressed confidence that that support would also be rendered in the future, because "in these decisive days it is needed more than ever before."[2]

On July 7 Subasic formed a new government in London. Two ministerial posts in it were taken by supporters of the national liberation movement. The following day this government published a declaration in which it announced its recognition of the "provisional directorship established by AVPLY and the NCLY."

However, the western powers wished by any means to replace the people's control with a bourgeois-monarchist one. On August 12 Churchill met with Stalin in Naples and tried insistently to convince him to enter into negotiations with King Peter. But these proposals were declined. During the meeting with the British Prime Minister again raised the question of a possible assault landing of British troops on the Istrian Peninsula. Tito had already set forth his point of view on this matter on July 5, 1944 in a letter to the head of the Soviet government. "...Such a landing," he wrote, "would not be pleasant for us, as I am sure that it would make things unpleasant for us in the country, due to which the matter could come to various types of clashes. But if it reaches negotiations on a landing, we will propose that as small a number of forces as possible be landed."[3] Further Tito wrote, "In the event

---

[1] Quot. from "Mezhdunarodnaya zhizn'," 1958, No. 8, p. 80.

[2] Ibid.

[3] IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Gr. Pat. War, Inv. 14579, p112

of a landing we cannot agree to any military or civil authority by them in our country that the Allies should establish where they arrive, because we have existing both military and civil authority." In the letter it was emphasized that in connection with all of this "we (Yugoslavia - Ed.) would treasure your support. In my opinion, the strongest support in all respects /420 would be for the Red Army to move across the Carpathians and Rumania in the southern direction."[1] However, military and political events in Yugoslavia in the subsequent months developed in such a way that until the completion of the military operations of the Soviet troops in the territory of Yugoslavia the British did not effect a landing on the Adriatic coast of that country. Their troops arrived in the area of Trieste only at the beginning of May 1945.

Such was the state of the people's liberation movement in Yugoslavia and the attitude of the great powers to it. By September 1944, that is by the time of the Red Army's breakthrough to the Yugoslav border, the peoples of Yugoslavia under the guidance of the Communist Party had achieved considerable success in the struggle against the foreign invader and traitors to the Homeland. But however significant was the progress, the Yugoslav patriots were unable to totally clear their land of the enemy due to the inequality of the forces of the belligerents, particularly in the logistical respect. All of the most important cities and the main railroads and automobile roads were still in the hands of the occupiers. Only after the breakthrough of the Soviet forces to the Yugoslav border did the prospect open of the complete liberation of the country from the German fascist invaders. In the first days of September Tito asked the head of the Soviet military mission in Yugoslavia to convey to the State Defense Committee of the USSR a request for the Red Army to enter Yugoslavia, since the PLAY had no heavy guns or tanks with which to break the German forces located there or to prevent their retreat from Greece to the north.[2] Reporting this, Lt. Gen. Korneyev stated, "The Marshal believes that joint operations by the Red Army and the PLAY, beside having a great military effect, would considerably strengthen the national liberation movement."[3]

---

[1] IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. No.14579, p. 112.

[2] Ibid, p. 128.

[3] Ibid.

In the territory of Yugoslavia, Albania and Greece at the beginning of September 1944 were concentrated 21 German divisions, 7 brigades and approximately 25 detached regiments and battalions.[1] They occupied key positions in the central regions of those countries, and the most important points on the railroads and automobile highways. In Yugoslavia over 10 Bulgarian and Hungarian divisions also bore occupation service.[2]

Supreme authority in these three states was wielded by the "high commander of the occupied territory of the Southeast," to whom two army groups, "E" and "F," were subordinated. The first of these was deployed in Greece, and the second primarily in Yugoslavia. Army group "Serbia" was detached from army group "F," operating in the eastern regions of Serbia. The main forces of the 2nd Panzer Army were deployed in Macedonia.[3] The remaining forces of this army group were located in the central, northern and western regions of Yugoslavia and also in Albania.

The forces of the traitors to the Yugoslav people, Pavelic, Nedic, Mihajlovic and Rupnik, numbered approximately 200,000 persons at the beginning of September. The largest were the Croatian armed forces of Pavelic, which united approximately 140,000 persons. They consisted of an army of domobrantsy, organized through mobilization of the population, and ustashy, fascist-type formations. The forces of Nedic had approximately 20,000 persons, and the detachments of Mihajlovic's Chetniks about 30,000 persons and finally, the troops of the fascist General Rupnik - about 10,000 men. /421 All of these formations operated against the PLAY and the partisan detachments in different regions of the country. However, the Yugoslav bourgeoisie, in spite of all its efforts, was unable to create a battleworthy army from the forces of traitors to the people. In 1943 and the beginning of 1944 incidents of mass desertion of domobrantsy to the side of the PLAY and partisan detachments were observed.

In connection with the breakthrough of the forces of the 2nd Ukrainian front to the area of Turnu-Severin and the sharp change in the political and

---

[1] IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #9608, p. 581.

[2] After the events of September 9 the Bulgarian divisions returned to Bulgaria and the Hungarian divisions did not take part in battles against the Soviet forces in the territory of Yugoslavia.

[3] The 2nd Panzer Army entered army group "F" on Sept.16, 1944. Col. Mats. on the Comp of Forces of Fascist Germany, 4th Ed, p. 156.

strategic situation in Bulgaria the German forces located in the southern part of the Balkan Peninsula could find themselves cut off from the main forces. The German command group ordered the formations of army group "E" to evacuate gradually from Greece to the north. The 2nd Panzer Army was to break through to the northeastern region of Yugoslavia and seize the defense on a front to the east, closing its left flank up to army group "South," which was occupying the defense before the forces of the 2nd Ukrainian front. Army group "Serbia" was assigned the mission of organizing the defense along the eastern border of Yugoslavia and also in the approaches from the south to the Niš - Kraljevo - Čačak road, and to reliably secure the evacuation of the German fascist forces from the southern Balkan peninsula.

Before the left flank 46th Army of the 2nd Ukrainian front north of the Danube, in the territory of Vojevodina, two divisions occupied the defense. The 3rd Ukrainian front, also including Bulgarian troops, was faced in the sector from the bend of the Danube at Orsova to the Bulgarian border by 12 German divisions and 1 brigade. Furthermore, evacuating formations of army group "E" could approach the region of military operations from Greece and Albania. The remaining troops at the disposal of the "commander of the occupied territory of the Southeast." were confined by the forces of the national liberation movement in Greece, Albania and in the central and western regions of Yugoslavia.

Preparation for the advance of the Red Army in the territory of Yugoslavia began with the agreement on its most important questions between the Soviet government and the National Committee of the Liberation of Yugoslavia. In mid-September Tito flew to Moscow. Here agreement was reached on the temporary entrance of the Soviet forces into Yugoslavia. The State Defense Committee of the USSR resolved to transfer to the disposal of the command group of the PLAY an air force group consisting of two airborne divisions and one air basing region, and also to concentrate arms, ammunition and communications equipment at bases in Sofia and Krajova for several divisions of the Yugoslav army.[1] In accordance with the request of the Yugoslav command group a large

[1] IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #14579, p. 258.

group of Soviet officers was sent to the PLAY units as instructors. Somewhat later at Krajova at a conference of representatives of the 3rd Ukrainian front's command group and Tito all questions of the participation of Bulgarian troops in the liberation of the eastern regions of Yugoslavia were agreed upon.

On September 20 Headquarters issued to the commander of the 3rd Ukrainian front, Marshal of the Soviet Union F.I. Tolbukhin - the Military Council member was Col.Gen. A.S. Zheltov, Chief of Staff Col.Gen. S.S. Biryuzin - a directive in which the 57th Army was designated to move out to the region west of Vidin for subsequent operations in the territory of the eastern regions of Yugoslavia.[1] The advance of the Soviet forces had the goal of routing the German army group "Serbia" and liberating a considerable part of Yugoslavia, including its capital, Belgrade. On September 28 the forward formations of the 57th Army, which was commanded by Lt. Gen.N.A. Gagen, broke through to the Bulgarian-Yugoslav border in the region of Vidin - east of Negotin, crossed it and took measures to join the 75th detached rifle corps of the 2nd Ukrainian front, which was already located in the territory of Yugoslavia on the Orsova - Brza-Palanka line.[2] On September 29 Headquarters transferred the 75th rifle corps to the composition of the 3rd Ukrainian front.

To conduct the offensive operation, which entered the history of the /422
of the Great Patriotic War under the name of the Belgrade operation, in the eastern regions of Yugoslavia, the 57th Army - the 75th, 68th, and 64th rifle corps (9 divisions, 1 motor rifle brigade, 1 fortified area), 1 division subordinated to the front, the 4th Guards mechanized corps,[3] the 17th Airborne Army and the Danube military flotilla - was assigned from the composition of the 3rd Ukrainian front. The forces had 2,200 guns and mortars, 149 rocket launchers, 358 tanks and assault guns, and 1,292 airplanes. In the Danube military flotilla there were approximately 80 ships, predominantly armored launches.

---

[1] IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #9493, p. 170.

[2] The regrouping of the 57th Army on the Bulgarian-Yugoslav border is discussed in Chapter 10.

[3] The corps was able to approach the front line of the 57th Army not before October 10-11.

Beside these forces, the 10th Guards rifle corps of the 46th Army of the 2nd Ukrainian front, which had advanced in the Yugoslav territory north of the Danube, was drawn upon to participate in the Belgrade operation. Two other rifle corps of the army were also located in Yugoslavia, but their military operations were organically tied to the Debrecen operation of the troops of the 2nd Ukrainian front in Hungary.

In the Belgrade operation, in the Nis direction, actions by three Bulgarian armies (13 divisions and brigades in all) were planned. By the start of the operation the 2nd Bulgarian Army, which was deployed in the area to the west of Pirot, included eight divisions. The remaining five divisions and brigades were included in the 1st and 4th Bulgarian Armies and were deployed on a wide front along the Bulgarian-Yugoslav border.

The operation called for the participation of 17 divisions of the People's Liberation Army of Yugoslavia, combined in four army corps, 2 of them (9 divisions) beginning operations at the second stage of the operation. In western Serbia, in the region of Rogačica - Užica, operated two divisions of the 1st corps. Three divisions of that corps were located between the cities of Kraljevo, Kuršumlija, Mitrovica, that is in the central sector of Serbia. In September and in the first days of October the 12th corps, including four divisions, arrived in the region of Valjevo - Obrenovac - Šabac from the western regions of Yugoslavia. In the eastern part of Serbia, in the region of Požarevac - Negotin - Knjaževac, the 14th corps consisting of three divisions was deployed, and in the southeastern part of Serbia in the region of Niš - Kursumlija - Vranje, the 13th corps consisting of five divisions.[1] The remaining forces of PLAY at this time were operating in Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia, Hercegovina, Montenegro and Macedonia.

The command group of the 3rd Ukrainian front, in planning the Belgrade operation, took into consideration the political situation in Yugoslavia as well as all of the conditions of the operational-strategic situation,

---

[1] See Historical Atlas of the Liberation War of the Peoples of Yugoslavia 1941-1945. Introduction; Zavrsne operacije za oslobodenje Jugoslavije 1944-1945. Beograde, 1957, str. 94-104.

specifically the geographical features of the terrain. Before the troops of the front were the nearly impassable West Balkans, and beyond them were located the East Serbian Mountains. The Soviet command group decided to go around the West Balkans from the north, for which it was required that the main forces be concentrated in the sector west of Vidin and in Kula. It was planned that the East Serbian Mountains would be overcome under conditions of tactical dissociation of corps and sometimes even of divisions. After the breakthrough of the combined arms formations to the Morava Valley the mobile forces of the front were planned to be brought into the battle. This decision, as the successful course of military operations later confirmed, was correct.

The plan of the operation was as follows. The troops of the 57th Army and the 4th Guards mechanized corps were to strike the main blow from the region of Radujevac - Kula - Vidin in the general direction of Belgrade. Before the approach of the 4th Guards mechanized corps (October 10-11) the 57th Army was to overcome the enemy's resistance in the East Serbian Mountains, seize the mountain pass sectors of the roads and break through to the valley of the Morava River. The 4th Guards mechanized corps and a part of the forces of the 57th Army were then to seize Belgrade. Simultaneously a considerable part /423 of the forces of the 57th Army was to support the advance on the capital of Yugoslavia from the southeast and south.

From the right, that is north of the Danube, on an approximately 250-kilometer front, the troops of the 46th Army of the 2nd Ukrainian front were to advance. The left flank 10th Guards rifle corps of that army had the assignment to break through to Belgrade in the region of Pancevo and thereby ensure the operations of the 57th Army from the north.

On the left, from the region of Pirot, the 2nd Bulgarian Army was to advance on Niš and Leskovac. The troops of the army, supporting the operations of the 57th Army from the south, were to seize those extremely important road junctions, cut off the Saloniki - Niš - Belgrade highway, depriving the enemy of the opportunity to transfer forces from Greece, and break through to the South Morava River. Left of the 2nd Bulgarian Army the troops of the 1st and 4th Bulgarian Armies were to advance.

The 17th Airborne Army was assigned the mission of supporting the ground forces, striking blows on the manpower and equipment of the enemy on the field of battle and blocking his movement along the roads. For closer cooperation with the ground forces the command group of the airborne army sent an operations group and representatives of air force formations to the headquarters of the 57th Army, 4th Guards mechanized corps, 2nd Bulgarian Army and PLAY.[1]

The Danube military flotilla, moving along the Danube to Belgrade, was to support the operation of the right flank formations of the 57th Army from the north. It was also entrusted the mission of operative movement of troops, mine clearing and warfare with enemy vessels on the Danube.

As has been shown, the most important questions concerning the operations of the Soviet and Bulgarian troops in the territory of Yugoslavia were coordinated with Tito in Moscow and in Krajova. On October 1 Headquarters gave

---

[1] The operations of the airborne army in the territory of Yugoslavia began considerably earlier than the advance of the ground forces, in the middle of September. The army, which was commanded by Col.-Gen. V.A. Sudets, received the assignment "to prevent the withdrawal of German forces from Greece and Yugoslavia, disorganize railroads and automobile transport in several sectors, halt railroad movement temporarily from Saloniki to Belgrade, destroy enemy troops and equipment along the roads leading from Greece and Southern Yugoslavia to the north and north-west" (Archive of MD USSR, col. 243, inv. 20371, div. 61, p. 102.) Carrying out this assignment, the units of the army destroyed railroad bridges in the regions of Nis, Kraljevo, Skoplje, Krusevac, important railroad installations, and conducted attacks on automobile columns of the enemy and military trains.

instructions to Marshal of the Soviet Union Tolbukhin to establish contact with the Yugoslav command group and to familiarize it in detail with the plan of the operation.[1] On the same day Headquarters ordered the Soviet military mission in Yugoslavia to inform the headquarters of PLAY of the fact that "in the aims of cooperation of the forces of the Red Army and the forces of the PLAY Headquarters considers it necessary to assign the troops of the PLAY operating in the regions of Belgrade and Niš to the line of Kragujevac, Kruševac, and Knjaževac and, if conditions should be favorable, to seize Niš. To tie up the detachments of Nedic and Mihajlovic with aggressive operations in the region south and southwest of Belgrade. To begin operations on October 9-10."[2]

According to the plan of Headquarters cooperation with the Yugoslav forces was effected thus. While the Soviet and Bulgarian forces overcame the East Serbian Mountains, that is at the first stage of the operation, the 14th and 13th Yugoslav corps, developing military operations in the enemy's rear, were to facilitate the progress of the advancing units to the west and jointly with them to seize tactically and operationally important points. At the second stage of the operation, when the Soviet forces and the 14th corps of the PLAY were to advance from the line of the Morava River on Belgrade, the 1st corps of the PLAY were to strike a blow in the German's rear with its main forces from the line of Dzjurinca on Belgrade, and with a part of its forces from the line of Gorni - Milanovac - Darasava in the direction of Kragujevac and /424
Palanka, toward the Soviet forces. The 12th Yugoslav corps was to strike a blow with a part of its forces in cooperation with the 1st army corps on Belgrade, and with its main forces onObrenovac, and then along the left bank of the Sava in the general direction of Zemun. In this very spirit the decisions of the command group of the PLAY were taken and objectives were assigned to the corps named.

---

[1] IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #9493, p. 210.

[2] Ibid, Inv. #11635, p. 510.

At the beginning of the advance the political directorate of the 3rd Ukrainian front addressed the troops, sergeants and officers in a proclamation. "You have entered the territory of Yugoslavia, which is kindred in spirit and blood to us..." it said. "Your mission, comrade, is to intercept the German fascist troops retreating along the Yugoslav roads... Your name is high and honorable in Yugoslavia... You are surrounded with the love and respect of the entire Yugoslav people as a soldier-conqueror, a soldier-liberator... Always and everywhere remember that you came to Yugoslavia not to impose your laws and order on Yugoslavia, but to overtake and destroy the Hitlerite bandits fleeing under your blows."[1] The political directorate called upon the soldiers to offer cooperation and help to the Yugoslav population and the PLAY in the struggle against the common enemy.

Even during the period of preparation for the operation in Yugoslavia seminars were held in the formations of the 57th Army for agitators of the subunits, commanders and political workers. Under the new conditions the mission of raising the feeling of friendship and respect for the peoples of Yugoslavia still more was moved to the forefront, of familiarizing the soldiers and officers with the heroic past and future of the country.

---

[1] Quot. from Soviet Armed Forces in the Struggle for the Liberation of the Peoples of Yugoslavia, p. 145.

2. The liberation of Belgrade.

The advance of the Soviet troops began on September 28. The following day, September 29, a report of the Soviet command group was published in which it was stated that with the agreement of the National Committee of Liberation of Yugoslavia the troops of the Red Army were temporarily entering the territory of that country and that upon fulfillment of their objective they would be withdrawn from there. The Soviet command group also gave notice in this report that in the territory of Yugoslavia, in the regions of the disposition of the Red Army units, the civil administration of the National Committee of Liberation of Yugoslavia would be operating.[1]

[1] See Foreign Policy of the Soviet Union during the Great Patriotic War, Vol. II p. 236.

Military operations in Yugoslavia developed successfully. The lead division of the 68th rifle corps of the 57th Army forced the Timok River on the border and took the inhabited area of Kobisnica by force. Two days later through the joint efforts of that corps and an assault landing force landed by ships of the Danube military flotilla in the port of Radujevac the city of Negotin was liberated. This improved conditions for coordinated operations by the right flank 75th rifle corps and the 68th rifle corps, which was advancing in the center. By evening of September 30 the formations of the 64th rifle corps of the army reached the region of Belogradcik.

During the period from October 1 through 8 the troops of the 75th and 68th rifle corps carried on fierce battles in the areas of Doni Milanovac and Klokocĕvac. The inhabited areas eached changed hands several times. In the region of Štubik considerable enemy forces were encircled and on October 4 destroyed.

The formations of the 75th rifle corps, which were commanded by Maj. Gen. A.Z. Akimenko, established contact during these days with the 25th infantry division of thePeople's Liberation Army of Yugoslavia, which was fighting in the region of Klokocevac, and, cooperating with it, seized Doni Milanovac. /425
Even before the Red Army crossed the Yugoslav border the 25th and 23rd infantry divisions of the 14th corps of PLAY carried on battles with the Germans and Chetnik forces, and cut off the enemy's communications in the region of Kučevo - Klokočevac - Bor.[1] When the Soviet troops entered the territory of Yugoslavia measures were taken to arrange closer cooperation. In a directive of October 4 from the commander of the 3rd Ukrainian front to the commander of the 57th Army it was proposed to "agree with the commander of the 14th a.c. PLAY to support with the forces of the 23rd, 25th i.d. with operations from the region of Kucevo and Zagubic to the east the movement of the 75th r.c. and 68th r.c. and prevent the enemy's approach toward the mountain region from the west."[2] To establish direct contact with the Yugoslav formations the commander of the army sent his chief of staff to the area of their activity. Communications with the 14th army corps of the PLAY were arranged.

---

[1] See Zavrsne operacije za oslobodenje Jugoslavije 1944-1945, str. 94-95.

[2] Archives of MD USSR, col. 413, inv. 322931, div. 1, p. 130.

In the center of the zone of advance of the army on October 3 the formations of the 68th rifle corps under the command of Maj. Gen. N.N. Shkodunovich jointly with units of the 23rd division of the PLAY seized the major center of Yugoslavia's copper and gold mining industry, the city of Bor.[1] On October 6 they overcame the East Serbian Mountains, and on the following day the forward detachment broke through to the area of Zdrelo in the Morava Valley.

Attempting to maximally exploit the success in the center of the zone of advance, the commander of the army ordered that the 5th detached motor rifle brigade be moved out to the crossings on the Morava River in the area of Svilajnacs. Carrying out this order, on October 8 the brigade reached the river unexpectedly for the enemy, and the following day seized the crossing west of Svilajnac. At this time the93rd rifle division of the 68th rifle corps forced the Morava somewhat further north and occupied an important enemy center of defense, the city of Velika Plana.

During the seizure of the crossings and the forcing of the river the soldiers and officers of this division displayed courage and heroism. The chief of the engineer services of the 266th rifle regiment, communist Sr. Lt. N.P. Lyskov and a group of soldiers cleared a bridge of mines under heavy fire. In the artillery regiment of the same division AUCP(b) member division commander P.M. Yemel'yanov moved out to a bridge and with submachine gun fire destroyed seven Hitlerites who had been guarding it.[2]

While in the center of the army's zone of advance our troops were breaking through to the Morava River, on the left flank the 64th rifle corps had fallen considerably behind. It crossed the Yugoslav border in the region east of Zajecar only on October 3. The fighting for that city lasted until October 8. The enemy's forces in the area of Zajecar were defeated in cooperation with units of the 45th division of the PLAY.[3]

---

[1] See Zavrsne operacije za oslobodenje Jugoslavije 1944-1945, str. 95.

[2] Archives of the MD USSR, col. 218301, div. 4, p. 517.

[3] See Zavrsne operacije za oslobodenje Jugoslavije 1944-1945, str. 97-98.

On October 9 the commander of the front decided to move the 4th Guards mechanized corps from the region of Vidin to the region of Petrovac, exploiting the success of the 68th rifle corps and the 5th detached motor rifle brigade, and from there to develop a thrust in the general direction of Velika Plana - Belgrade. The corps received the assignment "to seize the city of Belgrade no later than 14.10.44 and to hold it until the arrival of the units of the 57th Army."[1] In spite of the mountainous relief of the terrain, and the numerous enemy obstacles, units of the corps, completing a 160-kilometer march, concentrated by the end of October 10 in the region of Petrovac.

The 17th Airborne Army promoted the success of the ground forces, making bomb and assault attacks on the manpower, fighting equipment and railroad junctions in the enemy's rear.

Thus in the period from September 28 through October 10 the troops of the /426
3rd Ukrainian front breached the enemy's defense, progressed 130 kilometers in the direction of the main thrust, and routed the main enemy forces in the zone of advance of the 57th Army. Overcoming the East Serbian Mountains and forcing the Morava River, our troops created conditions to bring the 4th Guards mechanized corps into the battle with the goal of advancing further in the Belgrade direction. Close contact was established with the 14th army corps of the PLAY which with aggressive actions in the rear of the enemy facilitated the advance of the Soviet troops.

On the right the 46th Army of the 2nd Ukrainian front, commander Lt. Gen. I.T. Shlemin, meeting no serious resistance, by the end of October 8 had already cleared all Yugoslav land east of the Tisza in a sector from Novo Kaniza to the mouth of the river, forced it and seized beachheads in the area of the cities of Senta and Mol. The left flank 10th Guards rifle corps under the command of Maj. Gen. I.A.Rubanyuk, having liberated the cities of Vrsac and

[1] Archives of MD USSR, col. 243, inv. 20371, div. 63, p. 179.

Bela Crkva with the support of units of the Banat operative zone of the PLAY, seized the city of Pancevo on October 6. The breakthrough of the corps to the region of Belgrade to the north bank of the Danube on a 40-kilometer front considerably improved the operational situation in that region. Several days later, on the night of October 10, the 109th rifle division of the same corps, with the participation of the 12th Vojevodina brigade of the PLAY, forced the Danube unexpectedly for the enemy in the region of Starcevo and seized a beachhead on the south bank of the river. In order to prevent the expansion of the beachhead the enemy was forced to send a part of his reserves there.

On the left the troops of the 2nd Bulgarian Army under the command of Gen. K. Stanchev conducted battles during the first days of the Belgrade operation to improve their position. In the area of Niš - Leskovac fought formations of the 13th corps of the PLAY, attempting to seize these major road junctions. On October 7 representatives of the Bulgarian Army and the People's Liberation Army of Yugoslavia met with the command group of the 3rd Ukrainian front and reached ggreement on joint operations. The troops of the 13th corps of the PLAY were to cut off the roads leading from the north and south to the cities of Niš and Leskovac and to seize these cities in cooperation with the Bulgarian units.[1]

In accordance with the plan of the operation on October 8 the 2nd Bulgarian Army went over to the offensive. During the first two days it barely succeeded in breaking into the enemy's defense. On October 10 a tank brigade was brought into the battle, the attack of which was supported by Soviet aircraft. The Bulgarian tanks breached the enemy defense and broke through to the valley of the South Morava River in the area of Leskovac. This worsened the position of the German fascist grouping in the Niš - Leskovac region. The military operations of the Yugoslav and Bulgarian formations in the Nis direction facilitated for the troops of the 3rd Ukrainian front the infliction of the main thrust on Belgrade.

---

[1] See Final operation of the liberation of Yugsolvia 1944-1945, pp 103.

The troops of the center of the 57th Army, having broken through to the Morava River, split the enemy forces, as it were, into two parts. Before them and to the north were German fascist units and formations, over five divisions in all. To the south, in the zone of advance of the left flank formations, units and formations of the corps group "Müller" were retreating. The 34th German army corps created a defense at depth in the region of Kragujevac - Kraljevo - Čačak in order to ensure the connection of the forces retreating from Greece with the troops operating in the region of Belgrade. The enemy offered the most stubborn resistance during the period from September 28 through October 10 in the areas of Klokočevac, Štubik and Zaječar.

The plan of the further advance in the Belgrade direction was to rout the enemy grouping occupying the defense before the troops of the right flank and center of the 57th Army and, with a rapid blow by the mechanized corps and part of the forces of the 1st and 12th corps of the PLAY, to seize Belgrade. /427

The right flank 75th rifle corps of the army was to strike a blow in the direction of Kucevo - Pozarevac and with the support of the 5th detached motor rifle brigade to destroy the enemy in the region east of the Mlava River. The corps of the center (68th), beside fulfilling the main objective, was to break through with part of its forces to the line of Arandželovac - Šatornja, in order to support from the south the striking of the main blow of the front on Belgrade. The left flank corps (64th), advancing in the southeast, had the same assignment, to support the main blow. It broke through to the line of Varvarin - Knjaževac.

The main shock force at the last stage of the operation was the 4th Guards mechanized corps. Crossing the Morava, on October 12 the units of the corps struck the main blow in the direction of Velika Plana - Mladenovac - Belgrade, and an auxiliary blow in the direction of Smederevo - Belgrade.

Overcoming the enemy's resistance in the region of Aval Mtn. (south of Belgrade) together with part of the forces of the 1st corps of the PLAY, by the morning of October 14 the main forces of the mechanized corps broke through to Belgrade and engaged in battle in the southern outskirts of the city. The

units that had struck the auxiliary blow moved out to Belgrade through Smederevo. Thus on October 14-15 all roads leading from the south and southeast to the Yugoslav capital had fallen into the hands of the Soviet-Yugoslav forces. A considerable enemy grouping retreating under the thrusts of the 75th rifle corps found itself cut off from Belgrade. The 12th corps of the PLAY at that time held all roads south of Sava leading from Belgrade to the southwest.

By evening of October 15 a large part of the capital of Yugoslavia had been liberated. But the military operations of the Soviet and Yugoslav troops in the city became somewhat drawn out. This was due to the fact that it was necessary to assign a part of the forces to repel the blows of the enemy's 20,000-strong grouping retreating under the thrusts of the right flank of the 57th Army and attempting to break through to Belgrade.

During these days the joint advance of the formations of the PLAY and the 2nd Bulgarian Army developed successfully. From October 11 through 13 the tank brigade and units of the 47th Serbian division seized the city of Leskovac, and the 6th Bulgarian infantry division took the city of Bela Palanka. On the morning of October 14 units of that division engaged in battles for Niš. From the north unitsof the 1st Guards fortified area broke through to the city, and from the south and southwest the 22nd division of the PLAY. On that day through the joint efforts of the Yugoslav, Bulgarian and Soviet units, Niš was totally cleared of German fascist troops. The liberation of Niš and Leskovac had great significance, because the Hitlerite command group could now no longer withdraw its forces from Greece along the Athens - Belgrade highway.

In the following six days (October 16 through 21) the most desperate encounters took place southeast of Belgrade and in the city itself, and also in the area of Kragujevac. The enemy grouping cut off from Belgrade south of the Danube attempted to break its way into the city, but on October 16-17 the Soviet and Yugoslav troops encircled it. With converging blows from the southeast, south and northwest the main forces of the encircled grouping

were liquidated on October 19. In only two days over 10,000 men were killed or taken prisoner. The clearing of the region of the remnants of the German fascist forces continued on October 20-21. On the whole the enemy grouping southwest of Belgrade , numbering over 20 regiments and detached battalions, was subjected to total defeat.[1]

At this time fierce battles had not ended in the capital of Yugoslavia. On the Soviet side the 4th Guards mechanized corps, the 73rd Guards and 236th rifle divisions, 3 artillery brigades and 16 mortar and self-propelled artillery regiments, 1 antiaircraft artillery division and 3 detached antiaircraft /428 artillery regiments participated in them, and on the Yugoslav side the 1st, 5th, 6th and 11th divisions, as well as units of the 16th, 28th and 36th divisions. The flank of the forces at the river was supported by the Danube military flotilla. The operations of the Soviet and Yugoslav troops were supported by the 17th Airborne Army.

The battles for Belgrade, which began on October 14, ended only on October 20. Even on the first day, when after powerful artillery preparation the Soviet and Yugoslav forces breached the outer perimeter and burst into the southern outskirts of the city, the battles became intense. The enemy's strong points each changed hands several times. Along with the Soviet and Yugoslav troops bravely fought the inhabitants of Belgrade, helping in every way they could.

The Soviet soldiers and officers, like their brothers in arms, the fighters of the PLAY, showed great military skill and displayed courage and heroism in the battles for the capital of Yugoslavia. This is one of the examples. Fifteen communists and Komsomol members of the 42nd tank destroyer brigade volunteered to seize the central telegraph-telephone station. In the afternoon of October 15 just as the soldiers approached the telegraph office the enemy opened machine gun fire on them from the adjacent building. Medical service Lt. N.N. Kravtsov and two soldiers crawled out along the drainpipe and ledges into the window of that house and destroyed ten fascist submachine

[1] Archive of MD USSR, col. 413, inv. 219723, div. 7, p. 63; col. 243, inv. 62688, div. 7, p. 61.

gunners and a light machine gun with antitank grenades. On the second attempt to reach the telegraph the group was again fired upon, but this time from a pill-box. Kravtsov ordered his soldiers to open fire with their submachine guns on the adjacent streets, and himself crawled to the pill-box, and with a cry of "For the Motherland, for a free Yugoslavia!" threw two grenades into the embrasure. The enemy pill-box fell silent.[1]

During the battles for Belgrade the Soviet command group showed great concern for the preservation of the city's buildings. Our troops attempted to seize them, using predominantly rifle fire and not taking recourse to heavy weapons. Seven Soviet engineer battalions were assigned to clear the city of mines, and they saved 845 objects, 85 of them administrative buildings. The enemy's insidious plan to turn Belgrade into ruins was thwarted. "The burned Russian tanks in the streets of Belgrade," wrote R. Cholakovic, "testify to the heroism of the tank crew members, who did not spare their own lives so that Belgrade should be liberated with the least possible destruction. The Russian heroes also spilled their blood so that in the battle to liberate the city as few children and women as possible should perish. The residents of Belgrade understood all of this and simply thanked their liberators."[2]

At the time when the 4th Guards mechanized, 75th rifle corps and part of the forces of the 68th rifle corps with the support of the 17th Airborne Army and in cooperation with the troops of the PLAY were advancing in the direction of Belgrade, conducting battles to liquidate the encircled enemy grouping and clearing the Yugoslav capital of invaders, far to the south and southeast the 68th and 64th rifle corps were moving forward with stubborn fighting. The troops of the 68th rifle corps forced the Morava and progressed 40-60 kilometers to the west and southwest, meeting the strongest enemy resistance in the region of Kragujevac. On October 21 they broke through to the line of Arandźelovac - Gorni-Milanovac - Kragujevac and there joined the units of the 1st army corps of the PLAY. The divisions of the 68th rifle

---

[1] See Soviet Armed Forces in the Struggle for the Liberation of the Peoples of Yugoslavia, p. 73-74.

[2] "Jugoslavija - SSSR," 1946, No. 4, p. 42.

corps, which was commanded by Maj. Gen. I.D. Kravtsov, overcame approximately 85 kilometers, forced the Morava and South Morava Rivers, and broke through to the line south of Kragujevac- east of Kraljevo - Kruševac. Both corps, having supported the advance of the main forces of the front from the south and southeast, by the end of October 24 had fulfilled the mission before them.

North of Belgrade the 46th Army of the 2nd Ukrainian front operated successfully. The 31st Guards rifle corps of that army, having concentrated forces on the beachheads in the region of Senta and Ada, renewed the offensive /429 on October 18 and toward the end of October 21 crossed the border of Hungary in the region of Subotica.

From October 11 through 21 the Bulgarian forces in cooperation with formations of the PLAY advanced in the western and southwestern directions. The Bulgarians, as the former Hitlerite general K. Ditmar writes, "displaying enormous enthusiasm... attacked Lör's[1] columns from the east with their many formations, attempting to throw them back to the almost inaccessible high mountain regions of the western part of the peninsula."[2] On October 21 the 2nd, 1st and 4th Bulgarian Armies broke through to the line south of Krusevaca-Kuršumlija - Vranje - west of Kriva Palanka - Kočane,[3] covering the flank and rear of the troops of the 3rd Ukrainian front from the blows of the German fascist units retreating from the south of the Balkan peninsula.

As the result of the military operations of the Soviet, Yugoslav, and Bulgarian forces army group "F," having suffered defeat, retreated toward the end of October 21 beyond the line of Belgrade - Gorni-Milanovac - Kragujevac - Kraljevo - Kuršumlija - Vranja.

During the advance of the Red Army in Yugoslavia the local population was friendly and warm toward the Soviet soldiers. On October 15 the radio station "Free Yugoslavia" broadcast, "Every day letters come from Serbia and Vojevodina describing the unprecedented fervor of our people, who are greeting the Red Army ecstatically, with flowers and presents. Old and young, all

---

[1] Gen. A. Lor commanded the German troops then retreating from Greece.

[2] World War. 1939-1945, p. 130.

[3] IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #4390, pp. 20-32

try to help the renowned heroes of the Red Army, who along with the fighters of the People's Liberation Army of Yugoslavia are purging our country of the German invaders."[1]

During the days of the Belgrade operation the political section of the 57th Army reported to the Military Council of the 3rd Ukrainian front that the population of Serbia met the units and formations of the army warmly and greeted them with ecstatic cries. The residents of Negotin, the first Serbian city liberated by the Soviet soldiers, "brought flowers, regaled the fighters and commanders with grapes and white bread, invited them to dine with them... All of the main streets were filled with people greeting the Red Army."[2] People of the most varied segments of the population expressed warm feelings of kindness toward the Soviet people. One resident of Negotin related, "The Germans treated us like beasts, they took everything: clothes, bread, things... Our life for these three and a half years has essentially been a total nightmare. We felt complete freedom with the arrival of the Red Army. It brought us back to life."[3]

The Yugoslav partisans entering the city after the Soviet troops "embraced and kissed the soldiers of the Red Army as a sign of gratitude for the help they had rendered in defeating the Germans and liberating Serbia from the occupiers."[4] The streets of Negotin were decorated with slogans and Soviet and Yugoslav national flags. Everywhere rallies and meetings sprang up spontaneously, at which the inhabitants fervently greeted their liberators.

The population ceremoniously interred the Soviet and Yugoslav soldiers who had fallen in battle. In many cities and towns resolutions were passed at meetings to erect monuments on the brothers' graves. The funeral held in Belgrade on October 21 of soldiers and officers of the Red Army who had perished during the liberation of the city grew into a demonstration of the deep

---

[1] Quot. from "Pravda," October 16, 1944.

[2] Archive of MD USSR, fol. 243, inv. 32283, div. 16, pp. 238-239.

[3] Quot. from Soviet Armed Forces in the Struggle for the Liberation of the Peoples of Yugoslavia, p. 138.

gratitude of the Yugoslav peoples toward the Soviet Armed Forces. "The population tends for the graves of our soldiers, strews them with flowers; on many graves candles burn twenty-four hours a day,"[1] it was said in the report of the political directorate of the 3rd Ukrainian front. /430

It was not possible for the fervor that seized the peoples of Yugoslavia with the arrival of the Red Army in the country not to affect the moral-political condition of the troops of the 3rd Ukrainian front, and their offensive impulse. In its report of October 17, 1944 the political section of the 57th Army stated that the considerable upsurge in the political-moral state of the troops was caused by, in addition to other factors, the new circumstances, specifically meeting the partisans and soldiers of the PLAY and the attitude of the local population.[2]

The military operations of the Soviet troops on Yugoslav soil had enormous political and military significance. During the days of the Belgrade operation Tito wrote, "The liberation of Belgrade has historical significance for our peoples, particularly because the country of these tormented peoples is the arena where the sons of the Great Soviet Union and the worthy sons of Yugoslavia spilled their blood together. This has once again deeply imprinted the blood brotherhood of the peoples of Yugoslavia and the peoples of the Soviet Union."[3]

As the result of the Belgrade operation a large part of Serbia and the capital of Yugoslavia were cleared of the German fascist occupiers. The prospect of complete liberation opened before the peoples of Yugoslavia, who for nearly three and a half years had carried on an unequal, heroic fight with the foreign invaders and their servants. For over three years the Red Army had pounded the Hitlerite war machine, not giving it the opportunity to unleash its power on the European peoples who were rising to the struggle

---

[1] Archive of MD USSR, col. 243, inv. 265390, div. 2, p. 45.

[2] Ibid, inv. 32283, div.16, p. 150.

[3] Foreign policy of the Soviet Union during the Patriotic War, Vol. II, p. 359.

for liberation. In September and October of 1944 the Soviet soldiers, entering the territory of Yugoslavia, with enormous enthusiasm carried on the battle for the liberation of the eastern and northeastern parts of the country, and Belgrade. They, like our entire people, knew that the peoples of Yugoslavia had made a great contribution to the common cause of the struggle with the enemy.

The Soviet government government greatly valued the operations of the Red Army in Yugoslavia. In the 4th Guards mechanized corps alone 20 fighters received the high title of Hero of the Soviet Union. A medal "For the liberation of Belgrade" was instituted, with which all of the participants in that operation were decorated. The units and formations that had distinguished themselves were awarded the honorary designation "Belgrade."

For courage and valor displayed in the battles on Yugoslav soil the government of Yugoslavia decorated 2,000 soldiers and officers of the Red Army with orders and medals. The title of People's Hero of Yugoslavia was awarded to 13 Soviet warriors, including the commander of the 4th Guards mechanized corps Lt. Gen. of Tank Forces V.I. Zhdanov and the commander of the 73rd Guards rifle division Maj. Gen. S.A. Kozak.[1]

After the successful completion of the Belgrade operation extremely favorable conditions developed for expelling the German fascist occupiers from the entire territory of Yugoslavia. The People's Liberation Army was given the opportunity to form a solid front line (as a continuation of the front line of the Soviet forces). Now the PLAY rested not on separate regions that had been cleared of the enemy, but on the entire liberated section of the country. The forces of the enemy army group "F" occupying the defense in Serbia had suffered a serious defeat. The plan of the German command group, attempting to occupy the defense with the forces of army group "Serbia" on the Yugoslav-Bulgarian border and withdraw its forces from Greece along the Athens - Niš - Belgrade highway to the northern regions of Yugoslavia were

---

[1] See Soviet Armed Forces in the Struggle for the Liberation of the Peoples of Yugoslavia, p. 77.

thwarted. The Hitlerite forces could now retreat from Greece to the northwest only along inconvenient roads through regions where the troops of the PLAY and Yugoslav partisans operated.

3. The final expulsion of the German fascist invaders from Yugoslavia

After liberation Belgrade again became the capital of sovereign Yugoslavia. /431 The National Committee for Liberation, the Supreme Headquarters of the People's Liberation Army, andother central organs moved there. In November Tito and Subasic concluded a new agreement. The Antifascist Veche was recognized as the Provisional legislative organ, In the immediate future it was proposed to form a united people's government of Yugoslavia. The agreement also called for the creation of a Provisional Regents Council, which would function until the Constituent Assembly resolved the question of the

form of the country's governmental system. On November 20-23 representatives of the Yugoslav emigre government and the National Committee for Liberation of Yugoslavia met in Moscow with members of the Soviet government. In a joint Soviet-Yugoslav communique the need for formation of a united Yugoslav government on the basis of the November agreement of Subasic and Tito was stated.[1]

However, under the influence of the reactionary circle, which did not wish to change the order existing before the war, the king repudiated the agreement completed by Subasic and Tito, expressed mistrust of the government of Subasic and attempted to remove him. This provoked the indignation of the Yugoslav people. A wave of protest rallies and demonstrations rolled over the liberated territory of the country. The Yalta Conference of the heads of the three powers in February 1945 considered it necessary to recommend that Tito and Subasic immediately implement the November agreement and form a provisional united government. The wish was expressed that the AVPLY include only those deputies selected to the Skupstina in 1938 who during the years of the war had not compromised themselves by collaborating with the occupiers. In accordance with these recommendations a Regents Council was chosen, which accepted the resignation of the government. Tito formed a united government which included several emigre representatives. But its basic core was comprised of representatives of the National Committee for the Liberation of Yugoslavia. In a declaration published March 9, 1945 it was stated that the policy of the new government would be based on the resolutions of the Antifascist Veche of the People's Liberation, and not on the legislative acts of Royal Yugoslavia.

The breakthrough of the Red Army to the central part of the Balkans greatly perturbed the British imperialists. Churchill writes of this quite frankly in his memoirs of the Second World War. The question of the situation in Southeastern Europe and of the mutual relations of the states in this region was one of the most important during the negotiations between Churchill and Stalin that were held in Moscow from October 9 through 18, 1944.

---

[1] See Foreign policy of the Soviet Union during the Patriotic War, Vol. II, pp. 311-312.

Some Yugoslav leaders declared that during the years of the Second World War the USSR and Great Britain agreed to divided Yugoslavia into "spheres of influence." In this Churchill was usually cited. Indeed, in his memoirs Churchill writes that in Moscow in October 1944 an "agreement" was ostensibly concluded between himself and Stalin on the division of "spheres of influence" in Yugoslavia, and that he mentions this in a letter of July 23, 1945 addressed to Stalin. Churchill's assertion of an agreement concerning the division of Yugoslavia into "spheres of influence" is a malicious fabrication. Churchill's reference to the letter mentioned is also the fruit of fantasy, since no such letter entered the Soviet Union.

In fact, the heads of the two governments agreed during the meeting in Moscow only on the conduct of a joint policy concerning Yugoslavia, as was announced in a communique of October 21, 1944. "Both governments," it was stated in the communique, "have agreed to conduct a joint policy in Yugoslavia with the goal of concentrating all of their energies against the retreating Germans and with the purpose of resolving Yugoslavia's internal difficulties by uniting the Royal Yugoslav Government and the National Liberation Movement. The right of the Yugoslav people to resolve for themselves the question of the future governmental system after the war, of course, is recognized to be inalienable."[1] This resolution of the Yugoslav problem is also confirmed by many documents issued in the official publication of the MFA (Ministry of Foreign Affairs) of the USSR, "Correspondence of the Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers with the Presidents of the USA and the Prime Ministers of Great Briain during the Great Patriotic War 1941-1945." In a letter to Stalin of December 3, 1944 Churchill, expressing dissatisfaction with Marshal Tito, refers to the agreement "of joint policy concerning Yugoslavia."[2] In his answering message to Churchill on December 14, 1944 Stalin wrote, "I affirm your statement that the Soviet and British governments reached agreement in Moscow to conduct, as far as possible, a joint policy in relation to Yugoslavia. I hope that you will be able to come to agreement with Marshal Tito and that you will support the agreement reached between him and Mr. Subasic."[3]

/432

---

[1] Quot. from Foreign policy of the Soviet Union during the Patriotic War, Vol. II, p. 272.

[2] Correspondence of the Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers with the Presidents of the USA and the Prime Ministers of Great Britain during the Great Patriotic War 1941-1945, Vol. I. p. 284.

[3] Ibid, p. 289.

Both during meetings of the leaders of governments, specifically at the Moscow conference, and through diplomatic channels the Soviet government conducted negotiations in the interests of the struggle against the common enemy with its allies, the USA and Great Britain, on various questions which arose in the course of the war. Nor could it pass by the events in Yugoslavia, in relation to which Great Britain conducted an imperialistic policy. The emigre Yugoslav government was under British influence. In Yugoslavia the Chetniks of Mihajlovic and other reactionary groups connected not only with the Hitlerites but also with the government circles of England operated actively. British imperialism attempted to utilize all of this to restore the bourgeois-monarchist order in Yugoslavia after the war and consolidate its influence there.

The Communist Party and the Soviet government did not pursue any mercenary or selfish aims in relation to Yugoslavia. But the USSR, it is quite understandable, could not be indifferent to the fate of the brother peoples of Yugoslavia, and unfailingly supported their heroic struggle against the fascist invaders.

In this sense the Soviet Union, true to the principles of proletarian internationalism, had definite interests in Yugoslavia. But they coincided fully with the national interests of Yugoslavia, with the interests of the international worker's movement and socialism. The leaders of the Yugoslav Communist also saw this clearly then. Thus, for instance, at a rally in Ljubljana on June 12, 1945, E.Kardel' said, "The Soviet Union was the country that helped us selflessly from the first days, that demanded nothing from us, that did not bind us in any way that did not respond to our national interests..."[1]

It is well known that at no international conference did the USSR attempt to acquire "spheres of influence" for itself. The struggle for "spheres of influence," which is an integral feature of the imperialist policy, is incompatible with the Soviet state's principles of foreign policy.

---

[1] Quot. from "Izvestiya," June 17, 1945.

An extremely important military-political result of the Soviet-British negotiations in October 1944 was the fact that the negotiating sides came to an agreement on the need to direct all of their efforts toward the liquidation of the German forces retreating from the Balkans. During his stay in Moscow Churchill had the opportunity to convince himself that the government of the USSR was not planning to send its troops to Greece and to the Adriatic coast. The Soviet command group, true to its obligation to /433 withdraw its forces from Yugoslavia after the fulfillment of the objectives before them, took appropriate measures. As early as October 15 the commander of the 3rd Ukrainian front received a directive from Headquarters in which it was proposed that after the capture of Belgrade the troops of the front consolidate on the lines that had been gained and "progress no further into Yugoslavia."[1] Having completed the Belgrade operation, the Soviet troops began to regroup for military operations in Hungary. Only the 68th rifle corps was left temporarily in Yugoslavia, and occupied the defense south of Belgrade after October 23 in order, jointly with the units of the PLAY, to repel possible thrusts by the Germans retreating from Greece.

At the end of October and in November the Bulgarian troops, operating in cooperation with the People's Liberation Army of Yugoslavia, continued military operations. On November 10 the city of Veles was liberated, and in mid-November the capital of Macedonia, Skoplje. By the end of November the line to which the Bulgarian troops had broken out ran along Raška - Novi Pazar - Mitrovica - Skoplje - Veles. Having joined the war against Germany, the Bulgarian People's Army made a contribution to the cause of liberating Macedonia and Southern Serbia. This became possible thanks to the September uprising. While the Tsarist-Bulgarian troops had acted before September 9 as occupiers of a part of the lands of Yugoslavia, the people's army of the Patriotic Front during the battles in Serbia and Macedonia operated as an ally of the Red Army and the PLAY.

After the expulsion of the enemy from Belgrade the formations of the 1st and 12th Yugoslav corps developed the advance from the region of Zemun to

---

[1] IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #9493, p. 231.

the west. By the end of November they broke through to the line of Ilok - west of Lacarak and further along the west bank of the Drina River to Jana. There they were halted. As the result of the military operations of these corps, which were supported by Soviet aircraft, the front line was moved 100-110 kilometers to the west from Belgrade. Moreover, the penetration of the Yugoslav corps into the enemy's position increased the breach between the troops of the right flank of the enemy's 2nd Panzer Army operating in the area of Vukovar and his 34th army corps occupying the defense in the region of Kraljevo.

The German command group was forced to hasten the withdrawal of the forces of army group "E" from the southern Balkan peninsula in order to form a front along the Drina and to the south from Sarajevo as an extension of the front line running between the mouths of the Drava and Drina Rivers.

At the end of November the 68th Soviet rifle corps, which was still occupying the defense south of Belgrade, went over to the offensive and seized Kraljevo jointly with the Yugoslav forces. After that, on the orders of the commander of the 3rd Ukrainian front, it was transferred to the region west of Belgrade, and some time later to Hungary. At about the same time the Bulgarian forces left Yugoslavia. According to the joint resolution of the Soviet and Bulgarian command groups the 1st Bulgarian Army (six divisions) was organized, which operated thereafter in the composition of the 3rd Ukrainian front, on its left wing. On November 25 the transfer of this army to the north began. First the 1st Bulgarian Army arrived at the sector of the front between the Drava and the Sava, where it was located briefly, and then it was transferred to the left bank of the Drava, to the territory of Hungary. The remaining Bulgarian forces not included in the composition of the 1st Bulgarian Army returned to Bulgaria.

In mid-December the rear guard units of the German fascist forces withdrawing from the southern Balkan peninsula carried on delaying actions in the region south of Sarajevo. On December 20, when the troops of the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts were beginning their joint advance on Budapest, the front line in Yugoslavia ran east of Vukovar - Loznic - Senic - south of

Mostar - north of Zara (Zadara). Thus in October-November on the Adriatic coast all of the most important cities and ports had been liberated (Split, Šibenik, Zara).

By the end of 1944 Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia had been completely /434
cleared of the enemy. In the territory of Bosnia and Hercegovina, Croatia and Slovenia, where there were already many liberated areas, considerable forces of the PLAY and partisan detachments operated as before. However, all major cities and railroads were in the hands of the fascist invaders. In January-February 1945 when the Soviet forces began their gigantic offensive from the Vistula to the Oder, and in March when desperate fighting was going on in the western part of Hungary, the front line in Yugoslavia did not undergo any changes. Only in the coastal direction on February 14 the Yugoslav forces liberated the most important center of Hercegovina, the city of Mostar.

During these months fundamental changes took place in the Yugoslav army. In January the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Armies and in March the 4th Army were formed. The People's Liberation Army of Yugoslavia began to be called the Yugoslav Army, and the Supreme Headquarters of the PLAY was changed to the General Staff.

The government of the Soviet Union rendered considerable assistance to the Yugoslav Army. In 1944 it received approximately 350 airplanes, 65 T-34 tanks, 579 guns of various calibers, 170 antiaircraft guns, over 3,300 mortars and 500 large caliber machine guns, approximately 67,000 submachine guns, light and medium machine guns, approximately 53,000 rifles and carbines, a large quantity of ammunition, many radio sets, much clothing, personal equipment, and provisions. In December 1944 7 Soviet evacuation and 4 surgical hospitals with 5,000 cots were transferred to the Yugoslavs. On the request of Yugoslavia the Soviet command group sent additional officers of the Red Army to the army of that country in the capacity of advisors and instructors. An air force group and several airfield service battalions were transferred to the disposal of the Yugoslav command group, as was an infantry brigade of Yugoslavs formed in the Soviet Union and fully equipped.[1] All of this

[1] See Soviet Armed Forces in the Struggle for the Liberation of the Peoples of Yugoslavia, pp. 49-52.

helped the government of Yugoslavia to reorganize its army.

In March and April 1945 the Yugoslav Army renewed the offensive. It was developed in close connection with the military operations of the Soviet forces in the Vienna direction. In March, when the troops of the 3rd Ukrainian front were successfully advancing in the general direction of Vienna after stubborn defensive battles in the direction of Lake Balaton, the 4th Yugoslav Army began military operations on the coast of the Adriatic Sea. In the last days of March the Sarajevo corps group went over to the offensive and its troops liberated Sarajevo on April 6. On April 5 the advance was begun by the 2nd Army,[1] and on April 12 by the 1st Army.

The rapid progress of the troops of the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts in the first ten days of April and their breakthrough to the south and southwest of the German fascist troops operating in Croatia and Slovenia. Seven corps of army group "F" were threatened with a thrust by the Soviet troops from the line of Bruk - Gratz - Maribor on Trieste, and with being cut off in the northwestern part of Yugoslavia. Exploiting the favorable conditions created as the result of the Red Army's progress toward Vienna,[2] the Yugoslav forces successfully carried out their final offensive.

The liberation of all of Yugoslavia was completed a week after the crushing defeat of the German fascist forces at Berlin and Prague and the end of the Great Patriotic War in Europe. On May 15 the General Staff of the Yugoslav Army published a statement that the Yugoslav forces had encircled the remnants of the German, Ustashist and Chetnik units in the area of Maribor and Slovengradec, defeated them and compelled them to capitulate. The following day the organized resistance of the enemy ceased throughout the territory of the country.

A month before that, on April 11, 1945 in Moscow a treaty of friendship, /435
mutual aid and postwar cooperation between the USSR and Yugoslavia was signed. This treaty was the first major political act that

---

[1] The Sarajevo corps group entered the composition of the 2nd Army after the liberation of Sarajevo.

[2] This is discussed in more detail in the fifth volume of this edition.

significantly consolidated the international position of the new Yugoslav government.

Thus the Soviet Union rendered the Yugoslav people great moral-political and military-technical support. The Red Army in cooperation with the units of the PLAY and Bulgarian troops expelled the invaders from Belgrade and the eastern part of Serbia. The further successful advance of the troops of the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts in Hungary and Austria predetermined the final defeat in Yugoslavia of the German occupiers and their Croatian servants by the forces of the Yugoslav Army. The participation of the Red Army in the war against the states of the fascist bloc was a basic condition for the rebirth of the national independence of the Yugoslav people, as for that of many other peoples of Europe. Without the Soviet Union, Tito stressed in his report at the Vth Conference of the CPY, "victory over the fascist invaders would have been impossible, the liberation of Yugoslavia would have been impossible, the creation of a new Yugoslavia would have been impossible."[1]

The Yugoslav peoples, battling heroically against the foreign occupiers and their servants, made a great contribution to the cause of the final defeat of Hitlerite Germany and Italy. In the Second World War Yugoslavia bore huge losses - 1,700,000 persons dead, or approximately 10 percent of the population. For a long time the PLAY and the partisan detachments, fighting bravely under extremely difficult conditions, contained considerable forces of the occupiers in the Balkans and thereby rendered significant assistance to the armies of the antifascist powers, including the Red Army.

---

[1] V Congress of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, pp 134

4. The victory of the national liberation movement in Albania.

Throughout the entire war the people of Albania carried on a struggle for their liberation from the fascist occupiers and the landholders, bourgeoisie, reactionary officials, officers and clergy who had deserted to their side. This struggle was led by the Communist Party of Albania (CPA).

The Albania people, inspired by the victories of the Red Army, met the year 1944 under circumstances of fierce, bloody fighting. The enemy's large winter offensive, begun in the first days of 1943, entered its final phase.

The Hitlerites and their confederates, who did not achieve success in 1943, renewed the offensive in the beginning of 1944 in the zone of Korce, Elbasan and Barat. The fascists also attempted to rout the partisans in Northern Albania. However, in the spring the powerlessness of the occupation forces and the armed detachments of the internal reaction was revealed. By mid-February the 4th brigade of the National Liberation Army of Albania (NLAA) and the partisan detachments again liberated many areas of the Korce region. In the second half of that month the enemy was thrown out of Permet and several other inhabited areas, and in March from the area of Delvine. An heroic raid on the central regions of the country was accomplished by three battalions of the 1st brigade. With long, stubborn battles the NLAA and partisan detachments frustrated the offensive of the occupiers. In the beginning of April the General Staff of the National Liberation Army gave the order to "attack the vital centers of the enemy (everywhere - Ed.), destroy roads, blow up bridges, attack supply depots and barracks, liberate cities and towns."[1]

The ruling classes of Albania, sensing the threat hanging not only over the occupation forces but over the old regime, abandoned internal discord for the time and united for the struggle against the people's democratic revolution. The counterrevolutionary organization "Balli Kombetar," which arose at the end of 1942, moved from demagogic speeches in "defense of the fatherland" to open military operations against the NLAA and partisan detachments. Counterrevolutionary armed detachments were also created by the organization of supporters of King Zog, "Legalitet." The reactionaries attempted with all their forces to hold back the further development in the country of the antifascist, anti-imperialist and antifeudal struggle.

The Albanian reaction was supported by the Anglo-American ruling circles. The Allies had military missions not only at the General Staff of the NLAA, but also attached to the armed formations of various counterrevolutionary organizations and groups collaborating with the German fascist invaders. These missions attempted to split the military unity of the national liberation movement.[2]

---

[1] Arkivi Qendror i Partisë së Punës së Shqipërisë, Fondi: Shtabi i Përgjithshem i Ushtrisë nacional-clirimtare, Urdhërdite, date 5 prill 1944.

[2] See La lutte du peuple Albanais contre les occupants fascists, et les Allies. Report at the 2nd International Conference on the Hist. of the Resistance Movement in Europe held in Milan in March 1961, pp. 20-22.

Even in November 1943 the CC of the Communist Party of Albania warned the members of the party of the necessity to struggle resolutely against such actions of the Allied military missions. This timely statement helped to preserve the unity and combat readiness of the people's forces. In 1944 the English and American military missions began to exert open pressure on the General Staff of the NLAA, demanding that it cease its struggle against the armed detachments of "Legalitet" and attempting to achieve a landing of the Anglo-American forces in Albania. These demands were rejected. The advance of the Red Army, diplomatic and political support on the part of the Soviet Union, the success of the national liberation struggle in Yugoslavia, and also the correct position of the CC CPA and the General Staff of the NLAA prevented the occupation of Albania by Anglo-American forces, and consequently their interference in the internal affairs of the country. At the end of May 1944 a Soviet military mission was invited to Albania and greeted ecstatically by the people's troops and the population.

At the beginning of April a CC CPA Plenum was held which played an important part in the struggle of the Albanian people for the liberation of their homeland and the establishment of a people's democratic system. The Plenum addressed the General National Liberation Council [1] with a proposal to call a congress that would consolidate the victories of the people's revolution, and legally form the institution of people's democratic authority in the country. On April 15 this proposal was accepted.

After great preparatory work, on May 24, 1944 in Permet the Antifascist National Liberation Congress was held. Two hundred delegates of the congress, chosen democratically, represented all regions of Albania, as well as the units and formations of the NLAA.

The Congress planned a program to build a new, people's democratic Albania. The Antifascist National Liberation Council was made the supreme

[1] The General National Liberation Council was selected at the first conference on September 16, 1942 for the control of the activity of local councils.

legislative and executive organ. The Council formed an Antifascist National Liberation Committee having the rights of a provisional government.

The resolution of the congress to forbid the former king Zog to return to Albania and not to "recognize any other government which may be formed /437 within Albania or beyond its berders against the free expression of the will of the Albanian people, which is represented only by the Antifascist National Council"[1] was of great significance. With this a blow was struck to the plans of the Albanian reactionaries and their western benefactors,who wished to restore the pre-war regime in the country.

The Congress approved the political line of theGeneral National Liberation Council and the activity of the General Staff, and outlined measures to further intensify the national struggle.

Immediately after the Congress the Antifascist National Liberation Council began to carry out the program to build a democratic, independent Albania. A resolution was passed to review and annul all treaties and political and economic agreements concluded by the king and the Quisling government with foreign states. This was the beginning of the country's deliverance from economic and political oppression.

Thus the Antifascist Congress in Permet legitimized the victory of the people's revolution, created new state legislative and executive organs of power, thereby laying the foundations for the Albanian people's democratic state.

At the end of May and the beginning of June 1944 the German command group undertook a new offensive against the National Liberation Army of Albania, concentrating for this 3 divisions and several special units with a total numerical strength of approximately 33,000 men. Together with the Germans operated the armed forces of the Quisling government and the reaction, numbering 14,000 persons. The command group of the NLAA set against the

[1] Kongresi i 1-rë Antifashist Nacional-Clirimtar. 1944, f. 35.

enemy 9 brigades and detached groups with total numerical strength of up to 35,000 persons.[1] Major battles developed in the southern part of Albania where the partisans operated most actively and large regions had been liberated from the enemy. For over two weeks depserate fighting continued in the region of Elbasan - Berat - Permet - Korcë. Suffering defeat here, the enemy moved military operations to the region of Gjirokastër and Vlorë, and temporarily seized them.

During these battles, on May 28 the 1st assault division of the National Liberation Army was formed. Having worn down the enemy, the Albanian patriots themselves went over to the offensive to liberate the central and thenthe northern parts of the country.

At the end of June the 1st division, crossing the Shkumbin River at Elbasan, began stubborn battles to clear Central Albania. After a major victory gained in August the 1st and 2nd divisions (the latter was formed at the beginning of August) of the National Liberation Army were combined into the 1st army corps. In August the units of this corps conducted battles on the outskirts of Tirane.

The Albanian counterrevolution now placed its hopes on assistance from the Anglo-American ruling circles. The leaders of the reaction hastened to regroup their forces in accordance with the new conditions. The organizations "Liga gov" and "Liga Shkodera," which were created in mid-August, made it their objective to "jointly destroy the communist danger."[2] In this they calculated on Anglo-American bayonets. But all of the attempts of the reactionaries to stop the victorious national liberation movement failed.

In the last days of August, when the Soviet forces were approaching Bucharest, almost all of Southern Albania and a part of the central region had been liberated. The occupants found themselves besieged in the large cities. However, the further presence of the German garrisons even in the large inhabited areas soon became impossible, because the strategic situation

---

[1] See E kalitur në zjarrin e luftës, 1958, f. 70.

[2] Arkivi Qendror i Partisë së Punës së Shqipërisë, Fondi: Brigata e 24-të e Ushtrisë nacional-clirimtare, Kopje e proces-verbalit "mbi mbledhjen e maleve në Ballë" më 12 tetor 1944.

for the fascist forces on the Balkan Peninsula worsened sharply due to the advance of the Red Army. At the end of September the German formations began to retreat from the south of the Balkan Peninsula. In October as the result of the Belgrade operation their withdrawal hastened. But the three fascist divisions located in Albania retreated to the north slowly, with stubborn delaying actions, attempting to strongly cover the western flank of the forces evacuating from Greece. Exploiting the great success of the Red Army in the Balkans, the National Liberation Army of Albania began to liberate its native cities one after another. On September 12 Berat was seized, on September 18 Gjirokastër, on October 16 Vlorë, on October 24 Korcë. The process of disintegration of the reactionary organizations "Balli Kombetar" and "Legalitet" was hastened. The national liberation movement took on ever greater scope. /438

Under the conditions of the growing political activity of the popular masses, on October 20 the Antifascist National Liberation Council met in Berat and passed an important resolution on the further organization of the people's democratic power. The Council transformed the Antifascist National Liberation Council into the Provisional Democratic Government, declared the national councils in the provinces to be the organs of governmental power, and defined their functions. A "Declaration of Citizens' Rights" was accepted, proclaiming the freedom of speech, the press, of assembly, and the equality of all citizens. The Provisional Democratic Government presented a program in which the basic goal of the immediate future, the liberation of the country, was set forth, and the principles of the government's domestic and foreign policy in the postwar period were laid out.

Approving the creation of the Provisional Democratic Government and its programs, the patriots of Albania intensified their struggle against the invaders. The National Liberation Army at that time already had 70,000 persons in its ranks at that time. The supreme command issued an order to liberate the capital of Albania. On October 29 Tirane was liberated. In the battles for the city, which lasted 19 days, the enemy lost a large part of his forces. On November 17 the people's forces cleared Tirane.

After the liberation of the capital of Albania the center of military operations was moved to the north, where the German fascist forces were retreating. On November 29 the soldiers of the Albanian army drove the occupiers out of the main city of Northern Albania, Skhoder. The remnants of the fascist forces crossed the northern border of Albania and went to Yugoslavia. The long occupation of the country by foreign invaders had ended. The day of the final liberation of Albania - November 29 - became a national holiday.

The struggle of the Albanian people against the foreign invaders and internal reaction was truly heroic. The occupiers inflicted enormous damage on the country. They leveled 35 percent of the cities and towns, ruined the agriculture, destroyed the majority of mines, electrical stations, and bridges, and blew up or burned all of the ports. Twenty-eight thousand sons and daughters of Albania gave up their lives for the liberation of their homeland and approximately 13,000 became invalids. But in spite of heavy sacrifices, the freedom-loving Albanian people did not cease the struggle against the foreign occupiers for a single day. The workers of Albania understood that by their efforts alone they could not expel the occupiers from the country. "The Red Army," it was stated in the resolution of the Antifascist National Liberation Council, "we consider the main force which routed the sworn enemy of humanity, and moreover, for us it is the symbol of the antifascist struggle for freedom, the great guaranty of our rights. For this we are grateful to the Soviet Union, and our people will never forget the great help and heroic struggle of the Red Army, which saved us from catastrophe."[1]

---

[1] Mledhja e dyte e Keshillit Antifashist Nacional-Clirimtar te Shqiperise. Ligje dhe vendime te Keshillit Antifashist Nacional-Clirimtar. 1944, f. 52.

5. The forced withdrawal of the German fascist forces from Greece and the occupation of the country by British forces.

For four years the patriots of Greece had waged a relentless struggle /439
against the occupiers. In spite of the cruelest terror of the fascist invaders, the treason of the internal reaction, and the subversive work of British agents, the national liberation movement in the country acquired wide scope. Data such as these, for instance, speak of its scale: From May 1943 through October 1944 the troops of the People's Liberation Army (ELAS), according to the testimony of its commander in chief Gen. S. Sarafis, successfully conducted a large number of operations and encounters against the invaders, including 327 significant ones.[1]

[1] See Stefanos Sarafis. Greek Resistance Army. The Story of ELAS. London, 1951, p. 279.

Simultaneously the Greek people waged a struggle with internal reactionary forces for broad democratic reorganizations in the country. It achieved major success along this path. Thanks to many years of work by the Communist Party of Greece (CPG) a union of the working class and peasantry was achieved, with the guiding role played by the working class. Around this union rallied the middle strata of the population and part of the bourgeoisie. The hegemony of the working class in the antifascist, anti-imperialist struggle promoted the development of the national movement into a people's democratic revolution. In the liberated territory the old reactionary regime was eliminated. Everywhere the organs of the new, people's power arose: people's councils, a people's militia, people's courts. In March 1944 the National Liberation Front (EAM) formed the Political Committee for National Liberation (PEEA), on which were placed the responsibilities of the Provisional Democratic Government. In April the Political Committee for National Liberation held elections to the National Council, the supreme legislative organ. Thus, even before the final expulsion of the occupiers the foundations had been laid for the people's democratic power. With the breakthrough of the Red Army to the Balkans the national liberation movement of the Greek people intensified still more, and by the end of October 1944 almost all of mainland Greece had been liberated.

The Greek people paid a high price for this victory. They suffered huge human and material losses. According to incomplete data, in four years of occupation the fascists and Quislings executed 70,000, and another 105,000 people were burned in ovens or left to rot in penal servitude. During the war with Italy and in the subsequent struggle of ELAS against the invaders 85,000 persons perished, and in all during the entire period of the war the Greek people lost 520,000 persons, which comprised 7 percent of the entire population. One hundred ninety-three thousand homes were totally destroyed,[2] and 215,000 were partially destroyed.

---

[1] See P. Mawromatis. Contribution of the Greek people to the resistance movement against German Facism. (IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #12370, p. 10).

Hundreds of thousands of sons and daughters of Hellas fought, gave their lives so that the aggressor's boot should never again tread their native land, so that the people should be the master in a free, independent, democratic Greece. And this dream of the finest people of the country was close to realization. After the expulsion of the Hitlerites EAM became the actual master of the situation. The national liberation front united over a million patriots and the youth organization (EAON) contained another 40,000 people. There were approximately 125,000 persons in the National Liberation Army.[1] The Communist Party - the organizer and leader of the struggle of the Greek people - numbered 400,000 members by that time. It seemed that the victory of the people was ensured. However, this did not come about. When under the influence of the mighty blows of the Red Army /440 in the Southwestern theater of military operations the German forces began to evacuate from Greece, the country was immediately occupied by the forces of the British imperialists.

The democratic press of the entire world in 1944-1945 exposed the reactionary, imperialistic essence of the policy of the British, and then of the American ruling circles in relation to the Greek people. Denying this, the western allies asserted that the British troops landed in Greece only to help the people drive the German occupiers out of the country and to establish peace and democracy there. But this was an obvious lie. In fact the interventionists pursued one goal - not to allow the victory of the people's democratic forces and the establishment of a new social and governmental order in Greece. They were attempting again to turn this country into the base for British dominion in the Near and Middle East and in the Balkans.

---

[1] See P. Mawromatis. Contribution of the Greek people to the resistance movement against German Facism. (IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #12370, p. 10).

In his post-war memoirs Churchill recalls with cynical frankness the imperialistic intrigues of England in Greece during that period. On August 6, 1944 Churchill wrote to the Foreign Secretary, Eden, that "the behavior of EAM is absolutely intolerable."[1] On the same day he ordered the Chief of the Imperial General Staff to prepare for a landing at Athens in one month of 10,000-12,000 men and a certain quantity of tanks, guns and armored vehicles to seize the region of the Greek capital.[2] In a letter to Eden of August 16 Churchill revealed the concept of the military operations that he proposed to conduct in Greece: "As soon as the landing ground has been seized by the 1,500 British parachutists (in the region of Athens - Ed.), the Greek government would follow almost immediately,[3] and within a very few hours should be functioning in Athens... The arrival of the parachutists in the neighborhood of Athens could be effected with complete surprise, and might well be effected before EAM has taken any steps to seize the capital."[4]

The British government coordinated its actions with the government of the USA. In a message to Roosevelt of August 17 Churchill wrote, "We have always marched together in complete agreement about Greek policy ... The War Cabinet and Foreign Secretary are much concerned about what will happen in Athens, and indeed in Greece, when the Germans crack or when their divisions try to evacuate the country... It seems very likely that EAM and Communist extremists will attempt to seize the city..."[5] Further Churchill indicated, "We should make preparations through the Allied Staff in the Mediterranean to have in readiness a British force, not exceeding 10,000 men, which could be sent... into the capital when the time is ripe."[6] On August 26, at the height of the Iaşi-Kishinyev operation, Roosevelt replied to Churchill, "I have no

---

1 W.S. Churchill. The Second World War, Vol. VI, p. 97.

2 See Ibid.

3 Speaking of the Greek government, Churchill refers to the Royal emigre government of Papandreou. On August 21 Papandreou received instructions from Churchill to move the location of the government from Cairo to Italy, closer to Allied Headquarters.

4 W.S. Churchill. The Second World War, Vol. VI, pp. 98-99.

5 Ibid, p. 99.

6 Ibid, p. 100.

objection to your making preparations to have in readiness sufficient British force to preserve order in Greece when the German forces evacuate that country."[1]

Thus it is entirely obvious that the British began direct preparations for the occupation of Greece by British troops in August 1944, even before the Iasi-Kishinyev operation. In the process of developing the operation full agreement was achieved between the British and American governments.

The rapid advance of the Soviet forces and their breakthrough to the region of Bucharest spurred the government of England to hasten the occupation of Greece. On August 29 Churchill wrote, "It is most desirable to /441 strike out of the blue without any preliminary crisis. It is the best way to forestall the EAM."[2] The plan of the British command group called for the assault landing operation (code name "Manna") in the region of Athens to begin on September 11. But the German command group delayed the evacuation of its forces from Athens, because it began first to withdraw its units from the Peloponnesian Peninsula. Therefore the British changed the plan of operations and decided to effect the paratroop landing operation not in the region of Athens, but in the northern Peloponnesus.

On October 3 Hitler gave the order to withdraw from Greece, Southern Albania and Southern Macedonia.[3] The landing of British troops (parachute and tank brigades) began on the night of October 4 in the area of the city of Patra, taking place without interference. By this time there were no Hitlerite troops there. The entire peninsula was essentially in the hands of the People's Liberation Army. Pursuing the retreating German units, the British assault landing detachments broke through to Corinth and seized it. The guards battalions of the Quisling government of I. Rallis capitulated. On October 12 the British command group learned of the evacuation of German

---

[1] W.S. Churchill. The Second World War, vol. VI, p. 100.

[2] Ibid, p. 248.

[3] See Situation reports of the Wehrmach high command.. Bd. IV, Ester Halbband, S.820

troops from Athens. The following day on its orders British parachutists landed at an airfield 10-12 kilometers west of Athens.

The German command group, disturbed by the successful operations of the Red Army in the region of Belgrade, continued the evacuation of its forces from Greece throughout October. On November 1 the Hitlerites left Saloniki. The British did not hesitate to seize that strategically important city and port as well. Several days previously, the British assault landing detachments began to alight on the most important islands of the Aegean Sea. On November 10-11 the last German units withdrawing into Yugoslavia crossed the northern border of Greece. After the British units the emigre monarchist government of G. Papandreou arrived in Greece. The interventionists had created the prerequisites for the start in the country of a heavy, bloody war.

Although the British troops had seized strategically important regions of Greece - Athens and Saloniki - without a single shot, the entire remaining territory of the country was almost totally under the control of the National Liberation Front.

The British imperialists decided to put an end to EAM. In a letter to Eden of November 7, 1944, "I fully expect a clash with EAM, and we must not shrink from it..."[1] Churchill not only "expected a clash," but provoked it. With the support of the commander of the occupation forces in Greece, Gen. R. Scobie, the Greek Premier Papandreou established a regime of police terror in the country. He ordered the disarming of all ELAS detachments, that is the forces that for several years had waged an heroic armed struggle against the occupiers. As a sign of protest against the antinational actions of the Greek reaction, all six ministers - representatives of EAM, ELAS and the Communist Party who had joined the government of Papandreou in September 1944

---

[1] W.S. Churchill. The Second World War, Vol. VI, p. 250.

on the basis of the Lebanon (Beirut) Conference[1] - resigned on December 2. On the same day Gen. Scobie, who as early as November 15 had received instructions from Churchill to "prepare a counteroperation"[2] and crush the national liberation movement, issued an order to fulfill Papandreou's instructions immediately and without discussion.

The decision of the government and the actions of the British command group provoked a wave of popular indignation in Athens, which on December 3, 1944 developed into a demonstration of protest. Approximately 500,000 persons took part in it. The police and interventionist troops opened fire on the demonstrators. The day after the firing on a peaceful demonstration the British troops, along with monarchist detachments and police, began offensive operations against the few detachments of ELAS located in Athens. Bloody battles sprang up. The British subjected Athens to barbarous bombardment from the air and shelling from ships. Six thousand persons were killed and many buildings destroyed.

Nine years after these events Churchill produced in his memoirs a telegram which he sent on December 5, 1944 to Gen. Scobie. He wrote at that time, "...Do not hesitate to act as if you were in a conquered city where a local rebellion is in progress... We have to hold and dominate Athens."[3] Citing this cynical telegram, Churchill admitted, "I had in my mind Arthur Balfour's[4] celebrated telegram in the eighties to the British authorities in Ireland: 'Don't hesitate to shoot.'"[5] Churchill recalled that the phrase "Don't hesitate to shoot" sounded in his ears as an echo from a far-off time

---

[1] The Lebanon Conference was held in May 1944. In it participated representatives of the emigre government, EAM, PEEA and separate political parties. At the conference a resolution was passed to disband all armed organizations after the liberation of Greece and form a single army, to conduct a plebiscite on the question of the monarchy and the government of "National Unity."

[2] W.S. Churchill. The Second World War, Vol. VI, p. 250.

[3] Ibid, p. 252.

[4] A. Balfour, Minister of Irish Affairs 1887-1891, was famous for his ruthless suppression of the Irish independence movement.

[5] W.S.Churchill. The Second World War, Vol. VI, p. 252.

and prompted him to action. Thus, "not hesitating to shoot," the British occupiers began a war against the democratic forces in Greece. However, even under the conditions that had developed the actual master in the country was still EAM and its army. The British field marshal G. Alexander reported during those days to Churchill from Athens, "The British forces are in fact beleaguered in the heart of the city."[1] In reponse to this Alexander was given"complete freedom of action regarding all essential military matters."[2]

Having unleashed a criminal war of invasion against the freedom-loving people of Greece, the ruling circles of England did all they could to ensure the victory of the anti-democratic forces. The government of the USA, fearing unfavorable public reaction, did not then make up its mind to openly join the interventionists. However, the leading figures of the USA - F. Roosevelt, his advisor H. Hopkins, the Secretary of the Navy D. Forrestal and others - did not conceal their approval of the British actions. On December 13, 1944 Roosevelt wrote to Churchill, "I have been as deeply concerned as you have yourself in regard to the tragic difficulties you have encountered in Greece... I regard my role in this matter as that of a loyal friend and ally whose one desire is to be of any help possible in the circumstances."[3]

Meanwhile the struggle in Greece grew ever more heated. The situation in the country was controlled as before by EAM and its forces. On December 21, 1944, the supreme commander of the Allied forces in the Mediterranean Sea, Alexander, informed the British cabinet that his forces were sufficient to clear the region of Athens and Piraeus, but they were not enough to deal with the popular forces of Greece. "We are not strong enough," he wrote, "to go beyond this and undertake operations on the Greek mainland."[4] Reminding that during the occupation of Greece the Germans had kept 11 divisions there and still could not ensure the constant operation of their

---

[1] W.S. Churchill. The Second World War, Vol. VI, p. 260.
[2] Ibid, p. 260.
[3] Ibid, p. 261.
[4] Ibid, p. 269.

communications, Alexander continued, "...I doubt if we will meet less strength and determination than they (the Germans - Ed.) encountered... It is my opinion that the Greek problem cannot be solved by military measures. The answer must be found in the political field."[1]

The people's indignation and energetic resistance to the occupiers led /443 to the point that in January 1945 the Greek government of Papandreou submitted its resignation. On February 12 the new government of Gen. Plastiras, through the agency and on the advice of the ruling circles of England, concluded an agreement with EAM in Varkiz (not far from Athens). It called for the establishment in the country of democratic liberties, the lifting of the state of war, amnesty for political prisoners, and a purge of the government apparatus, including the police, of Quislings. The agreement called for a plebiscite to be held with the purpose of free resolution by the people of the question of the governmental system of the country, and later a general election to the Constitutent Assembly. All armed forces were to be disarmed and the creation of a new army was outlined. On these terms the leadership of the National Liberation Front agreed to disarm ELAS.[2]

Having been unable to overcome the people's resistance by force of arms, the interventionists and the Greek reaction achieved by means of deception - the disarming of the people according to a peace agreement. After the voluntary dissolution of ELAS, which was completed in February, on the decree of the British masters the government of Plastiras not only did not fulfill a single one of the obligations it had assumed, but it established unrestrained terror in the country against the communists and their supporters. When the monarchist-fascist government of Adm. P. Vulgaris came to power in April the terror increased still more. A fratricidal civil war began in Greece, which lasted for a long period of time and ended in the defeat of the democratic forces.

---

[1] W.S. Churchill. The Second World War, vol. VI, p. 269.

[2] See «Συμφωνια της Βαρκιζας», Αθηνα, 1945.

What were the basic reasons for the fact that the Greek people, who had fought heroically for four years against the fascist invaders and liberated their homeland, were unable to enjoy the fruits of their victory and take the fate of the country into their own hands? The main cause was British intervention. The British imperialists, attempting by every means to preserve their influence in this strategically important region, succeeded the German fascist occupiers in Greece, began a criminal war against the Greek people, and imposed on them a civil war that took hundreds of thousands of human lives. Appraising the events of that time, the VIIth Congress of the Communist Party of Greece, which was held in August 1961, noted in its resolution, "The interference of the British imperialists in December 1944, and later of the American imperialists, struck a blow to the forces of national Resistance, brought the most reactionary forces of Greek society to power and thereby stopped the normal democratic development of the country, restored the monarchy and established against the will of the people an anti-democratic, police regime which watched over the interests of the imperialists and the local oligarchy."[1]

The realization by British imperialism of their aggressive goals and the restoration in the country of the reactionary regime was facilitated by the errors committed in 1943-1944 by the leadership of EAM and the Greek Communist Party. In the reports of the CPG for the 40th anniversary of the party exposing these errors it is indicated that the agreement signed in July 1943 according to which the People's Liberation Army was subordinated to the Middle Eastern command group greatly curtailed the independence of ELAS.[2] Further in the report it is stressed that, in completing the Lebanon agreement "the CPG made unacceptable concessions not in accordance with the ratio of forces fighting in Greece."[3] Indeed, by that time the majority of the people and considerable armed forces were on the side of EAM and PEEA. In the liberated regions the people's authority existed. The emigre government expressed the interests of the ruling classes, that is an inconsiderable minority of the population, and had small armed forces.

---

1 Quot. from "Pravda," September 29, 1961.

2 See «Θεσεις για τα παραντεχρονα του ΚΚΕ», 1958, σελ. 22.

3 Ibid.

The Caserta agreement concluded in Italy in September 1944 "was a continuation and deepening of the Lebanon mistake."[1] In accordance with this agreemert the National Liberation Army was transferred to the command of the British Gen. Scobie and was not to occupy large cities and the most important regions - Attica, Central and Eastern Macedonia, Epiros, and so on. The most truly important regions of the country remained in the hands of reactionary organizations. Even more unacceptable was the conclusion of the Varkiz agreement, especially the section calling for the disarmament of ELAS. "... If there had not been these serious errors," it is noted in the reports of the CC of the Communist Party of Greece, "the heroic struggle conducted by EAM could have led not only to the liberation of the country from the German fascist yoke, but to its deliverance from any foreign imperialist dependence, to the opening of the path for the democratic rebirth of Greece."[2] /444

The Soviet government several times raised the question of the situation in Greece at international conventions and conferences. In July 1945 at the Potsdam Conference the government of the USSR made the proposal to recommend to the regent of Greece that a democratic government be formed in accordance with the Varkiz agreement. This question was also raised at sessions of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs in London (September 1945) and in Moscow (December 1945). In February 1946 the Soviet government demanded the withdrawal of British troops from Greece. The question of the unacceptability of the British troops' presence in Greece, with the help of which the reaction had taken the upper hand in that country, was also raised by the government of the USSR at the Paris Peace Conference in the summer and fall of 1946. Later the voice of the Soviet Union often sounded from the international platform against the occupation of Greece, against the terror and the persecution of the democratic forces in that long-suffering country. However, under the conditions of the "Cold War" that had begun it was not possible to change the situation in Greece.

The military-political events that took place in Yugoslavia, Albania and Greece at the end of 1944 and the beginning of 1945 were of great significance

1 Θεσεις για τα στρατηγορια του ΚΚΕ, σελ. 23.

2 Ibid, p. 24.

and provoked the greatest international consequences. The states of the Balkan peninsula were delivered from fascist slavery, and this occurred above all as the result of the Red Army's advance in Southeastern Europe. From the point of view of the internal alignment of class forces the question of the victory of the national liberation movement led by the Communist Party of those countries was predetermined even during the struggle against the German fascist invaders. But, not having sufficient forces for complete victory over the Hitlerite occupiers, the peoples of Yugoslavia, Albania and Greece counted on aid on the part of the countries of the antifascist coalition, and first of all from the Soviet Union.

In spite of many years of heroic struggle by the Yugoslav peoples and the success achieved by the People's Liberation Army, a considerable part of the territory of Yugoslavia, all of the most important cities and railroad communications remained in the hands of the occupiers in the middle of 1944. The final liberation of the eastern regions of the country began only when the Red Army began military operations there and in the territory of Hungary. The complete cleansing of Yugoslavia became possible only after the defeat of army group "South" in Hungary and the breakthrough of the Soviet forces to the region of Vienna, to the deep rear of army group "F", which still held all of the key positions in Croatia and Slovenia.

During the years of the war and many times in the post-war period both the Communist Party of Yugoslavia as a whole and its leading directors declared that the Red Army played an important and decisive role in the liberation of /445
Yugoslavia. On February 23,1945 the organ of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, the newspaper "Borba," wrote, "We are deeply sure that the participation of the Red Army in the war against fascism was the main condition that ensured our struggle for national liberation. The participation of the Red Army in the war against Germany and Italy provided the conditions for our people's rebellion. Without that participation it is impossible to imagine our partisan war. Without the struggle of the Soviet Union and its Red Army against the fascist oppressors our rebellion would have been doomed in advance to defeat." Tito, appraising the role of the Soviet people and its army, said on May 9, 1947, "Great and invaluable is the service of the glorious Soviet

Army and Soviet peoples, who with their incomparable sacrifices ensured and decided the victory over the fascist invaders and thereby saved the small peoples from fascist slavery, and humanity from a medieval darkness."[1] The famous Yugoslav general K. Popovich emphasized in 1947, "Our peoples know and understand well that without the Soviet Union, without the Red Army, our liberation struggle could not have been successfully completed... for the Soviet Union bore the main burden of the war on its shoulders, for the Soviet Union defeated fascist Germany, and all other forces were merely secondary and auxiliary, and those forces were able to achieve success solely thanks to the victories of the Red Army."[2]

The German occupiers withdrew from Greece and Albania only after the Soviet forces had created a direct threat to their communications. The Yugoslav, Albania and Greek peoples fought with the full efforts of their forces, but they could not achieve liberation on their own without help from outside.

The struggle with the fascist invaders was combined with the revolutionary movement against the capitalist order in the European countries. Under these conditions the ruling classes were ready to sell their souls to the devil to preserve their privileges. They were not against entering an alliance with fascist Germany or enlisting the armed support of the ruling circles of the USA and England. The actions of the reactionary segment of the bourgeoisie and the landholders who betrayed the national interests of their countries provoked the rage of the people. An exceptionally favorable situation developed for the revolutionary movement in the countries of Southeastern Europe. During the war the bourgeoisie lost their armed forces, with the support of which they had maintained their domination. The anti-fascist forces, on the contrary, formed the embryos of organs of people's democratic power during the struggle against the occupiers. In Yugoslavia, Albania and Greece people's liberation armies that had been hardened in battle arose.

---

[1] I.B. Tito. Collected works. Building the New Jugoslavia, II Vol. 1, 1947, p. 274.

[2] "Borba," November 11, 1947.

The Armed Forces of the USSR, fulfilling its mission of liberation, by no means intended to impose any social and governmental order by force on the European peoples. This contradicts the teachings of Marx, Engels and Lenin, contradicts the principles of the foreign policy of the Soviet Union, which believed and believes that a revolution cannot be brought about with bayonets. But it is completely obvious that the entrance of the army of a socialist state into one or another country could not but create favorable political conditions there for the free development of the class struggle, for the establishment by international revolutionary forces of a new, more just social order, for the liberation of the working masses not only from foreign, but from social oppression.

The line of the ruling circle of the USA and England was fundamentally opposed to this. They attempted to use their armies in order, having expelled the German fascist forces from the occupying countries, to plant reactionary political regimes there. In this connection it is useful to recall the course of political events in France and Italy. During the years of the war in those countries a powerful revolutionary national liberation movement developed, /446 and there operated Communist Parties incomparably stronger, more massive, tempered in revolutionary battles, than in many countries of Central and Southeastern Europe. However, the revolutionary struggle of the French and Italian people did not lead to the establishment of the power of the working class and its allies, because into these countries entered armies not of socialist states, but of capitalist countries. The same occurred in Greece.

CHAPTER 15

THE OPERATIONS OF THE NAVY OF THE SOVIET UNION ON NAVAL LINES OF COMMUNICATION

1. The altered situation in the naval theaters. The objectives of the fleets.

Throughout 1944 the Soviet naval fleets and flotillas conducted active /447
offensive operations in all naval theaters. They took direct part in the offensive operations conducted by the Red Army in coastal and riverbank directions. The Red Banner Baltic Fleet participated in the rout of the enemy forces at Leningrad, on the Karelian isthmus, in Southern Karelia and in the Baltic region. The Black Sea Fleet played no small part in the liberation of the Crimea and the Ukraine. The N orthern Fleet rendered great assistance to our troops in the Petsamo-Kirkenes operation. The sailors of the Dnepr military flotilla made their contribution to the cause of defeating the German fascist forces in Belorussia. The Danube military

flotilla supported the Soviet troops in the Belgrade and Budapest operations.[1] Simultaneously all of the fleets also fulfilled another important objective. They waged a struggle on the enemy's naval communications and defended their own communications. This struggle was conducted under the favorable conditions that had developed as the result of the victories gained by the Red Army in 1943.

The German naval forces in 1944 were faced with very difficult tasks: to maintain their former position on the seas, support the coastal groupings of ground forces in holding the front, and to intensify their blows on the naval communications connecting the USSR and its allies. The enemy fleet was further faced with securing sea shipments, transferring reserves for the coastal groupings and supplying them, and removing battle groups and stolen /448 material valuables from abandoned regions. The enemy effected these transports on numerous transport vessels, for the escort of which a large number of military ships were used.

The high command of the German naval forces attempted to maintain its positions on the Barents, Baltic and Black Seas. The main grouping of surface ships in 1944 remained in the ports of Northern Norway for operations against convoys traveling to the Soviet Union. That grouping was maintained there until the German ground forces lost their positions in Finland and the Baltic region. On the Baltic Sea in the beginning of the year the enemy felt relatively strong, because he held powerful naval defensive lines in the Gulf of Finland. However the rout of the Hitlerite forces at Leningrad, on the Karelian isthmus, and then in the Baltic region fundamentally changed the situation. It was no accident that several times the fascist command group conducted meetings at which questions of the defense of the Baltic Sea were discussed. Events developed still more rapidly on the Black Sea. In the beginning of the year the enemy's forces were located here under favorable circumstances: they still had at their

[1] The participation of the fleets and flotillas in all three operations is elucidated in Chapters 2-6, 9, 10, 12-14.

disposal the ports of the Crimea; the sea lines of communication running to the west from the Crimean Peninsula were at a considerable distance from the Soviet base on the shore of the Caucasus. With the loss of the Black Sea coast the situation became entirely different. The serious defeats suffered by the German army in 1944 forced the Hitlerite command group to reinforce its fleets on the Black and Baltic Seas in order to support the ground forces and contain the Soviet Navy. Approximately 50 submarines waged the struggle against the naval transports of the USSR. Due to the sharp worsening of the situation on the Soviet-German front, opportunities for operations on the seas by enemy aircraft decreased.

In 1944 the enemy's navy operated under conditions of the domination of Soviet aircraft in the air. Retired German Admiral of the Fleet V. Marschal writes, "The enemy's superiority on the sea and in the air became more and more obvious."[1] The superiority of the Soviet air force decreased the combat capabilities of the enemy fleet, particularly paralyzing the operations of surface ships.

By 1944 essential changes had taken place in the composition of our fleets. Thanks to the efforts of the Communist Party and the selfless labor of the entire Soviet people the Navy received during the course of the year new ships and airplanes, and new models of weapons. After 1943 the addition to the fleets of submarines, mine sweepers, submarine chasers, motor torpedo boats and small gunboats increased. This to a considerable degree replaced the losses in ships of corresponding classes. The number of antisubmarine defense ships and mine sweepers particularly increased, which was caused by the necessity to counter the enemy's main forces - submarines and mine weapons of the most advanced models. Old ships were equipped with new technical equipment: hydroacoustic and radar instruments, radio communication equipment, sweeps, means of destroying magnetic and acoustic mines, and other improved weapons. Equipping the fleets and flotillas with new ships and armaments increased their combat capabilities.

---

[1] World War. 1939-1945, p. 370.

The movement of the Soviet patriots, who conducted a collection of resources for the construction of ships, tanks and airplanes, had great importance in strengthening the military might of the Armed Forces of the USSR. On the money contributed by the population dozens of surface vessels and submarines were built. In the northern seas operated the "Yaroslavskiy Komsomolets" and "Novosibirskiy Komsomolets" submarines and the "Dzerzhinets" torpedo boat, in the Baltic fought the motor torpedo boats "Tambovskiy Pionyer," "Morshanskiy Zheleznodorzhnik," and "Mordovskiy Kolkhoznik," and on the Black Sea the motor torpedo boat "Moskovskiy Remeslennik" and others.

The air forces of all fleets grew quantitatively and improved qualitatively. The number of mine-laying and torpedo aircraft and bombers increased, and formations of ground attack aircraft appeared. The improved technical flight properties of the airplanes permitted the air force to strike blows at the entire depth of the naval theaters. /449

The growth of the share of the air forces and small battleships in the composition of all fleets responded to the objectives they were to complete in all of our inner limited naval theaters.

The widespread use of mine weaponry by both belligerents created a serious mine danger in all naval theaters, and especially in the Gulf of Finland. This hindered the operations of submarines, large surface war ships and transports of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet.

On the basis of study of the experience of the conflict with the enemy, training of the crews of surface ships, submarines and aircraft was increased, and means of controlling them in battle and operation were perfected. As in previous years, the personnel of the navy were distinguished by great morale and combat qualities. A large part in the ideological - political education of the seamen was played by Party and Komsomol organizations. Their influence on the life and combat activity of the units and ships increased considerably after the proclamation of the Central Committee

of the AUCP(b) on the reorganization of the structure of Party and Komsomol organizations in the Red Army and the Navy.[1]

In 1944 the tasks of our fleets as before were to cover the flanks of the ground forces and support the offensive operations of the Red Army. However, under the conditions of the altered situation these objectives took on new content and meaning.

In the first period of the Great Patriotic War, largely submarines and periodically aircraft and surface ships operated on the naval communications. On the whole, the forces of the fleets - ships, aircraft and even submarines - were used for close support from the sea and air of Red Army units defending the coastal regions. In the second period of the war the fleets increased their military activity. They contained the enemy in the coastal regions, supported the offensive of our ground forces, and conducted independent operations on enemy communications and defended their own communications. With all of this the fleets promoted the achievement of a radical change in the course of the war.

In 1944 tasks such as supply and evacuation of groupings pinned to the sea fell to one side: due to the increased fire power of the Red Army formations the need rarely arose for close support of the troops with the naval artillery and air forces of the fleet, or for small amphibious landings to breach the enemy's tactical defense. More and more often the necessity arose for transport of troops in order to regroup for an offensive, for assault landings at operative depth, for the seizure of isolated points and islands, and also for the supplying of land forces.

Disrupting the naval communications of the enemy in the Barents, Baltic and Black Seas remained an important operative-strategic task of the fleets throughout the entire war. In connection with the enemy's increased naval transports in 1944 and with the greater capabilities of our fleets, they were

[1] See Volume 3 of this edition, p. 228.

set more decisive objectives for the disruption of the enemy naval communications. Simultaneously naval forces on all seas were to defend their own communications, the length of which grew more and more as the Red Army moved westward.

To bring greater precision to the organization of the cooperation of /450
the ground forces with the Naval forces, on March 31, 1944 Headquarters of the Supreme High Command established the order of subordination of the fleets in a special directive and assigned their objectives. The Northern Fleet with the White Sea military flotilla and the Black Sea Fleet were subordinated directly to the People's Commissar of the Navy. The Azov military flotilla of the Black Sea Fleet was operatively subordinate to the commander in chief of the Detached Maritime Army, the Red Banner Baltic Fleet and the Ladoga military flotilla to the commander in chief of the Leningrad front, and the Dnepr military flotilla to the commander in chief of the 2nd Belorussian Front.[1] The Onega military flotilla continued to remain in operative subordination to the commander in chief of the Karelian front.

On the basis of Headquarters' directive the People's Commissar of the Navy set the Red Banner Baltic Fleet and the flotillas that were operating subordinate to the fronts objectives which were to be completed only by the naval forces (for example, operations on communications.)

[1] IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, pp. 142-145. In April 1944 the Dnepr military flotilla was re-subordinated to the commander in chief of the 1st Belorussian front.

2. The blockade of the Crimea and the further military operations of the Black Sea Fleet

The liberation of the Taman' Peninsula in 1943 and the Red Army's breakthrough to the shore of the Black Sea from Kherson to Perekop presented the Black Sea Fleet with new tasks. /450

The German fascist command group attached great importance to holding the Crimea. At the end of 1943 at a conference with Hitler, Admiral Donitz declared that the loss of the Crimea, and especially of its main port, Sevastopol', would change the situation on the Black Sea and greatly hinder transports along the northern and western shores.[1] The Crimea

[1]See Andreas Hillgruber. Evacuation of theCirmea in 1944, Berlin - Frankfurt am Main, 1959, S. 78, 88.

occupied a central position in the Black Sea theater, which permitted the enemy fleet's air force and light forces based there to operate in all radial directions (Novosibirsk, Odessa, Constanţa, etc.). Possessing the Crimea, the enemy could strike blows from the airfields and strong points on the coast at our communications along the shore of the Caucasus, in the Sea of Azov and in the zone of the Kerch' Strait (map 16). The Soviet fleet based at the ports of the Caucasian coast had limited opportunities to strike blows with surface ships and aircraft on the enemy's Odessa-Constanţa, Constanţa-Bosporus communications far from our bases.

After the Soviet forces broke through to the Perekop isthmus, the naval communications between the Crimean Peninsula and the ports of the western shore acquired crucial importance for the enemy. The battle readiness of his Crimean grouping depended on their strength. Reinforcements and all forms of supply for the 17th Army were brought in by sea, items of material value were removed and sick and wounded were evacuated. To resolve these tasks the enemy used 18 transport vessels with total displacement of 47,000 tons, 100 mechanized landing craft and many smaller vessels with total displacement of over 70,000 tons.[1] From month to month the number of /451
convoys completing runs between the ports of the western shore of the Black Sea and the Crimea grew. In February there were 20, in March 44, in April 141 and in 12 days of May there were 110.[2]

Believing that our Black Sea Fleet would undertake active operations on the naval communications, the enemy command group took measures to increase the number of escort ships. Several motor torpedo boats were brought from Germany and Italy by land and along the Danube, and from Italy and Greece dozens of mine sweepers, mechanized landing craft and auxiliary vessels were brought through the Dardanelles. In Nikolayev, Odessa and Constanta the construction of new small ships to guard the transports was accelerated. Work was begun to raise sunken ships and make them operational

---

[1] See Jürg Meister. Maritime was in East European waters, 1941-1945. München, 1958, S. 276.

[2] See N. P. V'yunenko. The Black Sea Fleet in the Great Patriotic War. Moscow, Voyenizdat, 1957, p. 302.

By the start of 1944 the enemy had on the Black Sea 1 auxiliary cruiser, 3 destroyers, 3 torpedo boats, 3 patrol ships, 3 gunboats, up to 30 mine sweepers, 14 submarines, 28 motor torpedo boats, 4 mine layers, 34 submarine chasers, over 100 assault landing craft and ammunition lighters, and other small ships.[1] At the airfields of the Crimea the enemy concentrated up to 250 airplanes. They presented a particularly great danger to our surface vessels.

By the start of 1944 the Black Sea Fleet had, including the Azov military flotilla, 1 warship, 4 cruisers, 29 submarines, 6 destroyers, 13 patrol ships, 3 gunboats, 44 mine sweepers, 113 small submarine chasers and patrol cutters.[2] Due to insufficient equipment of the naval bases with means of repair, many ships were out of operation. Thus, for instance, of 29 submarines only 16 were active, and of 47 motor torpedo boats 13 were in operation. The main assault and most mobile force of the fleet was the air force, numbering 467 airplanes.[3] The main base of the fleet was the port of Poti. As mobile bases the ports of Tuapse, Gelendzhik and Anapa were used. The main airfields were located on Taman' Peninsula, in Gelendzhik and other points on the east coast. The fleet was commanded by Vice-Adm. L. A. Vladimirskiy (after Mar. 28, 1944 by Vice-Adm. F. S. Oktyabrskiy), Military council member was Rear Adm. I. I. Azarov, and Chief of Staff Rear Adm. I. F. Golubev-Monatkin. The Azov military flotilla under the command of Rear Adm. S. G. Gorshkov was based at the port of Temryuk and performed the task of supplying and supporting the military operations of the Detached Maritime Army on Kerch' Peninsula.

The Black Sea Fleet had superiority over the enemy, but the command group did not have the opportunity to utilize all battle-worthy ships for operations on the communications. This was due, in the first place, to the fact that the main bases of the surface vessels and airfields of fighter

---

[1] Archives of Naval IO, div. 12830, pp. 20-24; div. 15015, pp. 2-6.

[2] Ibid, div. 36813, pp. 2-3, 61.

[3] Ibid, div. 12830, pp. 15, 16.

aircraft were located at too great a distance from the enemy communications and it was difficult to cover the ships from the air; in the second place, the operations of the large surface ships were complicated by the serious mine danger in the shallow northwestern area of the Black Sea. In 1943 alone the enemy placed approximately 5,000 mines and over 1,000 mine protectors in 50 fields. In all, according to German data, in the period from 1941 through 1945 approximately 20,000 mines were placed.[1] Under these conditions an excursion by large surface ships into the northwestern sector of the Black Sea to find and destroy convoys and small vessels, largely self-propelled craft, was completely unfeasible.

For this very reason in the beginning of 1944 largely submarines and /452
aircraft waged the struggle for the naval communications. The submarines operated on the lines of probable movement of enemy convoys between Sevastopol' and the ports of the western shore of the Black Sea, and the light forces of the fleet (motor torpedo boats) operated near the south coast of the Crimea. On the enemy communications in the northwestern area of the Black Sea, specifically on the communications connecting the Crimea and Odessa, the air force of the fleet conducted military operations. Thus, even in the beginning of 1944 the ships and air force of the fleet were taking part in the blockade of the enemy's Crimean grouping from the sea.

The blockade operations of the Black Sea Fleet in the approaches to the Crimea further continued to intensify. In March and April the 2nd brigade of motor torpedo boats, skirting the Crimea at a great distance from the shore, completed a daring movement from Gelendzhik to Skadovsk. The length of the route was over twice as great as the navigating range of the motor torpedo boats. Therefore they were accompanied for the first half of the distance by fuel cutters. From the first days of its deployment in the new area the brigade created a real threat to the enemy communications connecting the Crimea with Odessa.

---

[1] See J. Meister. Maritime was in East European waters, 1941-1945, S 296.

In the period preceding the conduct of the operation to liberate Odessa, the air force of the fleet was re-deployed to the airfields of Severnaya Tavriya. This made it possible to make strikes on the communications between the ports of Rumania and Odessa, which the enemy used to evacuate forces and objects of value from Odessa. At the same time bombing strikes were made on the ports of Constanţa and Sulina, and mines were placed in the roadsteads. The air force of the fleet, operating near the western shore of the Black Sea, from January 3 through April 10 sank 3 transports and over 40 mechanized landing craft, ferries, launches, and other small floating craft of the enemy.[1]

In April 1944, during preparations for the operations of the troops of the 4th Ukrainian front and the Detached Maritime Army to liberate the Crimea, the nature of the fleet's military operations changed. On April 11 Headquarters of the Supreme High Command gave the Black Sea Fleet an assignment: using submarines, aircraft and motor torpedo boats, to systematically cut off the enemy's communications in the Black Sea.[2] Disruption of the enemy communications was defined in the directive as the main objective for the immediate period. Simultaneously the fleet was to secure its own communications against enemy operations. The operations of large surface ships on the naval communications were not called for by Headquarters. However, from the operative point of view such a decision was justified only while the enemy had the opportunity to cover the evacuation of forces with aircraft based at the airfields of the Crimea. In the course of the operation, when the enemy, having lost the greater part of the Crimea, retreated to Sevastopol' and had almost no aircraft, it was expedient to use destroyers and cruisers to blockade the enemy grouping in the area of Sevastopol' from the sea.

The command group of the Black Sea Fleet ordered the formations of motor torpedo boats to destroy vessels leaving Sevastopol' and Yevpatoriya in the tactical approach to the Crimea. In the distant approaches to the

---

[1] TML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #13893, pp. 105-116.

[2] Ibid, Inv. #9492, pp. 168-169.

Crimea, closer to the coast of Rumania, the same assignment was performed by submarines. The aircraft of the fleet made strikes on the enemy communications along their entire length from Sevastopol' to the Rumanian ports of Sulina and Constanţa. The military ships and transports of the enemy were subjected to attacks not only on the routes they traveled to Rumania, but in the ports of the Crimea as well. Approximately 400 airplanes took part in the military operations (including 12 torpedo bombers, 45 bombers, 66 ground attack planes and 239 fighters).

The activization of the military operations of the Black Sea Fleet on the lines of communication forced the fascist command group to throw in the entire fleet and all air force formations to secure them. Regarding that question, the former chief of staff of the commander of the German naval /453 forces on the Black Sea, Capt. 1st Rank H. Conrady, wrote, "...The situation on the Black Sea had developed in such a way that to repel the enemy on the sea, to protect our own coast and naval lines of communication, and also to deliver supplies for the army by sea, and not by lengthy land shipments, it was necessary to bring the entire fleet into action."[1] However, in spite of this, the enemy was unable to protect his communications from the systematic strikes of the ships and aircraft of the Black Sea Fleet. The German fascist command group was forced to sharply curtail the supplying of the 17th Army. In December 1943-March 1944 only 75-80% of its needs were satisfied.[2]

On April 8 the operation to liberate the Crimea began. The air force of the fleet completed over 250 airplane flights every day. Ground attack planes and bombers accompanied by fighters made attacks on the ports and convoys at the shore of the Crimea, and further on the sea, groups of torpedo bombers and bombers operated independently. The enemy suffered losses. On April 11, for example, the airplanes of the 11th assault airborne division under the command of Lt. Col. D. I. Manzhosov, having conducted several successive strikes on a concentration of enemy floating

---

[1] D.H.D. v. Conrady. The Navy in the Black Sea, 1941-1944. "Marine Rundschawu," Heft 3, 1956, S. 69.

[2] See J. Meister. Maritime was in East European waters, 1941-1945, S. 276.

craft in Feodosia, sank the "P-204" mine sweeper, two assault landing craft and a seiner, and damaged two landing craft and port equipment. The Hitlerites' attempt to begin an evacuation from Feodosia was thwarted. On April 13 the air force made a new strike on the transport equipment in Feodosia. On the same day 80 ground attack airplanes accompanied by 42 fighters completed a mass attack on a concentration of enemy transport craft with enemy troops preparing to leave the port of Sudak.

Ground assault planes that used the topmast means of toss bombing (from a ground level flight) and torpedo bombers, which took off on "free chase," also operated successfully against the enemy transports on the sea. Furthermore, the air force placed mines in the approaches to the shore, ports and bases of the enemy.

The motor torpedo boats of the 2nd brigade under the command of Capt. 2nd Rank V. T. Protsenko conducted active operations. They carried out systematic searches for the enemy in the approaches to Yevpatoriya, Ak-Mecheti and Sevastopol' from the north, from the direction of Karkinitskiy Gulf. Thus, on the night of April 16 in the approaches to Sevastopol' the brave seamen sank a mechanized landing craft and several patrol cutters of the enemy. On April 19 the 1st brigade of motor torpedo boats under the command of Capt. 2nd Rank G. D. D'yachenko, which was redeployed from the Caucasian coast to Yalta, began military operations on the communications south of Sevastopol'. The searches for the enemy were complicated by the fact that his convoys usually moved out to sea at night and during poor flying weather. Before attacking enemy transports our cutters had to conduct an artillery engagement with guard ships. The arming of Soviet cutters with rocket missiles, which were found to be an effective means of defeating enemy guard ships and transport craft, was a complete surprise for the enemy. The motor torpedo boats operated especially boldly and decisively in the days preceding the storming of Sevastopol' by the troops of the 4th Ukrainian front, and during the direct battle for the city.

The bomber aircraft and submarines of the Black Sea Fleet also waged an intensive struggle during these days. Every day each bomber crew

completed two or three operational flights. The submarines conducted a search for the enemy both independently and according to data from aerial reconnaissance. When German convoys or single vessels were found the information was transmitted to the command group of the brigades of motor torpedo boats and air force. In spite of the fact that the enemy dropped depth charges on our submarines (during the Crimean operation 1,562 of them /454 were dropped), they boldly attacked the enemy vessels and, as a rule, achieved success. On April 22 the submarine "M-111" commanded by Sr. Lt. M. I. Khomyakov, having received a report from a reconnaissance airplane, searched out and sank a transport with displacement of approximately 5,000 tons. On May 12 the submarine "A-5" (commander Sr. Lt. V.I. Matveyev) discovered a convoy consisting of the transport "Durostor," seven mechanized landing craft, a destroyer and two patrol boats. Without diving, the submarine carried out an attack and sank the transport and one landing craft.

Thus in the course of the Crimean operation, through mutual cooperation motor torpedo boats, aircraft and submarines inflicted considerable material damage on the enemy. With its aggressive operations the Black Sea Fleet disrupted the orderly supply of the 17th German Army located in the Crimea. This facilitated their defeat by our troops. In the days when the liberation of the Crimea was being completed, the fleet and air force blocked the orderly evacuation of the remnants of the broken 17th Army. On the night of May 10 the last enemy convoy reached Cape Kherson: the "Totila" and "Teya" diesel-electric ships and self-propelled landing craft. Each having taken aboard 5,000-6,000 men, at dawn they set their course for Constanta. The 8th Guards and 47th ground attack air force regiments under the command of Lt. Col. N. V. Chelnokov and Maj. N. G. Stepanyan, the 13th Guards reconnaissance air force regiment commanded by Lt. Col. N. A.Musatov, and the 5th Guards mine-torpedo air force regiment (commander Maj. M.I. Burkin) attacked the enemy. The "Totila" and several landing craft were sunk not far from Cape Kherson. About two hours later the same fate befell the "Teya," which was moving away to the southwest.[1]

---

[1] Archives of Naval IO, div. 18279, pp. 370-375; div. 32887, pp. 107-111.

According to the data of headquarters of the 17th German Army, from May 3 through 13 alone during the sea evacuation from the Crimea the enemy lost 37,000 German and approximately 5,000 Rumanian soldiers and officers.[1] During the evacuation many enemy vessels were destroyed, the greater part of them as the result of air attacks. German Admiral F. Ruge admitted with bitterness, "Worse than anything for the small vessels was the Russian air force, particularly during the evacuation from the Crimea."[2] A document of Rumanian naval headquarters testifies that during the period of the evacuation vessels with tonnage comprising 82.8% of the tonnage of all German, Rumanian and Hungarian vessels located on the Black Sea were sunk or damaged.[3]

The Soviet command group highly regarded the services of the Black Sea fliers, submarine crewmen, and torpedo boat crewmen in the defeat of the enemy forces in the Crimea and at Odessa. In the orders of the Supreme High Command of May 10, 1944, among those who had distinguished themselves were noted the submarine brigade under the command of Rear Adm. P.I. Boltunov, the 1st and 2nd motor torpedo boat brigades and air force of the fleet, which were commanded by Lt. Gen. of the Air Force V. V. Yermachenkov. By a decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR of May 16, 1944, 23 officers of the fleet were awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union.

After the liberation of the Crimea and the northern shore of the Black Sea from Perekop to Odessa, the Black Sea Fleet was faced with the task of disrupting the communications and destroying the transport resources of the enemy along the western coast.[4] The enemy withdrew the remaining war ships, transport vessels and landing craft to Rumanian ports, primarily Constanta and Sulina.

---

[1] See Second World War 1939-1945. Military-historical outline. M., Voyenizdat, 1958, p. 567.

[2] Friedrich Ruge. War at Sea. 1939-1945. M., Voyenizdat, 1957, p. 289.

[3] Archives of Naval IO, div. 35909, p. 13.

[4] On April 14, 1944 the Azov military flotilla was transformed into the Danube military flotilla.

The command group of the Black Sea Fleet made a decision to effect a number of mass attacks on the ports of Rumania, above all on Constanta. From August 16 through 25 the air force made several strikes on the ships and /455 floating craft in Constanţa and Sulina, completing for this 687 airplane flights. As a result over 50 military ships and auxiliary vessels were sunk or damaged.[1] Many ships, having received very heavy damage, were taken out to the roadstead on the orders of the command group and sunk by their own crews.

Thanks to the successful operations of the Soviet air force the German and Rumanian ships and their bases were essentially taken out of operation. This facilitated the further landings of assault landing forces in the ports of Rumania and Bulgaria. In all, during 1944 the Black Sea Fleet destroyed 104 transport vessels with total displacement over 135,000 tons and 105 war and auxiliary ships of various classes.[2]

Simultaneously with active operations on the enemy communications in 1944 the Black Sea Fleet also completed another assignment given it by Headquarters - to protect our communications. With this purpose the air force of the fleet inflicted bombing strikes on the enemy submarine base in Constanţa and placed magnetic mines in the mouth of the Danube. In the routes of probable enemy submarine movement to the Caucasian coast in the middle section of the sea, Soviet aircraft conducted a search for submarines located on the surface. To cover separate sectors of the coastal communications, mines and anti-submarine net obstacles were placed, and in the bays of the Caucasian coast search and assault groups of patrol boats and submarine chasers were deployed. The crossings of transports were guarded by antisubmarine ships and aircraft.

---

[1] IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. 13893, p. 141-154.

[2] Ibid, p. 544-575. Here and below are presented figures on casualties that are confirmed by available data. In fact the enemy lost considerably more ships and transports.

All of this limited the opportunities for military operations by enemy submarines. Not risking attacks on guarded transports, they only attacked isolated ships and weakly protected targets. Thus at the end of March submarines, having surfaced not far from the shore, twice opened fire on passenger trains running between Tuapse and Sochi, with a clearly demonstrative purpose. As regards the enemy's air force, by this time it no longer presented a great danger. Communications between the ports of the Caucasian coast, and later between the ports of that coast, the Crimea and the northwestern sector of the Black Sea essentially were never interrupted even for a day throughout the entire year.

In the northwestern region the Black Sea Fleet operated under different circumstances. The enemy had placed many mine obstacles there. By the middle of the year the danger had greatly increased. By June the command group of the fleet had formed three brigades of mine sweeping ships, which began to clear the surface of the water of mines from Novorossiysk to Odessa. In 1944 the water areas of the ports and roadsteads were freed of mines and fairways were made through dangerous areas. With this 1,371 mines were swept and destroyed. It became safe to enter ports and bases.[1] The opportunity arose to return commercial navigation to normal.

The situation on the Black Sea fundamentally changed at the end of August 1944 in connection with the capitulation of Rumania. The Hitlerite command group calculated on transferring all battleworthy ships from the Black Sea to the Danube. However, the active operations of the Black Sea Fleet, especially the air strikes on Sulina and Constanţa, and the breakthrough of the Danube military flotilla to the mouth of the Danube, forced the Germans to reject the intended plan. On August 25 enemy ships abandoned the ports of Rumania and withdrew to Bulgaria. The Turkish government ceased to allow the German fascist fleet through the straits. Seeing no other way out, the Hitlerites sank all of their war ships, auxiliary vessels and cutters near the coast of Bulgaria. The last three fascist /456 submarines were sunk by their crews on September 10 near the coast of Turkey.[2]

---

[1] Archives of Naval IO, div. 12459, p. 27; div. 13722, pp. 9-28.

[2] See D.H.D. v. Conrady. The Navy in the Black Sea, 1941-1944. "Marine Rundschawu", Heft 3, 1956, S 74-75

Thus the Black Sea Fleet not only covered the strategic flank of the Red Army against attacks from the sea, but itself constantly created a threat to the enemy's flank. Keeping the initiative in its own hands, the fleet actively supported the coastal groupings of Soviet troops in offensive operations, disrupted enemy communications and ensured the security of its own naval movements.

3. The expansion of the areas of activity of the Baltic Fleet and its struggle against enemy naval movements.

The general situation on the Baltic Sea at the beginning of 1944 remained exceptionally complex. /456 The enemy held the northern shore of the Gulf of Finland as far as Sestroretsk and the southern shore up to the Oranienbaum beachhead (map 17). All islands with the exception of Seyskari, Penisari and Lavansari were in his hands. Across the Gulf of Finland along the line of the Gulf of Narva and the island of Sursari (Hogland) the enemy had created a mine-artillery position as early as 1942. West of that position along the line of Naissar Island (Nargen) - Porkkala - Udd in 1943 the Hitlerites equipped still another defensive position, which included a continuous antitank net obstacle, in addition to mine obstacles. By 1944

both of these positions were reinforced and formed a single powerful defensive line.[1]

On the shore of the Gulf of Finland the enemy had at his disposal numerous airfields, ports and sheltered anchorages. A sea cliff fairway, which was difficult of access for our forces, led out into Vyborg Gulf, that is, directly toward Kronstadt. All of this permitted the enemy to keep the entire Gulf of Finland under constant observation. In the event of their leaving Leningrad, Kronstadt and the island region of Seyskari-Lavansari, Soviet ships were threatened by great danger.

In the Gulf of Finland operated the naval forces of Finland and a special formation of ships of the German fascist fleet. The Finnish fleet included a coastal defense battleship, 8 patrol ships, 6 gunboats, 22 motor torpedo boats, 5 submarines, 16 antisubmarine ships, 6 mine layers, and over 40 mine sweepers and mine sweeper-cutters.[2] The ships were based at Vyborg, Kotka, Helsinki and other ports on the Gulf of Finland.

The German fascist fleet operating in the Gulf of Finland was not constant: its numerical strength depended upon the circumstances. It consisted of antisubmarine defense ships, amphibious landing vessels, mine layers, mine sweepers and submarines. By the end of June it included 8-12 torpedo boats and destroyers, 6 mine and net layers, 16 motor torpedo boats, 10 submarines, up to 100 mine sweepers and mine sweeper-cutters, and over 100 amphibious landing craft and other ships.[3] These ships were

---

[1] Not only our command group, but often the German fascist command group as well, did not know the location of many mine obstacles. On the night of August 19 in the middle sector of the Gulf of Narva three enemy destroyers were blown up by their own mine field and sank. (Archives of Naval IO, div. 23918, p. 169).

[2] See J. Meister. Maritime was in East European waters, 1941-1945, S. 78.

[3] See Ibid, pp. 77, 83, 88, 90, 96; Archives of Naval IO, div. 18865, p. 50.

based at the ports of Finland, and also at Tallinn and Paldiski. Loksa and Kunda were used as temporary basing points. The German naval command group could always reinforce its forces in the Gulf of Finland, transferring its ships from the southwestern section of the Baltic Sea. The enemy's plan /457 was to continue to blockade the ships of the Soviet fleet in the eastern part of the Gulf of Finland with limited forces, exploiting the straitened conditions of the Gulf. In this way the enemy calculated on ensuring for himself freedom of operation in the Baltic Sea.

On January 1, 1944 the composition of our fleet, including the Ladoga military flotilla, included: 1 battle ship, 2 cruisers, 2 flotilla leaders, 9 destroyers, 28 submarines, 6 patrol ships, 13 gunboats, 51 motor torpedo boats, 9 mine and net layers, 55 mine sweepers, 169 mine sweeper-cutters, 85 submarine chasers, 19 motor gunboats and other small ships. The air forces of the fleet included 389 airplanes.[1] The numerical strength of the air force further increased, and by the end of the year had reached almost 700 airplanes. The fleet was commanded by Adm. V. F. Tributs, Military Council member was Vice Adm. N. I. Smirnov, and the Chief of Staff was Rear Adm. A. N. Petrov.

The ships of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet were deployed at Leningrad, Kronstadt and the island of Lavansari. In the spring some of the patrol boats and mine sweepers moved to Luga Bay. The general advantage was on the side of the Soviet fleet. Therefore the enemy ships did not dare to show themselves outside the sea cliffs in the eastern part of the gulf. However, our ships, including submarines, were also unable to move out into the western part of the Gulf of Finland and further into the Baltic Sea due to the great mine danger. This is why the movements of the Baltic Fleet in the beginning of 1944 involved only participating in the operations of the Red Army to defeat the enemy's coastal groupings and then breaching the enemy's Hogland position, with the purpose of expanding the operational zone of the front. In the western section of the Gulf of Finland and in the Baltic Sea only the mine-laying and torpedo aircraft of the fleet operated.

---

[1] IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #13892, p. 525-530; Archives of Naval IO, div. 36816, pp. 171-196, 224-231.

In connection with the successful defeat of the enemy forces at Leningrad and the breakthrough of the troops of the Leningrad front to the shore of the Gulf of Narva, conditions for the deployment and military operations of the fleet considerably improved. With the beginning of navigation the Red Banner Baltic Fleet began to "gnaw through" the Hogland position in the Gulf of Narva. The enemy responded with bombing and assault strikes on the mine sweepers located at bases and on the sea, and on the forward airfield on the island of Lavansari. At the same time he began to reinforce the position with new mine obstacles and increased the number of ships guarding it.

Above the Gulf of Narva a stubborn struggle developed for dominion in the air. Throughout March, April and May and in the first days of June the air forces of the fleet, commanded by Lt. Gen. of the Air Force M. I. Samokhin, conducted over 200 air battles. The Soviet pilots displayed great examples of courage and selflessness. Thus, on March 23 when our ground attack planes attacked the enemy ships that were laying mines, Maj. V. N. Kashtankin repeated the feat of N. F.Gastello. He aimed his burning airplane at an enemy patrol ship and sank it.[1] In the battles over the Gulf of Narva the enemy bore heavy losses. On June 2 and 5 alone during attempts by German aircraft to inflict strikes on mine sweepers, 26 hostile aircraft were shot down.

All of the enemy ships that appeared in the Gulf of Narva during the daylight hours were invariably subjected to attacks by our aircraft. According to German data, in July alone the German fleet lost 2 mine sweepers and 2 assault landing artillery craft; 13 ships that had received serious damage were taken out of operation.[2] Therefore the enemy conducted mining only during the hours of darkness. In April and May he placed approximately 11,000 mines.[3] Further enemy night operations were hindered by the attacks /458

[1] Archives of Naval IO, div. 19104, pp. 260-161.

[2] See J. Meister. Maritime was in East European waters, 1941-1945, S. 89.

[3] See Ibid, p. 77.

of Soviet motor torpedo boats. As the result of the successful operations of the aircraft and torpedo boats our mine sweepers were given the opportunity to conduct a systematic sweep. Throughout the summer they made several passes at the mine obstacles in the Gulf of Narva. Particularly important work was performed by the 1st mine sweeper brigade under the command of Capt. 1st Rank F. L. Yurkovskiy. In three months it destroyed 630 mines and 190 mine protectors.[1]

In connection with the advance begun in June by the troops of the Leningrad front on the Karelian isthmus, the Red Banner Baltic Fleet stepped up its activity on the enemy's communications in Vyborg Gulf and in the rocky coastal zone between Vyborg and Kotka. Due to the great danger of mines and the real threat from enemy aircraft, the command group of the front, guided by the instructions of Headquarters, decided not to use large ships to inflict blows on the enemy's communications. This task was largely performed by aircraft and motor torpedo boats.

During the days of the battles for Vyborg and the islands of Vyborg Gulf the enemy attempted to break through along the sea cliffs into the gulf to help the beleaguered garrisons. On the night of June 20 two German torpedo boats heading for Vyborg Gulf were attacked by a group of motor torpedo boats under the command of Hero of the Soviet Union Capt. 3rd Rank S. A. Osipov. One enemy torpedo boat was sunk, and the others hastily withdrew to the sea cliffs. During the day a detachment of enemy ships attempted to enter the gulf. Our aircraft, sinking the motor torpedo boat "Taisto-1" and seriously damaging the gunboat "Aunus," the mine sweeper "M-29" and the artillery lighter "AF-49," forced the entire detachment to return to the area of Kotka. On June 20 Soviet aircraft sank the mine layers "Otter" and "Pargas" with 500 mines in that area, and damaged the transport and auxiliary vessels standing in the roadstead. On the same day our ships made an amphibious landing on the small island of Narva, located north of the island of Lavansari. The island of Narva was of great

[1] Archives of Naval IO, div. 28217, p. 120.

importance as an observation point of navigation along the sea cliff fairways. With the support of ships and aircraft its small garrison repelled three furious attacks by enemy ships attempting to make amphibious landings and again seize the island.

On the night of July 1 four German patrol ships, a mine sweeper and two torpedo boats guarded by patrol cutters attempted to break into Vyborg Gulf. However, they were detected from the island of Narva. Four motor torpedo boats under the command of Hero of the Soviet Union Sr. Lt. V. P. Gumanenko, which went out to intercept them, decisively attacked the enemy, although the forces were unequal. The Hitlerites conducted desperate fire. In spite of this, the torpedo boat of Sr. Lt. S. A. Glushkov released torpedos at short range and sank an enemy ship. Two other motor torpedo boats under the command of Sr. Lt. A. V. Suvorov, meeting strong defensive fire, were unable to move close to the enemy ships. Then, attacking the enemy from the other direction, they torpedoed the patrol ship. Fearing new blows by our motor torpedo boats, the German ships hastily retreated.

The Hitlerites' last attempt to break into Vyborg Gulf was undertaken on July 5. A detachment consisting of gunboats, mechanized landing craft, transports and cutters (over 20 units) attempted twice to break through to the islands occupied by our troops. Soviet motor torpedo boats and aircraft sank a gunboat and a landing vessel, and, damaging several other ships, forced the enemy to turn back and take cover in the sea cliffs.

Trying to cover his sea cliff Kotka-Vyborg Gulf communication from the blows of our aircraft, the enemy reinforced the grouping with fighter aircraft. The antiaircraft defense cruiser "Niobe" arrived in the Kotka roadstead. In order to destroy it, on July 16 the air forces of the fleet conducted an attack on Kotka, in which 132 airplanes took part. First /459
fighters attacked the enemy's air defense weapons. Then 28 dive bombers led by regimental commander Hero of the Soviet Union Lt. Col. V. I. Rakov struck a blow on the cruiser and damaged it. After that 3 bombers led by Lt. Col. I. N. Ponomarenko dropped 6,000-kilogram bombs on the cruiser and

sank it. Bomber Capt. I. V. Tikhomirov destroyed a large transport.[1] Officers Ponomarenko and Tikhomirov received the title of Hero of the Soviet Union, and Lt. Col. Rakov was awarded his second "Gold Star" medal.

Thus, in the struggle on the enemy's near naval lines of communication, which were of operative importance, the Red Banner Baltic Fleet achieved considerable success.

The operations of the Leningrad front and the Baltic Fleet created the real prerequisites to further expand the area of military operations and bring submarines and surface ships into the Baltic Sea. This latter circumstance caused alarm among the Hitlerite command group. On July 9 Adm. Dönitz reported to Hitler that a breakthrough of Soviet ships into the Baltic Sea could cut off the importing of ore from Sweden, which was of decisive importance for construction of submarines and the development of Germany's entire military economy. Furthermore, this would make it difficult to supply the northern grouping of German forces and would place the areas used for combat training of submarines under threat. Donitz demanded that mastery of the Baltic Sea be maintained at all costs. He felt that army group "North" should prevent the Soviet troops' breakthrough to ports and naval bases.[2]

With Finland's withdrawal from the war and the liberation of Estonia the situation at sea changed seriously: there was no longer a need to breach the Narva-Hogland mine and artillery position and to use ships and aircraft for military operations on the sea cliff line of communication along the northern coast of the Gulf of Finland. Ships could now cross into the western part of the Gulf along the sea cliff fairways in its northern sector.

After the Red Army routed the enemy's grouping in the Baltic and isolated army group "North" in Kurland, and Soviet troops landed on the islands

---

[1] Archives of Naval IO, div. 25795, pp. 4-18.

[2] See Brassey's Naval Annual, 1948. London - New York, p. 401.

of Saaremaa and Hiiumaa,[1] a part of the fleet's air force was redeployed to the areas of Panevežys, Pärnu and Palanga. By the end of the year 60 torpedo bombers, 50 bombers and approximately 200 ground attack planes were operating on the enemy's naval communications. Aircraft began to complete cruising flights to the southern part of the Baltic Sea as far as the Pomeranian Bay.

The Hitlerite command group resolved to hold the islands in the Gulf of Finland in order to prevent the breakthrough of Soviet ships into the Baltic Sea. For this it wished to take by force of arms from its former allies, the Finns, the most important islands in the system of defensive positions. On the night of September 15 over 35 German ships set down on the island of Sursari an assault landing force numbering 1,600 men with guns and mortars. The Finnish garrison engaged in battle. On the request of the Finns the air force of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet participated. During the day the 9th and 11th ground attack air force divisions sank four landing craft, a patrol ship and a steam tug near Sursari Is. and to the west of it with bombing and ground attack strikes. Many vessels received damage. Enemy ships that remained unharmed retreated to the west, leaving their assault landing force on the island without support. By the end of the day the landing force members ceased resistance. The enemy was later also forced to leave the second fortified naval position, which ran across the gulf from Tallinn to Porkkala-Udd peninsula.

In its retreat from the Gulf of Finland the German fascist fleet mined /460
ports, roadsteads and fairways, including Finnish territorial waters. Furthermore, the enemy reinforced the mine and net antisubmarine obstacles north of Tallinn, on the line of Naissar Is.-Porkkala-Udd. As the result of this, until the spring of 1945 our large ships could not be based at the ports of Tallinn and Paldiski.

At the beginning of October 1944 Soviet submarines broke out into the Baltic Sea. Military operations began on enemy communications. In connection

[1] The operations of the fleet in the Moonzund operation are elucidated in Chapter 12.

with the great activity of our submarines the German fascist command group was forced to quickly reinforce the antisubmarine defenses in the entire Baltic Sea. In spite of this the Soviet seamen operated ably and persistenly. From October 6 through 13 they sank seven enemy transport vessels in the regions of Memel' and Ventspils. A submarine commanded by Sr. Lt. S. N. Bogorad sank five vessels, and the submarines under the command of Lt. Capt. A. A. Klyushkin and Capt. 3rd Rank A. M. Matiyasevich each sank three ships. On October 16 a submarine commanded by Lt. Capt. M. S. Kalinin, penetrating to the Ventspils roadstead, discovered four transports standing at anchor and stunned two of them with a salvo of four torpedos.

At the same time the fleet air force also made strikes on enemy communications from the new basing area. To hinder the enemy's use of the ports of Liepaja and Memel' mines were placed in their roadsteads. In October-December the 8th mine and torpedo and the 11th ground attack air force divisions conducted eight massed attacks on Liepaja. With the aims of defending the port through which the Kurland grouping was supplied, the German fascist command group organized a powerful antisubmarine defense. But this did not stop the Baltic fliers. They selflessly continued to operate. Thus, as the result of an attack on December 14 Soviet aircraft sank 4 transports and a tanker, damaged 8 transports, burned a port warehouse and destroyed 11 enemy airplanes at an airfield near Liepaja.[1]

Although the disruption of shipments by sea did not decide the fate of the German fascist forces in Kurland, it did considerably worsen their position. The enemy experienced an acute shortage of fuel. For that reason at the end of October the command group of army group "North" was compelled to forbid all officers up to the rank of regimental commander to use automobiles.

The military operations of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet in 1944 were very effective. While under very complex conditions, the formations of the fleet rendered essential assistance to the troops of the Leningrad front in defeating the enemy at Leningrad, on the Karelian isthmus, in Southern

Karelia and in the Baltic region. With aggressive operations in the Gulf of Finland the fleet hindered the German fascist command group from using ships to help its ground forces, and furtherlimited the opportunity for either reinforcement or evacuation of troops and valuables from Kurland.

Throughout the year great material damage was inflicted on the enemy: the ships and aircraft of the fleet sank 123 transport vessels with total displacement of 273,000 tons.[1]

The expansion of the area of military operations of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet and intensification of the struggle on enemy communications also promoted the securing of our communications in both the eastern and central sections of the Gulf of Finland.

After October the length of the communications and the quantity of cargos shipped sharply increased. From Finland the export of timber, paper and prefabricated houses began, and from Sweden the export of industrial /461
equipment and other cargos. Military shipments to Tallinn and the Moonzund Islands became regular. The fleet guarded the movement of 1,514 transport vessels, on which approximately 315,000 tons of state economic and military cargos and over 42,000 persons were transported.[2]

The most important task of the fleet was to eliminate the great mine danger on the sea. Throughout 1944 mine sweeping ships swept 3,151 mines.[3] In spite of the fact that the fleet included 220 mine sweepers and mine sweeper-cutters, they guaranteed the secure navigation of convoys with great difficulty.

---

[1] IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #13893, p. 552.

[2] Archives of Naval IO, div. 21566, p. 21.

[3] Central Naval Archives, inv. 0018031, div. 20, p. 1.

4. The operations of the Northern Fleet on communications in the Arctic.

A special feature of the situation on the Baltic Sea by the beginning of 1944 was the long stability of the position on the coastal flank of the Soviet-German front. As in the preceding years of the war, in 1944 the German fascist command group devoted great attention to the struggle against Allied convoys. Commander of Naval Forces Donitz believed that for the sake of assisting the German forces operating on the Eastern Front it was worthwhile to risk an attempt to frustrate the supply of the Russian armies with war materials through the northern ports.[1] Plans of operations against the Allied convoys were considered several times in meetings at Hitlerite headquarters. The next discussion of them took place on January 3. In spite of the threat of an assault landing by American and British forces in Western Europe, at this meeting a decision was made not to weaken the naval

[1] See World War, 1939-1945, p. 365.

grouping concentrated in Northern Norway, but on the contrary to reinforce it with submarines and use it to make attacks on convoys moving to the Soviet Union with armaments and other cargos.

On January 1, 1944 in the composition of the Norwegian naval grouping the enemy had 1 battleship, 14 destroyers and torpedo boats, 18 submarines, 2 mine layers, over 50 patrol ships and mine sweepers, a flotilla of motor torpedo boats, over 20 landing craft, approximately 50 military cutters, many auxiliary vessels and 206 airplanes.[1] In Petsamo was based a detachment of Finnish ships (3 armed steamships, the trawler "Ruyya," which was used as a mine layer, and two patrol boats). Furthermore, when necessary the enemy could reinforce his grouping with ships and submarines located at the ports of Western and Southern Norway and in the North Sea (map 18).

The Soviet Supreme High Command regarded the protection of Allied convoys in the Soviet operations zone as a task of primary importance. Simultaneously with this the fleet began to wage a stubborn struggle on the enemy naval communications. The fleet was commanded by Adm. A. G. Golovko, Military Council member was Vice Adm. A. A. Nikolayev, and Chief of Staff was Rear Adm. M. I. Fedorov (after May 19 Rear Adm. V. I. Platonov). The fleet had 23 submarines, 9 destroyers, 19 patrol ships, 15 motor torpedo boats, over 70 submarine chasers and patrol boats, 36 mine sweepers, 40 mine sweeper-cutters and 353 airplanes.[2]

The conditions for conducting military operations in the Northern naval /462
theater during the period of the polar night, with snow storms, floating ice, and long periods of fog, were very difficult. Moreover, the enemy's communications ran near the steep Norwegian shores, which abounded in fjords and sea cliffs. On the coast were located numerous observation posts, shore and air defense batteries and airfields. Our middle and large submarines operated in remote sectors of the communications for the most part,

---

[1] Archives of Naval IO, div. 14951, pp. 21, 33-34. During the year the number of submarines was increased to 50. (See J. Meister. War at sea in the East European waters 1941-1945, p. 160.)

[2] Archives of Naval IO, div. 17814, pp. 6-7, 15.

and small submarines and motor torpedo boats operated in the approaches to Varanger-fjord from the northwest and in Baranger-fjord itself. Single torpedo bombers sometimes flew out on a free chase and to place mines in remote western regions as far as Tromsö. The military activity of the motor torpedo boats and especially of aircraft was to a considerable extent limited by difficult meteorological conditions. As spring approached operations on the enemy communications were intensified.

On April 1, 1944 Headquarters of the Supreme High Command assigned the Northern Fleet an objective for the spring-summer campaign - "to systematically cut off enemy communications along the northern coast of Norway and in Varanger-fjord... to inflict powerful bombing and ground attack strikes on the bases and airfields of the enemy... to ensure jointly with the Allies the movement of convoys on communications in the Barents Sea to the ports of Murmansk and Arkhangel'sk, in the operations zone of the Northern Fleet."[1] The fleet was ordered to be ready during the advance of the Soviet forces to the west for aggressive operations with the goal of seizing the enemy bases in Varanger-fjord. In order to guarantee the performance of these objectives, Headquarters reinforced the Northern Fleet with ships and airplanes. By the middle of summer the fleet air force already had over 600 airplanes. From the Soviet shipbuilding industry and partially from lend-lease the fleet received 6 submarines, 2 mine sweepers, 32 motor torpedo boats and 62 antisubmarine defense boats.

In August, according to an agreement between the governments of the USA, England and the USSR, as reparations American and British ships were transferred to the Northern Fleet from Italy for temporary use, including a battleship, a cruiser, nine destroyers and four submarines. However, all of these ships were old models, and the destroyers were so worn out that, according to the statement of one American newspaper, they "were good only for scrap."

---

[1] IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #9492, pp. 148-149.

In 1944 the Northern Fleet stepped operations on enemy naval communications. It operated particularly decisively in Varanger-fjord. Here strikes on the enemy were inflicted by the entire air force, submarines and motor torpedo boats, and the entrance to Petsamo was blockaded by shore batteries from Sredniy Peninsula.

The greatest results in disrupting the enemy's naval communications were achieved by the air forces of the fleet, which were commanded by Lt. Gen. of the Air Force A. Kh. Andreyev. Due to the great activity of the Soviet air force the enemy was forced to reject the inflicting of air strikes on our convoys and ports and throwing in airplanes to protect his naval communications.

In the spring and summer of 1944 air strikes on enemy convoys on the sea took on the character of increasingly strong attacks by several tactical groups: torpedo bombers, ground attack airplanes, bombers and several groups of fighters. Many strikes by Soviet aircraft, as a rule, ended in the rout of German fascist convoys.

Simultaneously with this the air forces of the fleet inflicted massive blows on enemy ports. Thus from June 17 through July 4 three powerful attacks were completed on the port of Kirkenes, in each of which 100-130 airplanes took part. Systematic attacks on Kirkenes and the blockade by artillery and motor torpedo boats of the port of Petsamo forced the enemy /463 to conduct part of his loading and unloading work in other poorly equipped ports.

In the fulfillment of their military duty Soviet fliers displayed great military skill and valor. Heroes of the Soviet Union I. T. Volynkin, D. V. Osyka, Ye. I. Frantsev, S. A. Gulyayev and others particularly distinguished themselves.

The brigade of submarines under the command of Hero of the Soviet Union Capt. 1st Rank I. A. Kolyshkin also operated successfully on the enemy naval

communications. The command group of the Northern Fleet, continuing to apply the positional-mobile method, also widely employed a new method when the submarines searching for the enemy maneuvered in regions assigned to them - the "Hanging curtains" method. It involved several submarines simultaneously taking up positions at a certain distance from the probable lines of movement of German convoys in order to avoid attacks by ships and aircraft of the antisubmarine defense. A hanging position in relation to the enemy communications ensured that one or several submarines could go into the attack. Having received reconnaissance data on the enemy, the submarines would move full speed to converge on the convoy and attack it. Operating independently or within the curtains, the submarines frequently achieved success. Thus, for example, on June 20 the submarine "S-104" under the command of Capt. 3rd Rank V. A. Turayev, having received a report of the movement of transports, immediately set out toward them to conduct an attack. Soon two transports guarded by four mine sweepers, three patrol ships and two submarine chasers were discovered. Two airplanes patrolled constantly above the caravan. Such heavy protection spoke of the great value of the cargo being transported, and the commander of the submarine took a risk. Approaching the vessels covertly, the submarine released a four-torpedo salvo. The torpedos struck a transport, a mine sweeper and a patrol ship. The remaining enemy ships began to pursue the submarine, firing depth charges. The submarine received some damage, but the personnel quickly corrected it and it continued to operate on the enemy communication.[1] In its next expedition this same submarine sank another two transports and an escort ship.

Great success was achieved by the submarines "V-4" under the command of Hero of the Soviet Union Capt. 3rd Rank Ya. K. Iosselani, "S-56" under the command of Hero of the Soviet Union Capt. 2nd Rank G. I. Shchedrine, "S-14" under the command of Capt. 3rd Rank V. P. Kalanin and "S-103" under the command of Capt. 3rd Rank N. P. Nechayev, which each sank three or four enemy vessels.

---

[1] Archives of Naval IO, div. 11336, pp. 1-7.

In the struggle with the enemy the submarine crewmen displayed fortitude and heroism. In one combat mission the submarine "S-56" was discovered by ships of the enemy's antisubmarine defense, and they gave chase. In 24 hours over 300 depth charges were fired at the submarine. Oxygen supplies within it were low. The men were paralyzed by inhuman fatigue. The commander addressed the seamen over the broadcast system: "The enemy is beginning to lose us... I am aware that the personnel are tired and becoming exhausted. Nevertheless, we must hold on. I will permit non-party members to rest. Communists I ask to stand for themselves and their comrades. I repeat: I ask Communists to hold on!" In response to this the personnel of all sections of the submarine declared their readiness to stand watch for as long as necessary. Non-party members asked that they not be relieved. Not one person abandoned his combat post. Five seamen submitted applications to be accepted as candidates for membership in the Communist Party. Thus in the most difficult moments of their lives the best men of the fleet stood under the Party's banner.

A brigade of motor torpedo boats under the command of Capt. 1st Rank A. V. Kuz'min operated aggressively on the enemy communications in Varangerfjord. The success of this brigade was due above all to the massed use of torpedo boats and their precise cooperation with aircraft. The persistent attacks of the motor torpedo boats not only during the dark, but also the /464 light hours, forced the enemy to throw in all destroyers and a considerable part of the air force for the struggle with them. But our torpedo boats, using smoke screens, utilizing the cover of the fighters, continued to operate boldly. The whole country knew the names of the masters of torpedo attacks, two-time Hero of the Soviet Union A. V. Shabalin, Heroes of the Soviet Union V. N. Alekseyev, V. I.Bykov, V. M. Lozovskiy, G. M. Palamarchuk and others.

For successful combat operations, in 1944 the motor torpedo boat brigade of the Northern Fleet was awarded the Order of the Red Banner and the Order of Ushakov 1st Degree. Even bourgeois military historians were forced to regard the military operationsof the Soviet motor torpedo boats highly.

J. Meister, for example, writes, "The Germans saw with amazement that... the Russian torpedo boats operated... with extraordinary enterprise... Their military activity in the fall of 1944 reached the highest level, which considerably hampered the evacuation of German forces."[1]

In 1944 the command group of the Northern Fleet conducted operations with the varied forces of the fleet (aircraft, submarines, motor torpedo boats, destroyers) with the goal of completely destroying convoys and thereby disrupting communications for a certain length of time.

The operations of the Northern Fleet on the naval lines of communication were particularly intensified before and during the Petsamo-Kirkenes operation. Enemy convoys were subjected to constant attack by the forces of the fleet and bore heavy losses. Thus on February 15 eight motor torpedo boats and approximately 150 airplanes made a strike on a convoy, and on October 16 four submarines and over 100 participated. In 1944 the enemy lost 77 transport vessels with total displacement of approximately 190,000 tons on the Barents Sea. Furthermore, 38 warships and auxiliary vessels were sunk.[2] The operations of the fleet on the enemy's communications did not allow him the opportunity either to throw in reinforcements to the northern grouping of forces in time or to fully ensure the evacuation of manpower and equipment from the Petsamo region and the area of Kirkenes. Gen. Erfurth, the former representative of the German fascist command group in Mannerheim's headquarters, observes with regret that in spite of advance preparations for evacuation from Northern Finland, the Germans were able to take out only a very small part of their supplies.[3] Thus, although the enemy drew on great forces to guard the lines of communication, he was unable to make his naval shipments secure.

---

[1] J. Meister. War at sea in the East European waters 1941-1945 pp. 180, 181.

[2] IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #13893, p. 565, 597.

[3] See W. Erfurth. The Finnish War 1941-1944, pp. 312-313.

Conducting the struggle on the enemy's communications, the Northern Fleet simultaneously continued to meet and protect Allied convoys. It performed this task jointly with ships of the British fleet, which guarded and covered transports for their entire route. The ships of the Northern Fleet reinforced the guard on the transports starting at the meridian of the islands of Medvezhiy and Tromsö, that is, in a sector about one thousand miles in length. In addition, the Northern Fleet was to ensure the safe arrival of Allied vessels and ships in Murmansk and Arkhangel'.

The general situation on the outer naval lines of communication in 1944 was characterized by a weakening in enemy activity. Unlike 1942 and 1943, the German command group could not use large surface ships and a large number of airplanes to disrupt our naval communications. Only the enemy's submarines, which continued to operate in "wolf packs," created an actual danger. However, increasing the number of ships and airplanes and supplying them with radar and hydroacoustic equipment hindered the operations of enemy submarines against transports.

To secure the convoys traveling from England and from the Soviet Union special operations were carried out by all forces of the fleet. In these air force formations from the Reserve of the Supreme High Command and the Karelian front also took part. In any event the Northern Fleet designated over 40 war and auxiliary ships and 2 air force divisions. The air force, as a rule, made preliminary strikes on enemy airfields, and the ships conducted a submarine search and a sweep of coastal fairways. In the second half of 1944 a squadron of the Northern Fleet (with the exception of a battleship and a cruiser) was used to guard naval communications, and above all to do battle with submarines. Thanks to this losses on the England-Soviet Union communication line were not great. In the worst year, 1942, 422 transports and 236 guard ships passed along this communication in both directions. Losses for that year were 69 transports and 5 guard ships. In 1944, of 506 transports and425 guard ships traveling in both directions the enemy sank only 6 transports and 3 guard ships.[1] In spite of such small losses, after April

/465

[1] Archives of Naval IO, div. 17814, book 4, pp. 61-62.

1944, as in previous years, the Allies ceased to send convoys until the polar night began. Movement of transports was renewed in August 1944 and did not cease until the end of the war. Even the former Hitlerite Admiral Ruge was forced to acknowledge the success of the Northern Fleet in securing the naval communications. Describing the movement of convoys between England and the Soviet Union, he writes that "in 1944-1945 complete convoys of 30 or more commercial vessels once more began to travel to Murmansk. In spite of attacks by submarines and sometimes by aircraft, losses remained negligible."[1]

In addition to external communications, internal naval communications also played a large part in the North. Shipments of cargos between points located on the shore of Kol'skiy Bay and the White Sea, largely between Murmansk and Arkhangel'sk, were essential to supply the Northern Fleet and the Red Army units operating on Kol'skiy Peninsula.

Many cargos were shipped along the Northern sea route to the Far East. Industrial goods and food products were delivered to Dudinka, Igarka, Tiksi, to trading points and polar stations. Raw materials were brought back on return journeys from the Arctic posts. In the Arctic the period of navigation is very short. In the Kara Sea, for example, navigation is possible only for three months, from mid-July to mid-October. At that time many transports and ice breakers were concentrated there, a tempting target for attack by submarines and surface raiders, (due to insufficient flight range the airplanes of that time could not operate in the Kara Sea). Ensuring the safety of navigation in the western sector of the Arctic was the main task of the White Sea military flotilla, which was a part of the Northern Fleet. The flotilla was commanded by Vice Admiral S. G. Kucherov, and by Vice Admiral Yu. A. Panteleyev after July 31, 1944.

In comparison with the previous years, sea freight traffic in 1944 along the Arctic communication increased. In the western sector of the Arctic shipments

[1] F. Ruge. War at Sea 1939-1945, p. 284.

were effected by over 20 transports, a detachment of icebreakers and ships of the White Sea military flotilla. In addition, 36 transports with cargo arrived in the Arctic by the Northern sea route from the East.[1] Ship movement in the Kara Sea was particularly lively. The enemy command group directed its submarines there. In the Kara Sea and the southwestern sector of the Barents Sea up to 10 submarines operated, which created a great threat to our communications. By this time new models of Hitlerite submarines had appeared with greater underwater speed. They could move beneath diesels while submerged (at periscope depth) and hit transports with homing torpedos. It was much more difficult to combat such submarines than the earlier models of submarines. Dönitz and Hitler placed great hopes /466. on them as a weapon that could change the course of the war in Germany's favor.[2]

By the summer of 1944 the forces of the White Sea military flotilla had also increased considerably. At the beginning of arctic nagivation two-thirds of all ships of the flotilla were transferred to the Kara Sea.[3] Unlike 1943, when east of Dixon Is. unguarded navigation of ships was allowed, in 1944 all ships sailed only in convoys, and although enemy submarines sank several small, unarmed vessels and laid mine banks in certain places, they achieved no real success. Of 247 ships accompanied along the artic communication line, they succeeded in sinking only one transport.[4]

In all, in 1944 the Northern Fleet and the White Sea military flotilla accompanied over 700 ships along the internal communications.[5]

Thus in 1944 the Northern Fleet successfully performed the tasks assigned to it by the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command. The formations of the fleet systematically inflicted blows on enemy communications, and provided protection for our naval communications. In making the

---

[1] Archives of Naval IO, div. 34640, p. 282.

[2] See Brassey's Naval Annual, 1948, p. 377.

[3] Archives of Naval IO, div. 36020, p. 5 and appendix p. 3.

[4] Ibid, div. 34640, p. 283.

[5] Ibid, div. 17814, book 4, pp. 63, 111.

movement of transports in our northern waters safe, the Northern Fleet and the naval forces of the Allies thereby resolved an important problem in the shipment of certain war materials to the Soviet Union.

In 1944 on the Black, Baltic and Barents Seas the Soviet Navy gained new victories over the naval forces of Germany and its allies. As the result of intense military operations in all naval theaters, during the year 304 transport vessels with total displacement over 600,000 tons and 143 war ships of the enemy were sunk. These facts convincingly refute the false statements of bourgeois historiography, which attempts to belittle the effectiveness of the activity of the Soviet Navy.[1]

After the liquidation of the enemy groupings in the Crimea and in the area of Iaşi and Kishinyev, and the withdrawal of Rumania and Bulgaria from the war, the enemy's naval forces in the Black Sea ceased to exist. Trade and economic links between the Black Sea, and later the Mediterranean countries with the Soviet Union were renewed.

---

[1] The investigation of the actual losses of the enemy continues to this day. It shows that losses were much greater than those that are presented in Soviet historical literature. Thus, for example, the most recent data of various foreign sources testify that in the Baltic Sea alone throughout the entire war 252 war ships and transports of the enemy were sunk or damaged. And according to Soviet statistics many of these are still listed as not completely verified losses!

The destruction of the enemy groupings at Leningrad and in the Baltic region radically changed the situation on the Baltic Sea. The German fascist command group was forced to withdraw its fleet from the Gulfs of Finland, Riga and Bothnia. The Red Banner Baltic Fleet began to operate systematically in the Baltic Sea. By the end of the year a sea trade route between the Soviet Union, Finland and Sweden was established, and sea shipments between the Baltic republics were also returned to normal.

A very large part was played in the defeat of the German fascist forces in the Arctic by the Northern Fleet, which after the completion of the operation received the opportunity to base in Varanger-fjord. There the Germans lost several airfields, from where their aircraft had previously made strikes on our bases and communications.

The main content of the military operations of the Navy was the support of the troops of the Red Army in offensive operations in the coastal directions. In the course of these operations in 1944 approximately 70 tactical /467
and operative assault landing groups were set down, which cleared islands, posts and bases of the enemy and struck blows on the rear services of small isolated groupings. On all seas the fleets successfully covered the coastal flanks of the advancing troops from the enemy's strikes from the sea.

During the offensive operations in the coastal directions all of the fleets were faced with complex tasks - to stop the supply and evacuation of German fascist groups isolated from the dry land. Therefore, in addition to supporting the ground forces, the fleets disrupted the enemy's naval communications. Sometimes such actions had the character of independent operations. The enemy lost many ships and transports with troops and equipment. To ensure the safety of his transports he was compelled to draw in a considerable number of ships and aircraft.

The main assault force of the Soviet fleets on the naval communications in 1944 was the air force. It accounted for approximately 60 percent of the entire tonnage sunk. Submarines and motor torpedo boats were also widely

used. Due to the great danger of mines, and also due to the fact that the enemy destroyed abandoned naval bases, large surface ships did not take part in the conflict on the enemy communications.

All of the fleets successfully fulfilled the tasks of protecting their communications. Losses in tonnage and cargos shipped did not exceed one or two percent. The greatest role in securing the safety of navigation of transports was played by surface ships: mine sweepers, patrol and anti-submarine ships.

The political organs, party and Komsomol organizations deserve great credit for the successful fulfillment of the tasks facing the fronts. They took care that Communists and Komsomol members were always in the forefront in any combat situation. Seamen who distinguished themselves in battle entered the ranks of the Party. In 1944 37,963 persons were accepted into the party by the fleets.[1] The political organs devoted particular attention to the Party organizations of those ships which had to operate for long periods far from their main bases. These organizations were strengthened by the best trained Communists, who were capable of conducting party-political work under the difficult conditions of battle. Through all of their activity the Communists rallied the personnel of the units and ships, inspiring them to heroic feats.

In 1944 the Navy made a significant contribution to the cause of defeating the enemy and completly liberating the territory of the USSR from the fascist invaders. The victories gained at sea testified to the great fighting spirit of the Soviet seamen, who performed their duty to the Motherland, begrudging neither their strength nor their own lives.

---

[1] Archives of Naval IO, div. 24698, pp. 1-2.

CHAPTER 16

THE STRUGGLE OF THE SOVIET PEOPLE IN THE ENEMY'S REAR IN 1944

1. The activity of the Communist Party in intensifying the struggle of the peoples of the Soviet Union in occupied territory

In addition to its enormous organizational work in guiding the Soviet Armed Forces, in 1944 the Communist Party took energetic measures directed at intensifying the national struggle with the fascist invaders in the enemy's rear, particularly the armed partisan struggle. As in the previous years, the party proceeded from the statement of V. I. Lenin that partisan military actions should be conducted under its control.[1] The brilliant victories of the Red Army in 1943 and the great work carried out by Party /468

[1] See V. I. Lenin. Works, vol. 10, p. 134.

organizations among the population of the occupied regions evoked an enormous political upsurge in the Soviet people who were still under the yoke of the occupiers. In response to the call of the Party to intensify attacks on the enemy from the rear and help the Red Army to quickly clear Soviet land of the fascists, more and more fighters joined the partisan detachments. In spite of the fact that by the end of the second period of the war a large part of the occupied territory had been liberated, the numbers of the partisans and underground members continued to grow, and their struggle with the occupiers took on ever broader scope and became more active. While in January 1943 over 120,000 persons fought in the partisan detachments that were in contact with the Central Headquarters of the partisan movement, by the start of 1944 there were already approximately 250,000.[2] The partisan formations had at their disposal numerous reserves numbering hundreds of thousands of persons, especially in the Ukraine and Belorussia.

The detachments and formations of the partisans had a reliable link /469
to the headquarters of the partisan movement and their representatives attached to the military councils of the fronts. In many areas radio stations were in operation, which provided communication within the partisan formations, districts and zones. In the records of the Central Headquarters of the Partisan Movement (CHQPM) for January 7, 1944 alone there were 424 radio stations in the enemy's rear, with the aid of which contact was maintained with 1,131 partisan detachments.[3]

The network of underground Party, Komsomol and antifascist organizations was broadened and strengthened. They operated in almost all large cities and inhabited areas occupied by the enemy, and raised the morale of the Soviet people. Battle groups of underground members conducted various diversions and eliminated fascist administrators and their accomplices.

---

[1] Questions of the military activity of the partisans in 1944 and their help to the advancing troops of the Red Army are also elucidated in Chapters 2, 3, 5-9, 11 and 12.

[2] See Volume 3 of this edition, pp. 447, 461.

[3] IML Central Party Archive, col. 69, inv. 1, div. 790, p. 11.

The struggle of the partisans and underground members was led by partisan organs: operations groups of the CC of the Communist Party of the union republics, obkoms, gorkoms, interregional Party centers and raykoms, as well as primary Party organizations. They carried on broad organizational and mass political work among the population in the Soviet lands occupied by the Hitlerites. This increased the effectiveness of the national struggle and made it more goal-directed.

In Belorussia, in the Leningrad and Kalinin regions, in the northern areas of the Ukraine and in the Crimea, Party organizations were located primarily in the partisan regions and districts (map 19). Their activity in the enemy's rear took place under exceptionally difficult circumstances. The situation in the Baltic region, certain western regions of the Ukraine, and Moldavia was even more difficult, where the enemy had created a network of agents from among the bourgeois nationalists. But in spite of extremely cruel terror and persecution the party organs operated in many places.

The year 1944 was characterized by the further strengthening of the Party leadership of the struggle of the people in the enemy's rear. By that time the CC of the Communist Party of the union republics, obkoms, republic and regional headquarters of the partisan movement had accumulated rich experience in leading the partisan movement and operating underground. They were in close contact with the military councils of the fronts, and within the partisan detachments and formations. The capabilities of the fronts to supply the partisans with ammunition and explosives had increased. All of this created favorable conditions for the best coordination of the military operations of the partisans, underground members and the advancing Soviet troops and for drawing on the partisans to fulfill military assignments in the interests of the Red Army.

In order to further raise the efficiency of leadership, the CC AUCP(b) found it expedient to liquidate the Central Headquarters of the Partisan Movement. In accordance with the decree of the State Defense Committee of January 13, 1944 it was disbanded. The leadership of the partisan movement

in the occupied territory of the Ukraine, Belorussia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, the Karelo-Finnish and Moldavian SSR, the Leningrad and Kalinin regions and the Crimean ASSR was delegated totally to the corresponding CC of the Communist Party of the union republics, regional Party committees and headquarters of the partisan movement. The military councils of the fronts were assigned to render assistance to the partisan detachments with ammunition and explosives through the headquarters of the partisan movement.[1] With the liquidation of the CHQPM the role of the CC of the Communist Party of the union republics and Party obkoms in the control of the partisan movement was enhanced, mass political work among the partisans and population was intensified, and cooperation between the partisans and underground members and the Red Army was improved.

Steady radio communication with the controlling organs and the existence of airfields in partisan districts and regions enabled the secretaries of Party obkoms operating in the enemy's rear, the leaders of operations groups, plenipotentiaries of the CC of Communist Parties of the union republics, and commanders and commissars of partisan formations to fly behind the front line upon a summons to report or to receive new instructions. At the same time the CC of the Communist Parties of the union republics, Party obkoms, and republic and regional headquarters of the partisan movement could send their representatives behind the front line. The secretaries of the CC of the Communist Parties of the union republics and obkoms were closely linked to the partisan commanders and commissars, and with the Party organs working in the enemy's rear: N. S. Khrushchev and D. S. Korotchenko in the Ukraine, P. K. Ponomarenko and P. Z. Kalinin in Belorussia, A. Yu. Snechkus in Lithuania, Ya. E. Kalnberzin in Latvia, N. G. Karotami in Estonia, I. I. Aleshin in Moldavia, A. A. Zhdanov in the Leningrad region, I. P. Boytsov in the Kalinin region, etc.

Strengthening the leadership of the Soviet peoples' struggle in the occupied territories led to better knowledge of the situation in the enemy's

---

[1] Archives of MD USSR, col. 240, inv. 15789, div. 11, p. 118.

rear on the part of the CC of the Communist Parties of the union republics and of the Leningrad, Kalinin and Crimean obkoms, and to their greater ability to assign objectives to the partisans and underground members and coordinate their actions with the advance of the Red Army.

In January 1944 in connection with the development of the great offensive by the four Ukrainian fronts in the Right Bank Ukraine, the First Secretary of the CC CP(b) of the Ukraine, N. S. Khrushchev, approved a plan of military operations of the partisan detachments and formations for January-March.[1] In the plan the tasks of the partisans in rendering effective assistance to the Red Army, and also in saving Soviet people from being driven to forced labor and preserving national property, were outlined. The partisans were to use every means to develop the struggle in new areas, above all the western regions of the Ukraine, drawing the local population into it, to inflict strikes on enemy communications, block shipments, and destroy the enemy's manpower and cargos. It was made their duty to further broaden the struggle with the German-Ukrainian nationalists, improve the political work of demoralizing the enemy troops, above all the forces of the satellites. To perform these objectives the CC CP(b) of the Ukraine conducted several measures. Thus, with the goal of strengthening the partisan movement in the Volynsk, Drogobych, Tarnopol', Stanislavsk and Chernovitsy regions and the Moldavian SSR,[2] more mobile partisan detachments designated from large formations were redeployed there.

The CC CP(b) of Belorussia relocated the Belorussian headquarters of the partisan movement from near Moscow to the area of Gomel', closer to the partisans' area of military operations. Organizational measures were taken

---

[1] Party Archives of the Inst. of Party History of the CC CP of the Ukraine, col. 62, inv. 62-1, div. 72, pp. 1-2.

[2] Until February 1944 the CC CP(b) of Moldavia effected operative control of the partisan movement in its republic through the Moldavian division of the Ukrainian Headquarters of the partisan movement. In connection with the approach of the front line to the borders of this republic the CC CP(b) of Moldavia and the CC CP(b) of the Ukraine requested the Central Committee of the AUCP(b) to permit the organization of a Moldavian Headquarters of the partisan movement. Such a headquarters was created somewhat later.

to establish closer contact with the headquarters of the fronts and more effective communications with the partisans. The Central Committee demanded that the partisan formations step up their military activity, setting them actual assignments. The underground Party and Komsomol organizations were to intensify party-political work with the population of the occupied territory.

In January-April 1944 the Bureau of the CC CP(b) of Latvia five times discussed the questions connected with the activity of underground Party and Komsomol organizations in Latvia.[1]

In Latvia questions of the partisan movement were twice (February 10 and May 15) the subject of discussion at meetings of the CC Bureau. In the resolution of the Bureau of the CC of the CP(b) of Latvia on February 10 it was stated that in connection with the successful offensive of the Red Army and its approach to the borders of the temporarily occupied territory /471 of the republic, the main objective of the Latvian headquarters of the partisan movement was to render maximum assistance to the Soviet troops, to intercept the most important main railroad lines and highways, to block the enemy's supply of manpower and ammunition to the front line, as well as the shipment of stolen property and equipment to Germany by the enemy.[2]

To improve coordination of partisan actions with the Red Army, it was proposed that the Latvian headquarters of the partisan movement create an operations group attached to the headquarters of the 2nd Baltic front.

The CC CP(b) of Estonia also placed concrete tasks before the partisans. On its instructions, in January-March several partisan groups and detachments were transferred to the territory of the republic. Three partisan brigades that had previously operated in the Leningrad region also went to Estonia.[3]

---

[1] Party Archive of the Institute of Party History of the CC CP of Latvia, col. 1771, inv. 1771-16, div. 69, pp. 43-44, 47-49, 51-52, 56,58-59,63.

[2] IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #16678, p. 3.

[3] Party Archives of the Inst. of Party Hist. of the CC CP of Estonia, col. 4, inv. 1, div. 46, pp. 2-3.

Under conditions when the Red Army was gaining one victory after another the more effective leadership of the partisan movement by the CC of the Communist Parties of the union republics and obkoms promoted further growth in the numbers of partisans. In Belorussia, in spite of heavy battles with punitive expeditions the number of partisans increased by over 30,000 persons from January 1 through the end of March. From January through August, 19 new partisan brigades and 110 detachments were organized there. The number of partisans in the western regions of Belorussia increased especially rapidly. In the Brest region, for example, from August 1943 through March 1944 it increased by almost 2.5 times. In the Baranovichi region in January-April 3,477 persons joined the partisans.[1] In the Ukraine, a large part of the territory of which had been liberated by the beginning of 1944, in January-April 96 new partisan detachments and groups were formed in the enemy's rear. The number of the formations that were already in operation also increased. Thus in January-March 1,393 persons joined the formation under the command of S. A. Oleksenko, and in January alone 1,345 persons joined the formation commanded by A. Z. Odukh. The partisan detachments fighting in the Trans-Carpathian Ukraine grew rapidly. In short periods of time they became large formations. For example, the partisan detachment of A. V. Tkanko increased from July through November from 19 to 871 persons; from September through October the detachment of V. P. Rusin increased from 17 to 225 persons.[2] From January through September the number of partisans in Latvia increased over three-fold. The composition of the 4th partisan detachment grew from January through the end of March by almost 2 times the 3rd by over 1.5 times, and the 1st by almost 1.4 times.[3] The number of partisans operating in the territory of Estonia in 1944 became almost five times greater than in 1943.[4]

---

[1] Party Archives of the Institute of Party History of the CC CP of Belorussia, col. 4, inv. 33a, div. 598, p. 1; div. 692, p. 19; div. 254, p. [illegible]; div. 478, p. 149; div. 252, p. 187.

[2] Party Archives of the Inst. of Party Hist. of the CC CP of the Ukraine, col. 62, inv. 62-1, div. 77, pp. 26, 27, 40, 61, 62, 80; col. 1, inv. 9a, div. 19, pp. 4, 18, 21.

[3] Party Archives of the Inst. of Party Hist. of the CC CP of Latvia, col. 302, inv. 2, div. 13, p. 249; div. 28, p. 42.

[4] Party Archives of the Inst. of Party Hist. of the CC CP of Estonia, col. 4, inv. 1, div. 46, pp. 2, 3.

The increase in the numbers of partisans demanded improved military and political training in the partisan formations. It was essential to teach the young partisans to master a weapon, familiarize them with partisan tactics and equipment, and to teach them to be courageous, high-principled, morally steady soldiers. Party and Komsomol organizations rendered great assistance to the command group of the partisan detachments in fulfilling this task. On the initiative of the Party organizations groups were formed for weapons study, and talks were held of seasoned partisans with young soldiers. Questions of military and political training of the partisans were discussed at sessions of underground raykoms and at Party meetings.

With the increase in the number of partisan formations the need arose /472 for new command cadres. Communists, Komsomol members, and non-Party members who had distinguished themselves in the struggle with the enemy were appointed commanders of the newly created subunits. It was more and more rarely necessary to transfer command cadres and specialists from the rear.

In connection with the liberation by the Red Army of many regions where large partisan formations operated it was necessary to resolve the questions of the further use of experienced partisan cadres.

In Belorussia, the Leningrad region and other areas partisan detachments and formations that found themselves behind Soviet lines were, as a rule, disbanded, and the majority of the partisans joined the Red Army. By August 31, 1944 approximately 100,000 men from the disbanded partisan brigades and detachments of Belorussia were sent to units of the Red Army and border forces, and slightly over 48,000 to Party, Komsomol and Soviet organs.[1] Many of them led Soviet and Party organizations in the liberated areas.

---

[1] Party Archives of the Inst. of Party History of the CC CP of Belorussia, col. 4, inv. 33, div. 692, p. 33.

In the Ukraine, unlike other republics, the CC CP(b) Ukr. took steps to retain experienced cadres, on the whole, and send them back to the enemy's rear. This enabled the Central Committee to help the underground Party organizations in the western regions of the Ukraine to intensify the partisan struggle. Subsequently these cadres were used to render the same assistance to the brother Communist Parties of Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Rumania. But in the Ukraine, too, a certain segment of the partisans were sent into the Red Army and into Party, Komsomol and Soviet organs after the liberation of their areas of operations. Thus, when in March 1944 three partisan formations of the Vinnitsa region were disbanded, 2,345 persons out of 3,149 joined the army, and 432 persons went into Party-Komsomol and Soviet work.[1]

In 1944 the Party organizations of the partisan formations seriously improved the leadership of the entire life and military activity of detachments and formations. This became possible thanks to the growing experience of party-political work and particularly the increased numbers of Party organizations. The Party organization of the Kirov detachment, which operated in the Brest region, grew over six-fold from December 1943 through July 1944.[2] In the Zhitomir partisan division named for Shchors there were 939 Communists by April 1, 1944, while on January 1, 1943 there had been 247.[3] The Party organization named for the 25th Anniversary of the Ukraine grew from January 1, 1943 through April 1, 1944 from 33 persons to 180, the V. I. Chapayev organization from 5 to 89, and the N. S. Khrushchev organization from 5 to 137 persons.[4] In the 1st Latvian partisan brigade the number of Communists increased two-fold from March through August 1944.[5]

---

[1] Party Archives of the Inst. of Party History of the CC CP of the Ukraine, col. 1, inv. 1-14, div. 911, p. 88.

[2] Party Archives of the Inst. of Party History of the CC CP of Belorussia, col. 4, inv. 33a, div. 481, p. 188.

[3] Party Archives of the Inst. of Party History of the CC CP of the Ukraine, col. 1, inv. 9a, div. 322, p. 9.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Party Archives of the Inst. of Party History of the CC CP of Latvia, col. 302, inv. 2, div. 16, p. 55.

Everywhere the network of the partisan underground grew and expanded. In November 1943 in the Vileysk region, Belorussian SSR, there were only 35 primary underground organizations uniting 429 Communists, and by March 1, 1944 there were already 47 primary organizations, and 1 Party candidate group consisting of 764 persons. In the Baranovichi region on November 1, 1943, 62 primary Party organizations with total numerical strength of 898 persons were in operation, and by the end of May 1944, 112 Party organizations numbering 1,586 Communists were working successfully. The underground Party organizations of nine districts of the Mogilev region, which was still under occupation, had 2,141 Party members and candidates by June 1, 1944.[1]

In the territory of the Rovensk and Volynsk regions of the Ukraine by /473
February 1, 1944, 11 underground raykoms and 67 primary Party organizations, in the ranks of which there were 322 Communists, were in operation.[2]

The number of primary underground Party organizations in Lithuania increased. While in September 1943 in the Trakaj province there were 16 underground Party organizations uniting 73 Communists, in July 1944 there were 37 with 162 Party members. The Kaunas Party organization with 80 persons at the beginning of 1944 grew by July to 150 persons. By a resolution of the CC CP(b) of Lithuania in January Northern and Southern underground regional Party committees were formed to guide the underground provincial Party committees, and through them the partisan detachments and groups, as well as mass antifascist organizations.[3]

In the territory of Latvia operated the Vidzemsk and Latgal'sk underground obkoms and the Valksk, Abrensk and Madona provincial committees.

---

[1] Party Archives of the Institute of Party History of the CC CP of Belorussia, col. 4, inv. 33a, div. 587, p. 7; div. 490, pp. 102-103; div. 252, pp. 154, 234; div. 281, p. 341.

[2] Party Archives of the Inst. of Party History of the CC CP of the Ukraine, col. 1, inv. 9a, div. 18, p. 64.

[3] Party Archives of the CC CK of Latvia, col. 1771, inv. 16, div. 68, pp. 29, 48.

The numerical growth and organizational strengthening of the Party organizations of the partisan formations and underground promoted the invigoration of intraparty work. Sessions of underground raykoms and meetings of primary Party organizations began to be held more regularly.

In Belorussia, for example, in 1944 sessions of underground raykoms were held 2 to 3 times per month. At the sessions were discussed questions of the combat and diversionary activity of partisan brigades, the state of military and political training of personnel, of the activity of underground Party and Komsomol organizations, and of work with members newly accepted into the Party. Questions were raised about protecting the civil population from extermination by the fascist invaders, about the creation of antifascist organizations and their control, about mass political work among the civil population, and so on. At general meetings of primary Party organizations questions were brought up on enhancing the role of Communists in the performance of military assignments, strengthening discipline, and so forth. Thus on February 27 at a Party meeting of the partisan detachment named for Bogdan Khmel'nitskiy (the formation of S. A. Oleksenko), which was operating in the Ukraine, the results of the battle for the city of Izyaslav were discussed. The Communists pointed out shortcomings in the actions of specific partisans and offered suggestions directed at their elimination. At Party meetings of the partisan detachment named for Kalinin in March reports of company commanders were heard two times. In the resolution of the Party committee of the partisan formation named for Kotovskiy on April 15 it was proposed that Party organizations and Party organs systematically monitor the fulfillment of Party assignments and combat objectives by the Communists. At Party meetings of detachments fighting in the territory of Poland and Czechoslovakia questions of educational work with personnel and so on were frequently discussed.[1]

---

[1] Party Archives of the Inst. of Hist. of the Party of the CC CP of the Ukraine, col. 1, inv. 9a, div. 311, pp. 77, 80, 217; div. 310, p. 19; col. 62, inv. 1, div. 9, p. 24.

General meetings of the personnel of partisan detachments were also widely held. In the partisan detachments of the Slutsk district, Minsk region, from April 1943 through July 1944, 373 all-detachment and company meetings were held, at which were discussed the results of recent military activity and future assignments, questions of enhancing discipline and organization, strengthening revolutionary vigilance, increasing diversionary activity and so on.[1]

Komsomol organizations, which were the faithful helpers of the Party organizations, grew and became firmly established in the partisan formations and the underground. Their role in work among young people in occupied territory was enhanced and their authority grew.

The fact that thousands of youths and girls, who fought heroically in the enemy's rear, joined the Komsomol organizations, testifies to their enormous influence. From January 1 through May 1, 1944 the Komsomol organization of the Stolbtsy district, Baranovichi region, Belorussian SSR, grew by over 80 percent. In all, in the territory of the Baranovichi region at the end of May, 22 underground raykoms of the Komsomol and 160 primary Komsomol organizations were in operation, uniting 3,682 members of the VLCUY. In the Vileysk region from November 1, 1943 through July 1, 1944 the number of primary Komsomol organizations in the partisan brigades and inhabited areas grew by over 60 percent. By July 1944, 20 underground raykoms, the Vileysk gorkom and 220 primary Komsomol organizations numbering 2,891 persons were working in the region. During January-April the Komsomol organizations of the Brest region accepted more new members into their ranks than in all of 1943.[2] The Komsomol organization of the Zhitomir partisan division named for Shchors grew over three-fold from July 1943 through May 1944.[3] /474

---

[1] Party Archives of the Inst. of Party History of the CC CP of Belorussia, col. 4, inv. 33a, div. 274, p. 151.

[2] Ibid, col. 4, inv. 33a, div. 252, p. 284; div. 587, pp. 8, 15; div. 75, p.53.

[3] Party Archives of the Inst. of Party History of the CC CP of the Ukraine, col. 1, inv. 9a, div. 322, p. 13.

The organizations of the VLCUY won authority among young people by the fact that Komsomol members were utterly devoted to the cause of the Party and the Soviet people, that on the example of Communists they were always in the first ranks of fighters and performed the most crucial assignments with honor. The Komsomol organization of the 1st Latvian partisan brigade, numbering 111 members, gave many daring scouts, fearless demolition sappers and tireless agitators. Almost all of the Komsomol members of that brigade in 1944 were awarded medals and orders of the Soviet Union.

The underground Party and Komsomol organizations led the struggle of the antifascist groups, the number of which continued to grow in 1944. In only two regions of Belorussia in the first half of the year 570 antifascist groups involving 2,479 persons were operating. In the Vileysk region by July 1, 1944 the number of antifascist groups reached 429, while by November 1, 1943 there were only 95. In Baranovichi the antifascists had their people at the depot, at the telegraph, in the directorate of the railroad, and in the city and regional magistracy.[1]

Strong antifascist groups operated in the Nikolayev, Kirovograd, Odessa, Vinnitsa, L'vov and Zhitomir regions of the Ukraine. Underground groups existed even in remote rural areas. In the summer of 1944 in the Trans-Carpathians, Party organizations began to form underground people's committees in villages. After the liberation of the Trans-Carpathian Ukraine these committees were transformed into People's Councils, organs of local authority.

There were numerous antifascist groups in Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, the Crimea and Moldavia.

The Communist Party attached great importance to mass political work in the enemy's rear. Party and Komsomol organizations of the partisan detachments and underground were active fighters to fulfill the Party's instructions. Resting on the experience acquired in the previous years, they carried on broad activity in partisan detachments and formations and among the local population. Thousands of Communists and Komsomol members

---

[1] Party Archives of the Inst. of Party Hist. of the CC CP of Belorussia, col. 4, inv. 33a, div. 252, p. 234; div. 587, pp. 11, 24; div. 252, p. 103.

were in agitation collectives, carried the word of Bolshevik truth to the masses, and instilled in the hearts of Soviet citizens confidence in their rapid liberation. The main content of the political-educational work was the elucidation of the tasks set by the Party before the Soviet people, the mobilization of partisans and population for their fulfillment and the exposure of fascist propaganda. The Party organizations conducted an implacable struggle against bourgeois nationalists of every stripe. This was caused by the fact that with the Red Army's approach to the borders of the Soviet Union bourgeois nationalists in the western regions increased their activity.

A major role in mass political work among the population in the occupied territory was played as before by the Soviet press. /475 It was one of the most powerful organizations of the national struggle with the Hitlerite invaders. The existence of a large number of landing strips for aircraft and areas for receiving cargos "bailed out" with a parachute made it possible in 1944 to deliver considerably more newspapers, magazines and leaflets to the occupied areas. Many Party organs and partisan formations regularly received the newspapers "Pravda," "Izvestiya," and "Komsomol'skaya Pravda," the magazines "Ogonyok" and "Krokodil" and republic and regional newspapers, including those specially published for partisans and population ("Za Radyans'ku Ukrainu," "Savetskaya Belarus'," "Tiesa" ("Pravda") in the Lithuanian language, "Uzh Taribu Lietuva" ("For Soviet Lithuania"), "Leningradskiy Partisan" and others). In the enemy's rear all obkoms and raykoms operating there and many large partisan formations published newspapers.

In the occupied territory of the Leningrad region, for example, the newspapers "Za Leningrad," "Narodnyy mstitel'," "Partizanskaya Pravda," "Krasnyy Partizan," and others were issued regularly. In Belorussia behind enemy lines approximately 150 republic, regional and district newspapers were published, including "Zvyazda," the organ of the CC CP(b)B and the Minsk obkom. The newspaper "Chervonyy prapor" in Ukrainian and "Chervonyy standart" in Polish (Transliterated from Russian), the organ of the Rovensk obkom of the CP(b)Ukr and the regional headquarters of the partisan

movement, continued to be issued. The organ of the Kamenets-Podol'skiy obkom and the regional headquarters of the partisan movement was the newspaper "Zorya Podillya," and the organ of the Zhitomir underground obkom of the CP(b)Ukr was the newspaper "Chervonye polessya." The Southern underground committee of the CP(b) of Lithuania published the newspaper "Kova" ("Struggle") and the Northern committee issued "Letuvos Partizanas" ("Partisan of Lithuania"). The newspaper "Zhal'girio aynis" ("Scion of Grunwald") was published as the organ of the CC LCUY of Lithuania. The provincial underground committees of the CP(b) of Lithuania published their own newspapers. Six newspapers were issued in the occupied territory of the Latvian SSR, including "Par Dzmiteni" ("For the Motherland"), the organ of the CCCP(b) of Latvia. In Estonia the newspaper "Tatsuya" ("Avenger") was published.

In addition to newspapers an enormous number of leaflets were also printed. Newspapers, magazines and leaflets contained material on the situation at the fronts, in the rear of the USSR and of fascist Germany, calls of the Party and Soviet organs to the population and partisans to strengthen the people's authority in partisan areas, and to render help to the Red Army in every way.

During the offensive of the Red Army near Leningrad and Novgorod the newspapers printed for the partisans and inhabitants of the occupied areas carried calls: "Help your brothers - the soldiers of the Red Army!" "Strike the enemy still harder, so he does not leave our Leningrad soil alive!" "Let us delay the movement of German transportation, and thereby help the Red Army to rout the fascists!"[1] On January 12, 1944 a leaflet was issued with the address of the Supreme Soviet, Council of People's Commissars of the Ukrainian SSR and the CC CP(b) of the Ukraine to the population of the occupied areas of the republic. This address, which revealed the situation in the Soviet Union and at the war fronts with great depth, ended with a call to intensify the struggle with the occupiers and bourgeois nationalists.

---

[1] See Bolshevik Newspapers behind Enemy Lines. Collected Materials from Underground Newspapers of the Leningrad Region during the German Occupation. Leningrad Gaz.-Zhurn. i Kn. Izd-vo, 1946, pp. 234, 239.

When in Belorussia the partisans were faced with the task of exposing the maneuvers of the enemy, who was attempting to carry out forced mobilization of the male population into fascist-type military formations of the "Belorussian Regional Defense," newspapers and leaflets called on the population not to submit to any provocation, to leave under the partisans' protection. "Go into the forests and swamps!" summoned the leaflets of the Pinsk obkom of the CP(b)B in May 1944. "Hide from the Hitlerites! Destroy them, the Red Army is near! It will soon liberate you."[1] The CC CP(b) /476
of Latvia exposed the base plans of the occupiers, who were attempting to forcibly mobilize Letts into the German fascist army. In a leaflet of the Bureau of the CC addressed to young people, it was stated, "Hitler has begun forcible mobilization of Latvian youth... Do not permit the enemy to execute his insidious plans! Block the mobilization by all means you have! Do not go to draft points! Go into the woods! Join the partisans!"[2]

Newspapers, leaflets and magazines were delivered to the population by messengers and agitators. In January 1944 alone Komsomol member-agitators of the Korelichi, Ivenets, Volozhinsk and Dyatlov areas of the Baranovichi region distributed approximately 6,000 copies of newspapers, leaflets and summaries from the Soviet Information Bureau, which were published by underground Party and Komsomol organizations. To deliver the literature to cities where the fascists had established a particularly harsh regime it was necessary to have recourse to various tricks. For example, trips to a bazaar with food products were often used. So that the literature would not be found in a search it was hidden in horse collars, in false bottoms in the carts, and so on. In spite of persecution the messengers and agitators succeeded in distributing newspapers, leaflets and Soviet Information Bureau summaries not only among the population, but even in enemy garrisons.

In the mass political work of the Communist Party in the occupied territory a large place was occupied by oral propaganda and agitation. In

---

[1] Collection of works of national partisan struggle in Belorussia during the years of the Great Patriotic War (1941-1944). Minsk, Dzyarshaunaye bydavtstva BSSR, page 333.

[2] Party Archives of the Inst. of Party History of the CC CP of Latvia, col. 302, inv. 1, div. 37, p. 2.

partisan regions and zones, and also in areas controlled by the partisans, were held meetings, rallies, and resounding readings of Soviet Information Bureau summaries, newspapers, magazines and letters. Reports on various themes, seminars and conferences were organized. It was the practice in the partisan units to read out orders before the soldiers in formation, and to summarize previous battles and operations. Various types of evening gatherings were arranged. Radio and cinema were used widely. Communists and Komsomol-underground members worked selflessly in cities and inhabited areas where German garrisons were positioned. Individual talks were the main form of agitation there.

The Party organs in the enemy's rear conducted extensive work in demoralizing the troops and police of the enemy, especially the troops of the satellites of fascist Germany. German antifascists who had joined the "Free Germany" movement and were in contact with the partisans took part in this work. Much attention was also devoted to agitation among soldiers who had been forcibly mobilized by the Hitlerites in the countries they occupied. In special leaflets addressed to Poles, Czechs, Slovaks, Frenchmen, Belgians, and Dutchmen, the monstrous atrocities of the fascists in the territory of their countries were revealed. The leaflets called on them to desert to the side of the Red Army and the partisans. As a result many soldiers and officers deserted to the partisans and later fought heroically in partisan detachments. On January 15, 1944 the newspaper "Krasnyy partizan" wrote that Dutchmen and Czechs who had deserted to the partisans derailed a German train in the area of Kingisepp.[1] The underground group of the Nikolayev region under the leadership of V. N. Tristan, making contact with Czechoslovak officers serving in the German army, achieved the formation in February 1944 of a Czechoslovak partisan detachment numbering 175 men. This detachment took active part in the struggle with the German fascist invaders in Odessa.[2]

---

[1] See Bol'shevik Newspapers behind Enemy Lines, p. 170-171.

[2] Party Archives of the Inst. of Party History of the CC CP of the Ukraine, col. 1, inv. 9a, div. 114, p. 82.

Due to the approaching liberation of all Soviet land the Communist Party began to prepare the population in the enemy's rear to restore the state economy. If in the first years of the war the Party organizations /477 called on the population to destroy everything that the Hitlerites could use to increase their war production, now their efforts were directed toward preventing the enemy from removing or destroying the equipment of plants and factories, successfully completing the spring sowing, collecting and preserving the harvest. There are many examples of this. On March 25, 1944 the Rudensk underground raykom of the Party of the Minsk region, discussing the question of the course of preparation for the spring sowing, made it the obligation of Party and Komsomol organizations to take measures for the sowing of all land.[1] The underground group of the village of Maydan Pochapinetskiy, Latinsk district, Vinnitsa region, as the result of a great deal of work with the inhabitants, achieved the sowing of all sowing area in the spring of 1944.[2] Party and Komsomol organizations conducted special talks with the population on how best to hide harvested grain to keep it from the enemy.

In the activity of the Communist Party in intensifying the struggle in the occupied territory, as before an important place was occupied by questions of supplying partisans and underground members with material resources. In 1944, thanks to measures taken by the Party organs and military councils of the fronts, supply of the partisans improved greatly. While in February 1943 the Belorussian partisans received 3 tons of military cargo, in February 1944 they received approximately 90 tons, and from January 1 through July 11, 1944 they received over 1,150 tons.[3]

However, in spite of that the needs of the Belorussian partisan formations for arms and ammunition could not be fully satisfied; the rapid growth in the numbers of partisans demanded an ever greater quantity of arms and

---

[1] Party Archives of the Inst. of Party Hist. of the CC CP of Belorussia, col. 4, inv. 33a, div. 71, p. 36.

[2] Party Archives of the Inst. of Party Hist. of the CC CP of the Ukraine, col. 1, inv. 9a, div. 82, p. 120.

[3] Party Archives of the Inst. of Party Hist. of the CC CP of Belorussia, col. 3500, inv. 4, div. 1, p. 174; inv. 3, div. 77, p. 68.

ammunition. This was due to the fact that by the beginning of March a considerable part of the personnel of the partisan formations was not armed. Trophies captured from the enemy by the partisans could not cover the needs for weapons and ammunition.

Beginning in December 1943 through the end of March 1944 the Ukrainian partisans received weapons, ammunition, explosives and other resources through the "Ovruchskiy corridor," which was formed during the advance of our troops toward the partisan zone located west of the Mozyr'-Korosten' railroad. Along this "corridor" the wounded and sick were also taken out.

In planning operations, simultaneously with the assignment of combat objectives to the partisans the headquarters of the fronts considered measures for their material support. Thus during the period of preparation for the offensive operation in Belorussia the front air force delivered to the partisans a large quantity of weapons, ammunition, and 29,640 kilograms of TNT.[1]

The improved supplying of the partisans, above all with automatic weapons and mine and demolition equipment, increased the combat capabilities of the detachments and formations.

Thus, as the result of the great organizational and mass political work of the Communist Party in 1944, the Party and Komsomol organizations of the partisan formations and underground were strengthened, their political influence on the workers of the occupied areas was intensified, the zones of the active partisan struggle and the network of the antifascist underground were expanded, the combat effectiveness of the partisan detachments increased and their material support was improved. The military operations of the partisans and the work of underground partisan organizations promoted the final expulsion of the enemy from the bounds of our Motherland.

---

[1] Party Archives of the Inst. of Party History of the CC CP of Belorussia, col. 3500, inv. 3, div. 78, p. 286.

2. The characteristic features of the partisan war and of the military activity of the underground in 1944

In 1944 the people's war behind enemy lines acquired its greatest scope. The population of the occupied areas supported the partisans and underground members in every way. The military operations of the partisans, the activity of the underground, the resistance of millions of Soviet people to the occupiers, assumed the most varied forms: from sabotage of the political, economic and military measures of the enemy to major military operations against the German fascist forces. The armed struggle during this period was characterized above all by closer cooperation of the partisans and underground with the units of the Red Army. The partisans actively participated in almost all operations of the Soviet troops. /478

The improvement in cooperation between the partisan formations and the Red Army was promoted by more precise planning of their military activity.

In the operations of 1944, Headquarters of the Supreme High Command and the military councils of the fronts, as a rule, determined the general objectives of the partisans in advance. This enabled the leading Party organs and headquarters of the partisan movement to plan and prepare the military operations of the partisans and underground members with consideration of the further operations of the Red Army, and to considerably intensify the struggle in the enemy's rear even before the beginning of the Soviet troops' advance. It was thus during the execution of the operations at Leningrad and Novgorod, in the Right Bank Ukraine and in the Crimea, Karelia and Belorussia.

Operations groups or representatives of the headquarters of the partisan movement attached to the military councils of the fronts were occupied with planning of the military operations of the partisans and underground members in the interests of the offensive operations. Receiving instructions from the military councils, they worked out a plan of operations for the partisans during the period of preparation for and conduct of the offensive, conveyed it to the command group of the partisan formations, determined the forms of cooperation with the Soviet troops, organized material and technical support, and trained and transferred the necessary cadres to reinforce the partisan detachments.

In accordance with the general plan of each operation, regrouping of the forces of the partisan formations was, as a rule, conducted before it started. Thus, on the orders of the Leningrad headquarters of the partisan movement during the period of preparation for the advance near Leningrad and Novgorod several partisan brigades were transferred to the new areas, as a result of which all of the enemy's most important communications were found to be under the strikes of the partisans. In January 1944, when operations were conducted to liberate the Right Bank Ukraine, 16 formations and 4 independent detachments of Ukrainian partisans were regrouped.

Before the start of the offensive operations of the Red Army the partisans, performing the assignments set before them, disrupted the work of the

enemy's rear, destroyed his manpower, fighting equipment and material resources, partially or totally blocked defensive work, acquired valuable intelligence data and helped the Soviet air force, directing it toward enemy targets.

Partisans operated especially actively on the enemy communications. Conducting systematic diversions on railroad lines and automobile roads, carrying out attacks on the German fascist garrisons, they not only disrupted the work of the rear, but also diverted the enemy's operative reserves toward themselves. In March-April 1944 formations of Ukrainian partisans under the command of P. P. Vershigora, A. F. Fyedorov, M. I. Naumov, S. F. Malikov, A. M. Grabchak and others diverted considerable forces of German fascist troops with their operations on lines of communications. To protect the railroad junctions and major stations of Brest, Kovel', Khelm, Vladimir-Volynsk, Sokal', L'vov, Przemysl, and Yaroslav and the railroads connecting these cities, the Hitlerites were forced to throw /479 in 10 divisions.[1] The operations of the partisans resulted, in a number of cases, in the enemy's operative reserves being found not to be where the interests of his defenses required, and often being unable to move out in time to the threatened directions.

In areas where the Red Army was to operate the partisans usually did not destroy the major bridges, water towers, electrical stations and other targets that were essential for the movement of the Soviet troops, and for the restoration of which a great deal of time would be required. On the railroads, for example, they conducted demolition which interrupted communications only for a certain time and at the same time did not permit the enemy to utilize track-wrecking machines to render the railroad inoperable.

On the eve of the advance of the Soviet troops, the partisans made massed studies on communications with the goal of preventing the enemy from using railroad transportation during the defense. The actions of the Belorussian partisans, conducted on the instructions of the CC CP(b)

(1) Party Archives of the Inst. of Party Hist. of the CC CP of the Ukraine, Col. 1, inv. 1-14, div. 905, p. 197

of Belorussia on the night of June 20, 1944,[1] may serve as the most characteristic example. "The major operation conducted by the partisans that night with lightning speed," wrote the chief of the transportation directorate of German army group "Centre," Col. G. Teske, "caused in some places a complete halt in railroad movement on all important communications leading to the breakthrough areas... The partisans conducted a brilliant operation: by wisely distributing their forces, and in close cooperation with the Red Army, they did not allow the advance of the latter to be stopped by the bringing up of German formations by railroad."[2] In this operation the partisan brigades under the command of N. Kh. Balan, S. G. Ganzenko, V. G. Yeremenko, A. I. Dalidovich, I. F. Sadchikov and other particularly distinguished themselves.

The operations of partisans on the enemy's rear defensive lines were of great importance during the period of preparation for the offensive. The avengers of the people prevented the Hitlerites from preparing and bringing up construction materials, and from carrying out the mobilization of the population for defensive works, attacked detached enemy construction units, destroyed constructed fortifications and mined those in process of construction. When at the beginning of 1944 the Red Army's operations began in the Right Bank Ukraine, in order to contain the advance of the troops of the 1st Ukrainian front in the L'vov direction the German fascist command group began rapidly to erect a defensive line along the Zbruch River. Learning that for this the Hitlerites were to conduct a forced mobilization of the population, the partisans resolved to thwart their plans. On March 3 the partisan detachment "Smert' fashizmu" suddenly burst into the village to which the Hitlerites had driven the local inhabitants, routed the German guard and freed the Soviet people. On the same day the partisan detachments named for Suvorov and for Kotovskiy, completing an attack on another village, routed the 725th construction battalion and stopped the mobilization of many thousands of Soviet citizens for defense works.[3]

---

[1] See Chapter 5, p. 168.

[2] Hermann Teske. Guerrillas against the railroad. "Wehrwissenschaftliche Rundschau," Issue 10, 1953, p. 475.

[3] Party Archives of the Inst. of Party Hist. of the CC CP of the Ukraine, col. 62, inv. 62-1, div. 87, p. 33.

During the operations of the Soviet troops the goal of the military operations of the partisans and underground was to support the conduct of the offensive at high speeds. During this period they blocked the regrouping of enemy troops, the bringing up of reserves, organized withdrawal and the occupation of defensive lines at depth, rendered direct help to the Soviet troops, cooperating technically with them, and disrupting the enemy's control and communications. Thus during the offensive of our troops near Leningrad and Novgorod the partisans paralyzed movement on certain sectors of railroads leading from Leningrad to the south, southwest and west. In spite of desperate efforts the enemy did not succeed in restoring regular communication on railroads in this area. With their /480
attacks the partisans inflicted great damage on the enemy. From January 15 through February 21, 1944 with the help of the local population the partisan brigade commanded by K. D. Karitskiy alone undermined 5 railroad bridges and 7,000 rails, destroyed 18 locomotives and 160 cars with enemy manpower and equipment, 1 armored train and 218 automobiles, and destroyed a telegraph-telephone line for a 150-kilometer sector.[1]

Partisans also operated successfully on highways and unpaved roads, although it was considerably more difficult to paralyze movement on these roads than on the railroads. During the Crimean operation the partisans attacked enemy columns and seized separate sectors of road, which greatly complicated the enemy's withdrawal along the Simferopol'-Alushta and Kerch'-Simferopol' highways. Partisans also performed the same tasks in 1944 in other sectors of the Soviet-German front.

The local population rendered great assistance to the avengers of the people in disrupting the enemy's movement on highways and unpaved roads. During the advance of the Soviet troops near Leningrad and Novgorod, kolkhoz workers helped the partisans of the 7th brigade to complete the assignment given it by the headquarters of the partisan movement - to cut off the highway to Pskov and not to allow the enemy to retreat from the blows of the advancing troops. On the summons of the leadership of the Party underground

[1] See "Leningradskiy partizan," April 15, 1944.

of Karamyshevskiy district on the night of February 7, 2,500 kolkhoz workers went out to complete their assignments. They felled trees, dug pits, cut down telegraph poles, and removed telephone and telegraph lines. As a result movement along the highway was stopped and communications were disrupted for several days.

Whole villages of inhabitants of many districts in the Vileysk region went out to the roads, dug them up, set up "wolf holes" and forest obstacles. This interfered with the enemy's bringing up of reserves and orderly withdrawal of forces.

With the approach of Soviet troops to the areas where the partisans conducted battles, conditions were created for tactical cooperation. The partisan detachments struck blows on the enemy from the rear, helped the forward units of the Red Army to force rivers and overcome other natural obstacles, and participated in the destruction of encircled enemy groupings, in the seizure of inhabited areas, and in the pursuit of the enemy. They frequently supported the exposed flanks of advancing units and formations and helped them to break through to the rear and the flanks of the enemy. Numerous incidents testify to this.

During the advance of the troops of the Leningrad and Volkhov fronts, partisans, in cooperation with units of the Red Army, liberated the little town and station of Plyussa, seized the station of Peredol'skaya and held it until the arrival of the Soviet troops, and took part in the rout of two enemy divisions in the area of Strugi Krasnyye.

During the operations in the Right Bank Ukraine considerable forces of partisans operating in the enemy's tactical zone of defense rendered direct assistance to the forward units in liberating certain inhabited areas, including the regional center, Rovno. The battle of the Ukrainian partisans for the city of Izyaslav may serve as a very clear example of the tactical cooperation of the partisans and Red Army units. The enemy garrison there numbered 1,300 men. It had a division of self-propelled

artillery, 8 tanks and 2 armored vehicles. The Hitlerites adapted all stone buildings for defense, and around the city they had erected field fortifications. Twelve partisan detachments (2,300 persons) from the formations commanded by S. A. Oleksenko, F. S. Kot and A. Z. Odukh took part in the seizure of Izyaslav. In the evening of February 15 the partisans concentrated in villages 8-12 kilometers from the city, and reached it that night. In the morning of February 16 after artillery preparation, in which a Red Army regiment participated, the partisans burst into Izyaslav, and seized it after four hours of stubborn battles. The enemy undertook counterattacks with the goal of retaking the city. However, supported by /481 artillery and the Red Army units that had arrived the partisans successfully repelled all of the Hitlerites' counterattacks.[1]

In this battle bravely fought the fourteen-year-old Pioneer from the village of Khemlevka, Shepetovskiy district, Kamenets-Podolsk region, Valya Kotik. The youthful patriot, who entered the struggle against the occupiers even in 1941, accomplished many glorious feats, and was seriously wounded twice. In the battle for Izyaslav, Valya was again wounded, this time fatally. He died in the arms of his comrades. For courage and heroism displayed in battles with the German fascist invaders, Pioneer-partisan V. A. Kotik was awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union.

Their rich battle experience enabled the partisans to cooperate closely with the Soviet troops even in those areas where there were no large forest masses. Thus, on March 20, 1944 the partisan detachment under the command of Col. Ya. A. Mukhin occupied the district center of the Moldavian SSR, Kamenka, seized major supply depots of the enemy and held them until the arrival of our troops. After this, jointly with tank subunits, the detachments liberated several inhabited areas. On March 26 the partisans covered the crossing of the Dnestr by our units in the area of the village of Stroinitsa, then, together with the forward subunits of the Red Army, repelled numerous enemy counterattacks on the right bank of the river for several days. On April 6, jointly with the Soviet troops, the detachment participated in the liberation of Orgeyev.

---

[1] Party Archives of the Inst. of Party Hist. of the CC CP of the Ukraine, col. 62, inv. 62-1, div. 1, pp. 100-101.

The cooperation of the partisans with the troops of the 4th Ukrainian front and the Detached Maritime Army in the Crimean operation was effective. The partisans occupied the cities of Staryy Krym and Karasubazar and held them until the arrival of the Red Army. Together with Soviet units they conducted battles for Simferopol'.

During the offensive by the troops of the 2nd Baltic front in July 1944 the partisan brigade of the Kalinin region under the command of N. M. Varaksov, having occupied the defense along the river Isse in the city of Mozyli (30 kilometers northwest of the city of Opochka), repelled several enemy attacks and prevented him from consolidating on that water line. After joining the troops of the Red Army, in cooperation with units of the 8th Guards rifle division the brigade drove the Hitlerites out of yet another inhabited area, forced the Sinyaya River under enemy fire, seized a tactically important height, and routed a retreating enemy column of 370 soldiers and officers.[1]

The partisans of Latvia cooperated closely with the advancing Red Army units. On July 30, 1944 the partisan detachment commanded by P. K. Ratynysh seized a sector of the railroad in the area of Lubana and held it for 26 hours. On the same day a group of partisans under the leadership of P. A. Pizan seized a sector of highway and for 10 hours did not allow the enemy the opportunity to effect shipments there. On July 31 the partisan detachment under the command of A. K. Rashkevits led certain units of two rifle divisions of the Red Army into the rear of the fascist forces and thereby ensured that a surprise attack would be made on the enemy. The enemy retreated in panic, unable to destroy inhabited areas, remove stolen goods or, most importantly, drive the inhabitants of the volost to Germany.[2]

Many incidents of close cooperation of partisans with the troops of the Red Army were observed in the operations to liberate Belorussia. The partisan brigades and detachments of the Vitebsk, Vileysk and the northern part

---

[1] Party Archives of the Kalinin obkom of the CPSU, col. 479, inv. 1, div. 334, pp. 292-294.

[2] Party Archives of the Inst. of Party Hist. of the CC CP of Latvia, col. 101, inv. 3, div. 5, pp. 8, 29.

of the Minsk regions cooperated with the troops of the 1st Baltic and 3rd Belorussian fronts, and the brigades and detachments of the Mogilev region, the eastern and southern parts of the Minsk region, the Polessk, Baranovichi, Pinsk and Brest regions with the troops of the 2nd and 1st Belorussian fronts.

During the retreat of the German fascist forces the partisans struck /482
blows on the most important main highways of Mogilev-Minsk, Mogilev-Bobruisk, Orsha-Minsk and others, holding back the retreat of the enemy and thereby helping the Red Army to surround and destroy him. On the night of June 30 the 1st Minsk partisan brigade under the command of Ye. A. Ivanov straddled the Cherven'-Minsk highway, along which columns of enemy troops were moving, and for three hours held a large sector of it. As a result many various units and formations of the enemy and a huge quantity of military equipment were stranded near the city of Cherven'. On this concentration Soviet aircraft struck a crushing blow. The Baranovichi partisans conducted intense battles with the retreating German fascist forces that were routed near Minsk. The brigade under the command of P. I. Gulevich alone conducted up to 30 battles in the area west of Minsk in a short time. The Minsk partisan formation, commanded by V. Z. Korzh, and the 208th partisan regiment, fulfilling the assignment of the Military Council of the 61st Army to "cut off Luninets from the west and not to let the enemy out of Luninets until the arrival of the 89th rifle corps," struck blows on the railroads and highways of Gantsevichi-Luninets, and Luninets-Pinsk. In constant battles the partisans destroyed much enemy manpower and equipment.[1]

The Belorussian partisans also rendered the advancing troops great help by occupying and holding river crossings and some inhabited areas until the arrival of the Soviet units. Four brigades of the South Minsk formation under the general command of N. P. Kuksov routed several German rear subunits, seized the crossings on the Ptich' River south of Glussk on June 27

[1] Party Archives of the Inst. of Party Hist. of the CC CP of Belorussia, col. 3500, inv. 4, div. 190, pp. 472, 473; inv. 5, div. 255, p. 69; inv. 23, div. 57, p. 346; inv. 4, div. 140a, p. 215; inv. 5, div. 289, p. 79; inv. 4, div. 245, p. 23; inv. 23, div. 58, p. 2; inv. 1, div. 1008, p. 65.

and held them until the arrival of units of the 1st Belorussian front.[1] The brigade named for A. Nevskiy under the command of N. D. Kuril'chik seized a crossing on the Slucha River in the area of Starobina and for 48 hours, until units of the 48th Guards rifle division arrived, waged stubborn battles for it. The partisans of the Mogilev region, having seized crossings on the Druta River, deprived the enemy of the opportunity to use them during the retreat.

The actions of the partisans in the forested, swampy regions often led to the enemy's being forced to position his troops in some sectors along the roads. He was unable to form a continuous front. This enabled the Soviet units to break through the gaps in the German defense to the flanks and rear of the enemy. Thus in January 1944 the troops of the right wing of the 1st Ukrainian front, exploiting the fact that north of the Korosten'-Kovel' railroad Ukrainian partisans controlled a broad territory where the enemy did not have a continuous front, progressed 100 kilometers in a short time and broke through to the Goryn' River. During the Rovno-Lutsk operation the partisans led cavalry formations across the front line to the enemy's rear, which promoted the brilliant success of our troops in that operation. Col.-Gen. N. P. Pukhov, who commanded the 13th Army of the 1st Ukrainian front in that operation, recalling the partisans' actions, wrote, "In the territory of Ukrainian Poles'ya we saw for ourselves what a terrible force in the battle with the occupiers the partisans had become, what steadfastness and valor were possessed by the Soviet people who had responded to the call of the Communist Party to beat the enemy not only from the front, but from the rear."[2]

The underground members cooperated closely with the advancing Red Army. During the liberation of Kirovograd by the troops of the 2nd Ukrainian front they took direct part in street fighting, performed important combat

---

[1] Party Archives of the Inst. of Party Hist. of the CC CP of Belorussia, col. 4, inv. 33a, div. 599, pp. 42-43.

[2] N. P. Pukhov. Gody ispytaniyi. (Years of Trial), p. 46.

assignments of the Soviet command group, and led our troops to the enemy's line of retreat. During the storming of Odessa underground members and /483
partisans prevented the demolition by the enemy of the dike in the Khadzhibeyskiy estuary, thanks to which the units of the Red Army were able to enter the city from the direction of Peresyp'. During the battles for Sevastopol' communist underground workers, who had established contact with the Soviet command group, led detachments of our troops into the enemy's rear, which supported the rapid liberation of the city.

After joining the Soviet troops, the partisans and underground members, with the active support of the local population, conducted a great deal of work to restore wrecked roads and crossings, whereby they ensured the forward progress of the units of the Red Army. For example, the partisans of the 2nd Minsk brigade, which was commanded by N. G. Andreyev, in three days, with the help of local inhabitants, built 39 bridges, dismantled 8 barriers and scattered 74 mines in the roads. The 95th partisan brigade named for M. V. Frunze erected 20 bridges in only one day. Min specialists of the brigade named for M. I. Kutuzov cleared mines from many sectors of roads in the Vileysk region. The Latvian partisan detachment under the command of A. K. Savitskiy, after joining the unitsof the Red Army, built a half-kilometer road across the forested, swampy terrain, thereby ensuring the timely transfer of heavy arms.

The cooperation of the partisans and underground with the Red Army was also expressed in the great reconnaissance activity that they conducted in the interests of the Soviet command group, both during preparations and during the conduct of offensive operations. In the enemy's rear operated thousands of agents and army scouts. All partisans who went out on combat assignments actually conducted reconnaissance. In 1944 the network of intelligence agents expanded considerably. In a small territory of the western areas of the Kalinin region, which were still in the enemy's hands, in the first six months the numbers of intelligence agents increased by over twofold.[1] In the same time in the occupied part of Belorussia their numbers increased by over 75 percent.[2]

---

[1] Party Archives of the Kalinin obkom of the CPSU, col. 479, inv. 1, div. 65, pp. 193, 197.

[2] Party Archives of the Inst. of Party Hist. of the CC CP of Belorussia, col. 3500, inv. 2, div. 1012, p. 26.

The information that was transmitted to the command group of the Red Army by partisan scouts and the underground was of the most varied kind. The scouts constantly acquired valuable data on the enemy's defenses, on the grouping of his forces, and on all measures he conducted. They infiltrated regional fascist commissariats, the organs of enemy intelligence and counter-intelligence, their schools, they registered fascist agents, captured some of them and sent them to the rear.

The Komsomol underground members of Kaunas, for example, regularly informed the Soviet command group about the concentration of enemy troop trains at the railroad station, which helped Soviet aircraft to bomb them more accurately. In January 1944 reconnaissance of Ukrainian partisans reported on the construction of fortifications by the enemy in the area of Kovel', the transfer of new units and formations to that area, on the concentration of German fascist forces in the area of Shepetovka and the building of defensive positions on the line of the Goryn' River. In February it reported that the Hitlerites had begun to erect fortifications in the area of Brest.[1] In July scouts of the 1st Latvian partisan brigade informed the command group in time of enemy fortifications in the area of Tilzhi and of mined sectors of road. They also transmitted information on the presence and nature of enemy fortifications in the area of Liepna, and on the plan of his antitank defense and artillery positions.[2] The Kalinin partisan scouts and underground workers from November 1, 1943 through July 15, 1944 established the movement and disposition of 30 divisions, 2 brigades, 23 regiments, 63 battalions, 148 field post offices, 2 field hospitals, and the location of 11airfields, 95 supply depots, and 32 enterprises.[3]

By all forms of partisan intelligence in Belorussia from January through May 1944 the dispositions of 27 headquarters, 598 formations and units, and 163 field post offices were revealed. The scouts determined /484

[1] Party Archives of the Inst. of Part.History of the CC CP of the Ukraine, col. 1, inv. 1-14, div. 905, pp. 53, 59, 69.

[2] Party Archives of the Inst. of Party History of the CC CP of Latvia, col. 302, inv. 2, div. 13, p. 256.

[3] Party Archives of the Kalinin obkom of the CPSU, col. 479, inv. 1, div. 65, pp. 197, 198.

the position of 36 airfields and landing strips, defensive lines in the areas of Minsk, Vitebsk, Orsha, Bobruisk and in other places, seized and sent by air to the Soviet rear over 500 operational documents of the enemy, including operational maps and orders.[1]

The military operations of the partisans and underground members in ocupied territory were executed not only in operative and tactical contact with the advancing Red Army. They were also conducted in the interests of achieving strategic goals. It is well known that the successive thrusts of the Red Army in 1944 made the enemy direct his forces to the threatened directions from other theaters of military operations, and also from those sectors of the Soviet-German front where at the given moment the Soviet troops were not conducting offensive operations. Under these conditions it was extremely important not to give the German command group the opportunity to regroup its forces in advance in an organized way. The partisans' actions to disrupt the operation of enemy transportation acquired great significance, not only in the zone of advance of the Soviet troops, but also in the areas from where the enemy could throw in forces to close gaps formed in his defenses. Therefore operations on the enemy's railroad communications were conducted continually and in ever-growing scale.

In January-April, when the Soviet troops were conducting major offensive operations near Leningrad and in the Right Bank Ukraine, the increase in diversionary activity in the enemy's rear on the railroads of the central sector did not permit the enemy to freely maneuver his reserves. At this time the partisans of Belorussia were conducting diversions in approximately 40 railroad sectors. The Minsk-Bobruisk, Brest-Luninets, Molodechno-Polotsk, and Minsk-Orsha railroad sectors, along which passed the greatest number of enemy trains, were subjected to particularly intensive action. In January-April the Belorussian partisans undermined 2,989 enemy trains.[2]

---

[1] Party Archive of the Inst. of Party History of the CC CP of Belorussia, col. 3500, inv. 2, div. 1012, pp. 40-41.

[2] Ibid, inv. 3, div. 77, p. 83.

During the advance of the Red Army in Belorussia in the summer of 1944 the operations of the Ukrainian partisans on the communications of army group "North Ukraine" were of great importance. In order to save the position of army group "Centre" and hold back the successful progress of our troops in Belorussia, the enemy began to transfer divisions to that sector both from the deep rear and from army group "North Ukraine" and "South Ukraine." The partisans, making constant attacks on railroads and highways, undermining sectors of routes, bridges and other targets, stopped or delayed the movement of enemy trains. The L'vov-Lublin road, on which traveled the most enemy troop trains, was subjected to particularly strong attacks. The Hitlerites bore enormous losses. In June and Julythe partisans derailed 276 troop trains.[1] The partisan detachments named for Pozharskiy under the command of L. E. Berenshtein, named for Karmelyuk under the command of Hero of the Soviet Union V. M. Yaremchuk, the division groups of partisan detachments of the name Kirov (Commander M. Ya. Nadelin) and named for Suvorov (Commander S. A. Sankov) alone undermined 42 troop trains with enemy manpower and fighting equipment in June.[2]

Raids by partisan formations into the western areas of the country gave considerable help to the troops of the Red Army. Unlike the previous years, in 1944 the partisans raided not only with the goal of strengthening the partisan movement and disrupting the operation of the enemy's rear in the territory of the Soviet Union, but also to give assistance to the peoples /485 of other countries in their struggle with the enemy. The Ukrainian partisans especially completed many raids on the instructions of the CC CP(b) of the Ukraine.

In three months, from January 5 through April 1, the 1st Ukrainian partisan division named for S. A. Kovpak under the command of P. P. Vershigora moved in force through the territory of the Rovensk, Volynsk, and L'vov

---

[1] Party Archives of the Inst. of Party History of the CC CP of the Ukraine, col. 62, inv. 62-1, div. 77, pp. 129, 147.

[2] Ibid, inv. 62-2, div. 84, pp. 53, 57-58, 62, 81.

regions of the Ukraine, the Lublin and Warsaw voivodeships of Poland, and the Brest and Pinsk regions of Belorussia. In that time the partisans derailed 24 trains, destroyed 75 tanks and armored vehicles, 196 automobiles, 16 tractors, 5 airplanes, 20 supply depots and much other military equipment, and blew up 3 electrical stations, 16 plants, and 57 railroad and highway bridges.[1]

In 1944 the partisan formation under the command of M. M. Shukayev continued its raid. The partisans moved in force through the Right Bank to western regions of the Ukraine and the southern areas of Poland, overcame the Carpathians and broke through to Czechoslovakia, where they operated until their meeting with the Red Army in 1945. During the raid the partisans organized 206 wrecks of enemy railroad trains and accomplished 832 other diversions.[2] The Hitlerite command group frequently took measures to destroy this formation. In order not to give the enemy the opportunity to concentrate large forces to conduct operations against the partisans, with its breakthrough to every new area Shukayev's formation quickly dispersed and inflicted blows in small groups on communications and other enemy targets in a broad territory. The Hitlerites were forced to scatter their forces, throwing them to reinforce the guard on important targets. This permitted Shukayev to organize rest for the partisans and gather them again to continue the raid. These tactics doomed to failure all of the German command group's efforts to liquidate the partisan formation.

The Karelian partisans, forced to base near the front line in a territory occupied by our troops, periodically moved out to the deep rear of the enemy to conduct military operations. In the summer of 1944 19 partisan detachments raided in the enemy's rear. Cooperating with the advancing units of the Red Army, the partisans liberated 11 inhabited areas from the enemy and held them until the arrival of our troops.[3]

---

[1] Party Archives of the Inst. of Party History of the CC CP of the Ukraine, col. 62, inv. 62-1, div. 1, pp. 105-106.

[2] Ibid, col. 71, inv. 71-1, div. 2, pp. 1-74.

[3] Party Archives of the Karelian obkom of the CPSU, col. 213, inv. 29, div. 4, pp. 13-14.

Even West German military historians acknowledge the helplessness of the occupiers in the struggle with the partisans. Thus W. Gorlitz, describing the actions of the Ukrainian partisan formation under the command of Maj. Gen. M. I. Naumov, which in January 1944 completed a raid from the Zhitomir region into the western areas of the Ukraine, observes, "... for a long time this group made strikes from the forests in the area of the source of the Bug (Western Bug - Ed.) and Stryy on the important railroad rear communications of the Germans. The German... formations were unable to render it harmless... This raid of Gen. Naumov is a superior example of the conduct of the operative partisan war."[1]

The partisan raids in the occupied territory of the Soviet Union and beyond the borders of our Motherland, in the course of which important political and military tasks were performed, testified to the high level of military art of the commanders, and the exceptional morale and military qualities of the personnel of the partisan detachments and formations.

In 1944 the Communist Party turned the particular attention of the partisans and underground to the need to guard Soviet people against being driven away to fascist forced labor and to preserve the peoples' property from plunder and destruction. During the operations to liberate the Crimea the partisans of the Southern formation received the assignment to save Yalta, /486 the palaces on the South coast of the Crimea and other material treasures from destruction. This assignment was, for the most part, carried out.

In the plan for conducting and supporting the military operations of the partisan detachments in the winter-spring period of 1943-1944 the CC CP(b) of Lithuania called for the mobilization of the entire population for active opposition to the fascist invaders, who were driving Soviet citizens to Germany and removing the peoples' property. The CC proposed that the party organizations prepare places to hide people and areas for cattle, form in

[1] W. Gorlitz. Second World War 1939-1945, Vol. II, P. 122.

all inhabited areas special groups for the struggle with enemy torchers and detachments that stole the peoples' property.[1]

At the end of May 1944 the CC CP(b) of Belorussia sent a directive letter to the Party organizations and command group of the partisan detachments, in which the obligation was placed on them to explain to the partisans that under the conditions of the Red Army's advance and the coming liberation of our country it was necessary to take all measures to preserve the peoples' goods.[2]

Underground Party organizations did much to save the Soviet people from fascist forced labor. On their instructions the underground members found work at fascist councils, at the labor exchange, at passport offices, transit camps, and the police. They warned our people in advance that they were about to be sent to Germany, and provided them with false documents. Doctors who were underground members working at clinics and on medical selection commissions attached to the labor exchanges helped Soviet people to avoid mobilization for forced labor. They issued them false certificates of unfitness for work, gave them injections to cause a high temperature, declared typhus quarantine in areas where there was no epidemic, and so on. In Simferopol' a group of actors, including N. A. Baryshev, D.K. Dobrosmyslov, Z. P. Yakovlyev, A. F. Peregonets and others, formed a studio attached to the theater. In it the Soviet patriots listed many youths and girls who had no work, thereby saving them from being taken to Germany.[3] The underground helped the partisans to take residents away to the forests where camps were to be built for them with mud huts, bakeries, baths, medical posts, closed pens for cattle and huts for fodder.

The struggle to save Soviet people and national treasures became especially intense during the Hitlerites' retreat. In helpless rage the fascists

---

[1] Party Archives of the Inst. of Party History of the CC CP of Lithuania, col. 1, inv. 1, div. 2, pp. 15-28.

[2] Party Archives of the Inst. of Party History of the CC CP of Belorussia, col. 3500, inv. 4, div. 258, p. 16.

[3] See "Sovyetskaya Rossiya," December 12, 1959.

shot thousands of peaceful citizens in the cities and towns and barbarously destroyed everything they were unable to remove. Thus near Leningrad the retreating enemy began mass extermination of the peaceful population of the Kingisepp and Volosovsk areas. The partisans of the 9th brigade led approximately 10,000 residents away to the woods.[1] With the help of the local underground Party-Komsomol organization led by the secretary of the Dno underground raykom of the Party, M. I. Timokhin, the partisans sent to forest camps a part of the population of the city of Dno. In the same camps peasants from many towns and villages of the Dno and Porkhov areas found sanctuary. Thwarting the intentions of the occupiers to drive the inhabitants of the Leningrad region to fascist forced labor, the partisans and underground members saved the lives of over 400,000 Soviet citizens.[2] The Moldavian partisans also fought selflessly. In July and August 1944 three partisan detachments alone saved over 40,000 residents from being driven away to Germany.[3] On the eve of the storming of Odessa by Soviet troops underground workers and partisans emerged from the catacombs and engaged in battle with the occupiers, not giving them the opportunity to destroy the city and inflict reprisals on the defenseless population. In Minsk, underground members with the active support of the inhabitants /487
extinguished fires, cleared buildings, bridges and other city targets of mines even before the arrival of the Red Army. With the approach of the Red Army to the borders of Lithuania the underground Komsomol organization of Kaunas designated a special group to prevent the occupiers from demolishing plants and factories. The Komsomol-underground workers put the entire telephone network of the city out of service, as a result of which the instructions of the German command group to blow up many buildings were not transmitted.

---

[1] Party Archives of the Leningrad obkom of the CPSU, col. 24, inv. 2, div. 5305, p. 142.

[2] Ibid, col. 0-116, inv. 8, it. 117, p. 68.

[3] Party Archives of the Inst. of Party History of the CC CP of Moldavia, col. 3280, inv. 1, div. 132, p. 2; div. 138, pp. 11, 33.

In spite of the enormous material damage inflicted on our country by the enemy, he was nonetheless unable to turn the territory abandoned under the blows of the Red Army into a "desert zone." In this the Communist Party, Soviet partisans and underground workers deserve great credit.

In 1944 the partisans conducted an intensive struggle with the enemy's large punitive expeditions. The occupiers, feeling that the land was burning under their feet, attempted by all means and methods to suppress the partisan movement. In the areas of operations of the partisans they subjected the population to repressions, conducted false propaganda, arranged provocation, planted agents in the partisan detachments, and so on. However, the rich experience accumulated in battles with the invaders taught the partisans to successfully oppose these insidious devices of the enemy. The Hitlerites were forced to use largely their regular units for the conflict with the avengers of the people.

A large number of regular units and formations supported by artillery, tanks and aircraft participated in the punitive expeditions conducted by the German fascist occupiers in 1944. The punitive expeditions in Belorussia, the Kalinin region, the Crimea and Latvia were particularly brutal. From December 1943 through July 1944 the German command group organized 19 major punitive expeditions to liquidate the Kalinin partisans. In Latvia against the partisan detachment under the command of A. S. Poch alone at the beginning of June 1944 the Hitlerites conducted a punitive expedition in which approximately 20,000 soldiers and officers took part. Losing 700 men, killed and wounded, the fascists still did not achieve their goal.[1] The struggle with the punitive expeditions was intense in Belorussia, lasting until the Soviet troops went over to the offensive in June 1944. The German fascist command group threw part of its army reserve as well as part of the reserve of army group "Centre" against the Belorussian partisans.

---

[1] See 15 Years of Soviet Latvia. Collected articles. Riga, Latgosizdat, 1955, p. 130.

The Hitlerites often began their punitive expeditions with a blockade of partisan areas. In the struggle with the enemy's superior forces the blockaded partisans were assisted by local inhabitants, neighboring partisan formations, and Red Army troops operating in the given sector of the front. The population of the partisan areas, under the guidance of Party organizations, participated in the construction of defensive installations and obstacles in the sectors of the enemy's probable advance, conducted reconnaissance, supplied the partisans with food products, and took part in battles with the punitive expeditions. The headquarters of the partisan movement sent their representatives and operations groups to the blockaded areas, and they led the struggle of the partisans. On their instructions neighboring partisan detachments and formations made attacks on the rears of the punitive groupings of Hitlerites and on enemy communications and contained the enemy, forcing him to scatter his forces to defend the rear.

The controlling Party organizations took measures to strengthen the partisans with material aid and to evacuate children and wounded from the zone of encirclement. From June 22 through July 13, 1944 alone the air force conducted 347 airplane flights to the area of military operations of the Kalinin partisans and removed from there 105 wounded and sick partisans, 1,571 children and 93 women.[1] The partisans received over 60 tons of ammunition, weapons and provisions. In the period of battles with the punitive expeditions in the Polotsk-Lepel' partisan area in March and April /488
the Belorussian headquarters of the partisan movement and the headquarters of the 3rd Belorussian front organized the airlift of 215 tons of ammunition to the partisans. During the same time approximately 1,500 wounded were removed from the area of military operations.[2] The Soviet air force bombed concentrations of troops of the punitive expeditions and their reserves, and covered the partisan areas from the strikes of enemy bombers.

---

[1] Party Archives of the Kalinin obkom of the CPSU, col. 479, inv. 1, div. 645, pp. 52-54.

[2] Party Archives of the Inst. of Party History of the CC CP of Belorussia, col. 3500, inv. 3, div. 77, p. 38.

In accordance with the situation that had formed the partisans either stubbornly held the areas they were defending or, breaching the blockade, broke out of the encirclement and again returned to the area of their main basing. The partisans often made preventive attacks on the enemy's communications and garrisons before the start of the punitive expedition, which frequently thwarted the enemy's plans.

In battles with punitive expeditions the partisans displayed exceptional fortitude and selflessness. An immortal feat was accomplished by partisan-antitank gunners V. A. Volkov, V.M. Feduro, D. P. Khakhel', V. P. Khakhel', I. S. Khakhel', S. N. Korzhakov and I. V. Chernyshev of the brigade named for V. I. Lenin during the battles in the Polotsk-Lepel' partisan area in April 1944. Defending the sectors entrusted to them, several times they allowed enemy tanks to come to within 30-40 meters and fired on them point blank from antitank guns. When the shells ran out the fearless patriots threw themselves under the tanks with clusters of grenades.[1]

An heroic deed was done by Kh. A. Tammemets of the Estonian partisan brigade commanded by A. F. Filippov. On March 6, 1944 Tammemets, covering the retreat of his comrades, was wounded. However, he continued to wage an unequal battle with the fascist punitive expedition. When his strength was almost exhausted and the Hitlerites were nearly upon him the brave partisan blew up himself and two fascists with a grenade.[2]

Thanks to the high moral and military qualities of the Soviet partisans, skillful use of the terrain and modern weapons of battle, good reconnaissance, centralized control of the actions of large groupings of partisans, and the active help rendered them by our whole country, the enemy's punitive expeditions were, as a rule, unsuccessful. The Hitlerites were unable to decrease the scope and activity of the partisan movement, much less suppress it. In many areas the effectiveness of the partisan struggle considerably intensified in 1944.

---

[1] Party Archives of the Inst. of Party History of CC CP of Belorussia, col. 4, inv. 33a, div. 256, p. 267; col. 3500, inv. 4, div. 30, pp. 312-315.

[2] Party Archives of the Inst. of Party History of CC CP of Estonia, col. 4, inv. 1, div. 160, p. 34.

The Soviet people carried on not only an armed struggle in the enemy's rear. They sabotaged all of the political, economic and military measures of the occupiers, frustrated the enemy's plans to provide German industry with manpower from the occupied areas of our country, and evaded mobilization for defense works. The same Soviet citizens who were forced to work at plants and factories organized mass sabotage, delayed the release dates of production and did all they could to lower its quality. An underground diversionary group at the Proskurov airfield put enemy airplanes out of operation, putting sand and iron filings in the cylinders of the motors during their repair. By cutting the cables of stabilizers the Soviet patriots caused 17 airplane accidents in the air. Underground members of the city of Chernovitsy damaged the machinery of a shoe factory working for the German army, putting sand in the electric motors. At a Nikolayev shipbuilding plant underground members blocked the testing of diesels. In the cast iron shop of that plant the repair of two cranes continued to 5 to 8 months instead of the 12 days called for by the norms, due to sabotage. A 60-ton hammer in the pressing shop was in repair for 6 months, although according to the norm 20 days were required. The repair of a crane for shipbuilding in building slips lasted 6 months instead of one.[1] In railroad transportation workers and employees extended the time for formation of trains, repair of locomotives and rolling stock, deliberately set fire to fuel, put locomotives out of operation, and disrupted communications, in order to decrease the throughput of the railroads. /489

Thus the measures of the Communist Party and the accumulated experience of struggle in the enemy's rear ensured close cooperation by partisan formations with the Red Army, and enabled the partisans and underground to concentrate their attention on rendering it effective assistance. The Party organizations of partisan formations and the underground maintained the high morale of partisans and underground members and raised hundreds of thousands of inhabitants to the active struggle with the Hitlerite invaders. The help of the population promoted the successful operations of the partisans

[1] Party Archives of the Inst. of Party History of the CC CP of the Ukraine, col. 1, inv. 9a, div. 61, p. 62; div. 44, p. 9; div. 114, p. 36.

and the advance of the Soviet troops. The Party organizations led the struggle of the partisans and underground to save Soviet people from being driven away to fascist slavery, and to save national treasures from destruction by the enemy. Later this promoted the rapid restoration of the war-ruined national economy in the liberated areas.

3. Assistance to the partisan movement of the countries of Europe

In 1944 the military operations of the partisans in the territory of the USSR ended. After meeting the Red Army a large number of the partisans merged into its ranks, but on the orders of the Communist Party many Soviet partisan formations continued military operations against the fascists beyond the borders of our Motherland. Fulfilling their international duty, they rendered great assistance to the workers of Central and South-eastern Europe in their struggle for liberation (map 20).

The outstanding victories of the Red Army over the German fascist invaders were a very important factor in intensifying the antifascist movement in the occupied countries, especially in Central and Southeastern Europe. In 1944 this movement rose to a new, higher level and almost everywhere took on the nature of an armed struggle. However, a shortage of experienced command cadres, weapons and ammunition held back the broad development of the partisan movement in these countries. Therefore the aid of the Soviet Union in organizing the partisan movement and also in supplying the partisan formations with arms and ammunition acquired enormous importance. On the request of representatives of the antifascist organizations, Communist and worker's parties of Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Rumania and Bulgaria, national cadres of partisan commanders were trained in the USSR, then airlifted to those countries. Our aircraft delivered to them weapons, ammunition, communications equipment and medical supplies. In addition, the Soviet Union sent its own experienced partisan commanders, and in some cases partisan formations as well.

In 1944, in connection with the approach of the front line to the national borders of the Soviet Union, aid to foreign partisans increased. On the request of progressive Polish emigres several partisan formations, well-supplied with arms, ammunition and mine and demolition equipment, were formed from Poles located in Ukrainian and Belorussian partisan formations as early as autumn of 1943. In April 1944 the Polish Headquarters of the Partisan Movement (PHQPM) was formed to lead all Polish detachments and formations. Three partisan formations and one detachment, numbering 1,863 persons, were transferred to its subordination.[1] Attached to the headquarters was a school for training partisan cadres, where on July 1, 1944 /490 over 1,500 Polish patriots were studying. To help the PHQPM the Central Committee of the CP(b) of the Ukraine designated 30 experienced workers from the composition of the Ukrainian Headquarters of the Partisan Movement, including radio operators, cipher clerks, and mine and demolition specialists. The Headquarters received for its disposal 40 trucks and 13 automobiles,

[1] Party Archives of the Inst. of Party History of the CC CP of the Ukraine, col. 62, inv. 1, div. 1, p. 113.

5 airplanes, and a large quantity of weapons, ammunition, and other material resources.[1] The Ukrainian Headquarters of the Partisan Movement continued to offer assistance to its Polish comrades even after the PHQPM was fully staffed. Experienced Soviet partisan commanders systematically conducted classes with the trainees of the Polish partisan school.

Thanks to the support of the Soviet Union many Polish partisan detachments formed in the western regions of the Ukraine and Belorussia soon came out to the territory of Poland and merged with the People's Army. In the beginning of 1944, after the establishment of radio contact with the command group of the People's Army, supply of the Polish patriots with weapons and ammunition considerably improved.[2]

In the spring of 1944 over ten formations and detachments of Soviet partisans were operating in Poland.[3] They quickly established contact with Polish patriots and began an active struggle, striking strong blows on the enemy's rear services. By their military operations these detachments promoted the activation of the partisan struggle in the eastern areas of Poland.

The military operations of the Soviet partisans were, as a rule, conducted in close cooperation with detachments of the People's Army. In June seven Soviet partisan detachments, three brigades of the Polish partisans and a Polish-Soviet detachment, having 3,000 persons in their composition, were surrounded by German fascist troops in the Lipsk and Janow forests of the Lublin voivodeship. The Hitlerites threw against them two infantry divisions and several cavalry units supported by artillery, tanks and aircraft. Creating a tenfold superiority in men and an overwhelming superiority in equipment, the enemy anticipated a rapid and easy victory.

---

[1] Party Archives of the Inst. of Party History of the CC CP of the Ukraine, col. 1, inv. 14, div. 1665, pp. 20-21.

[2] See W. Tuszyński. Partisan Warfare in the Forests of Lipsko, Janow, and Puszca Solska, pp. 38, 41.

[3] See Chapter 8, p. 232.

An exceptionally difficult situation had formed for the partisans. But their spirits did not fall. In the hour of terrible danger the Polish and Soviet partisans united their forces, and on the night of June 15 breached the enemy's ring and broke through to Solskie puszcza, evacuating all of the wounded. An attempt by the Hitlerites to encircle them again and destroy them suffered failure. By the evening of June 23 the partisans broke out of the encirclement and unleashed their blows on the enemy's rear services in other areas. During these battles our fliers rendered great assistance to the Soviet and Polish detachments, dropping ammunition, weapons, and provisions to them and evacuating the seriously wounded.[1]

In June 1944 representatives of the Communist Parties of Czechoslovakia, Rumania and Hungary turned to the Central Committee of the CP(b) of the Ukraine with a request for help to better organize the partisan movement in the territory of those countries. The CC CP(b)Ukr responded to this request. On its instructions the Ukrainian Headquarters of the partisan movement developed a plan of practical measures. A large role was played by training national partisan cadres. With this purpose, in July 1944 representatives of the Communist Parties selected 400 persons from among the Hungarians, Rumanians and Czechoslovaks in the territory of the USSR, who underwent special training in sessions led by experienced Soviet partisan commanders. Organizational detachments were formed from the trainees, which were led by commanders of the corresponding nationality. Commanders were nominated and approved by representatives of the Communist Parties. To help the local partisans these detachments included experienced /491 Soviet partisans in the capacities of headquarters workers, mine specialist instructors, radio operators and doctors. By August 10, 12 organizational detachments had been airlifted to Czechoslovakia, 8 to Hungary, and 7 to Rumania.[2] The airlift also continued after that.

---

[1] See W. Tuszynski. Partisan Warfare in the Forests of Lipsko, Janow, and Puszcza Solska, pp. 42-50, 68-83.

[2] Party Archive of the Inst. of Party History of the CC CP of the Ukraine, col. 1, inv. 14, div. 896, pp 6-8.

The organizational detachments exerted a great influence on the development of the partisan movement in these countries. They played an especially important part in Czechoslovakia, where due to the local population they quickly grew into large military units.[1] By the beginning of October 1944 in the territory of Czechoslovakia and Hungary 10 partisan formations and 32 independent detachments numbering 17,000 persons were in operation.[2]

The command group of the Red Army designated 30 transport airplanes, which airlifted men, arms and ammunition. In October and November alone the air force delivered approximately 35 tons of military cargos to the Czechoslovak partisans.[3]

The help rendered by the Soviet Union to the partisan movement in Czechoslovakia was highly regarded by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. K. Gottwald wrote to N. S. Khrushchev, "Permit me, in the name of the CC CP of Czechoslovakia, to relay to you fervent gratitude for the great and effective assistance that you have rendered us in the organization and development of the partisan movement in the territory of Czechoslovakia... These great results of your help will go down in the history of the struggle for the liberation of Czechoslovakia."[4]

On the request of representatives of the Balkan countries the Soviet Union offered great support to the people's liberation armies and partisan detachments fighting there. They delivered valuable cargos to them in transport aircraft of the military and civilian air force. In 1944 the aircraft of the USSR Civil Air Force alone completed 972 airplane flights, including 387 with a landing. Over 3,750 Yugoslav, Greek, and Albanian antifascists and Soviet specialists and over 1,000 tons of various cargos were airlifted behind enemy lines.[5]

---

[1] See Chapter 11, p. 316.

[2] Party Archives of the Inst. of Party History of the CC CP of the Ukraine, col. 62, inv. 62-1, div. 96, p. 68.

[3] Ibid, pp. 60-68.

[4] Ibid, col. 1, inv. 14, div. 896, p. 9.

[5] Archive CAF, col. 4, inv. 17, div. 361, pp. 50-58.

At the decisive moment of preparation of the Bulgarian people for an armed rebellion a large part was played by the Soviet weapons that were airlifted at the end of August 1944 by our pilots to Yugoslav partisan airfields located near the Bulgarian border. These weapons were received by 10,000 Bulgarian and Yugoslav partisans.[1]

In many countries of Europe Soviet people who had escaped from prisoner of war camps or forced labor participated in the partisan movement. "There are many cases," the Plenipotentiary of the USSR Council of People's Commissars on the matter of repatriation of Soviet citizens from Germany and the countries it had occupied, Col. Gen. F. I. Golikov, said in an interview, "testifying to the fact that thousands of Soviet people in German captivity fought heroically against the enemy. Thus, for example, it is known that in the territory of France a large number of Russians, Georgians, Armenians, Tadzhiks, Tatars, Ukrainians, Belorussians - former Red Army soldiers and officers, who had been taken prisoner by the Germans and driven by them to the territory of France, rebelled against the German command, and with guns in hand joined the French partisans in entire groups and subunits, and actively participated in the liberation of France and Belgium from the Germans. The Motherland can be rightly proud of such sons."[2]

In France and Italy, in Belgium, Holland and Norway, in Yugoslavia and Greece, Soviet people fought heroically with the enemy, displaying models of selfless courage and great military skill.

In the beginning of 1944 in the territory of France there were approx- /492
imately 25,000 citizens of the USSR. These were people who had escaped from German camps for prisoners of war, those driven away by Hitlerites to forced labor, or who had entered that country for other reasons.

---

[1] Archive of the Museum of the Bulgarian Revolutionary Movement, inv. #612, p. 19.

[2] "Pravda," November 11, 1944.

The Central Committee of Soviet Prisoners (CCSP), which was formed at the end of November 1943 and located in Paris, conducted work among the prisoners of war, drawing them into the partisan detachments. The Committee maintained close contact with the CC of the French Communist Party through its plenipotentiary, G. Laroche. Thanks to the great political work of the CCSP, hundreds of Soviet people took the path of armed struggle. By 1944 over 30 Soviet partisan detachments were operating in France, including /493
"Chapayev," "Kotovskiy," "Rodina," "Donbas," "Svoboda," "Dede," ""Katrin," and others. Many citizens of the USSR fought with the fascists in the composition of French partisan detachments.

To strengthen political work among prisoners of war and increase the scope of the partisan struggle, in May 1944 the CCSP formed constantly operating intercamp committees in the main areas of concentration camps - in Pas de Calais, Nancy, and Paris. Along with the CCSP these committees developed plans, directed the military activity of the partisan detachments, tying them in with the operations of the French partisans, published the newspapers "Sovyetskiy patriot," "Sovyetskiy partizan," "Sovyetskiy vestnik," and issued proclamations and leaflets. Under conditions when other sources of information were little accessible to Soviet people due to their ignorance of the language, the press was of exceptional significance. From the newspapers and leaflets, which were printed on rotary presses as well as typographically, Soviet people learned of the situation at the fronts of the Second World War, and of the outstanding victories of the Red Army over the Hitlerite hordes. This raised their spirit, and instilled in them faith in their rapid liberation and return to the Motherland. The press called on them to enter the partisan detachments and to bring the hour of victory over fascism closer through armed struggle.

In extremely difficult circumstances, not knowing the country, poorly armed Soviet people, like the participants in the French Resistance movement, fought bravely with the Hitlerite invaders. The Soviet patriots understood that in fighting for the freedom of France they were defending

the interests of their socialist Homeland. It was not in vain that the oath taken by citizens of the USSR upon entering the partisan detachments ran: "Fulfilling my duty to the Soviet Motherland, I will also be honest and fair toward the French people, on whose soil I am defending the interests of my Motherland. I will support my French brothers by every means in their struggle against our common enemy, the German occupiers."[1]

The Soviet people kept their solemn oath with honor. Three Soviet partisan detachments operating in the area of Nancy made systematic strikes on the military targets and communications of the enemy. The "Zheleznyak" detachment, in cooperation with a French partisan group, completed an attack on a fascist concentration camp and freed a large group of prisoners. They also routed a battalion of Hitlerite troops taking part in a punitive expedition.[2] The 1st battalion of the Armenian partisan regiment, fighting in the departement of Upper Lozere, in Savines and Gore, destroyed hundreds of German fascist soldiers and officers and much enemy fighting equipment, seizing large trophies. In 1944 the detachment "Parzhskaya Kommuna" conducted 34 military operations, undermining 6 troop trains and destroying many fascist soldiers, officers and fighting equipment.[3] In a surprise attack on Bar-le-Duc the "Svoboda" partisan detachment liberated 47 political prisoners who had been sentenced to death by the German fascist authorities. In February partisans under the leadership of Red Army officer V. V. Porik, who had escaped from captivity, conducted an attack on the guard of a forced labor camp. The bold and audacious attack of the Soviet patriots was crowned with success. The fascists were unable to offer any resistance. Seizing their weapons, the partisans disappeared, suffering no losses. In April the same group opened fire on an enemy column numbering approximately 200 soldiers and officers. In the battle the enemy lost up to 30 men.[4] In northern and northeastern France alone from February through August 1944 the

---

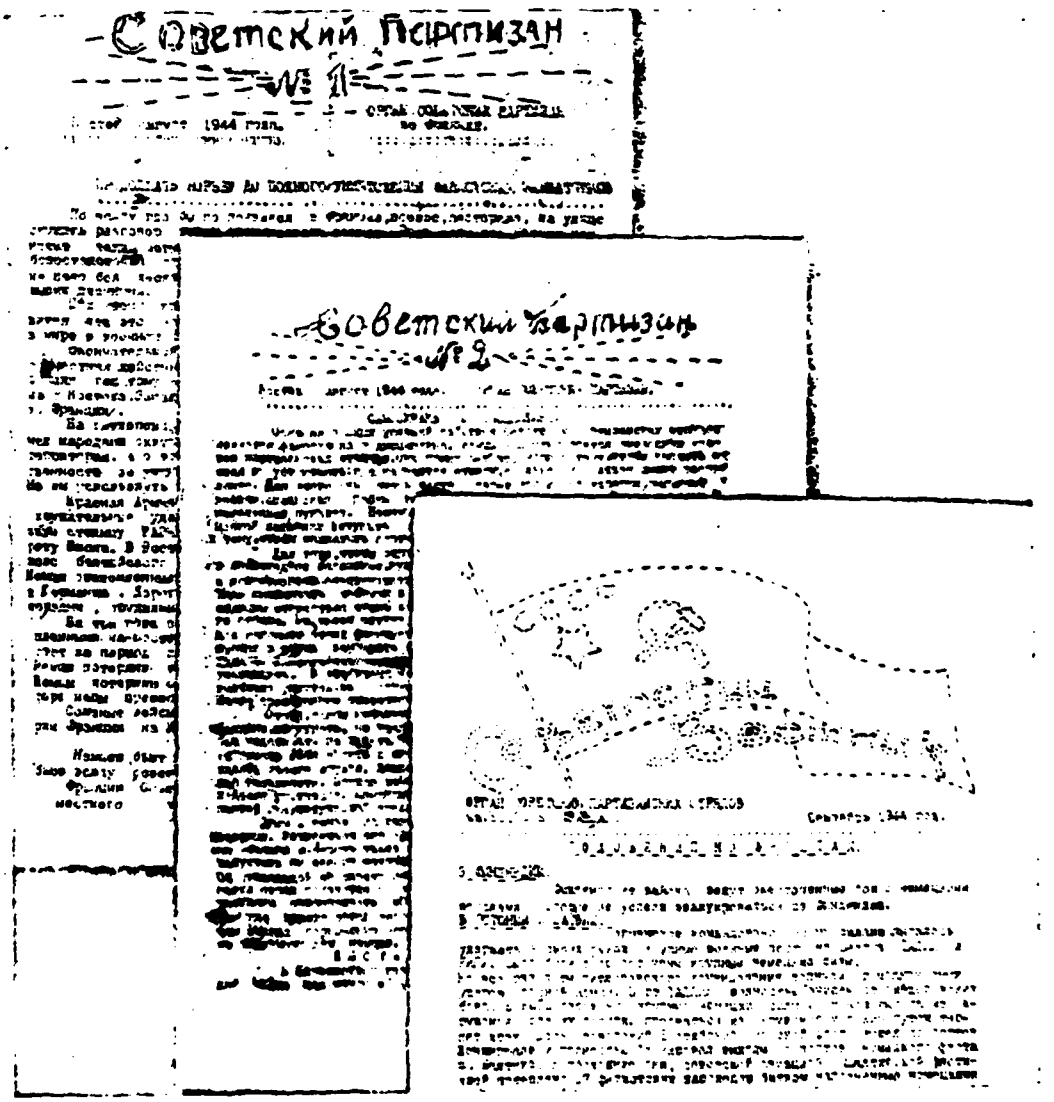
[1] "Voprosy istoriyi," 1960, No. 3, p. 97.

[2] See "Komsomol'skaya Pravda," March 12, 1960; "Sovyetskiy flot," March 24, 1960.

[3] See "Krasnaya Zvezda," March 22, 1960.

[4] See "Krasnaya Zvezda," February 17, 1962.

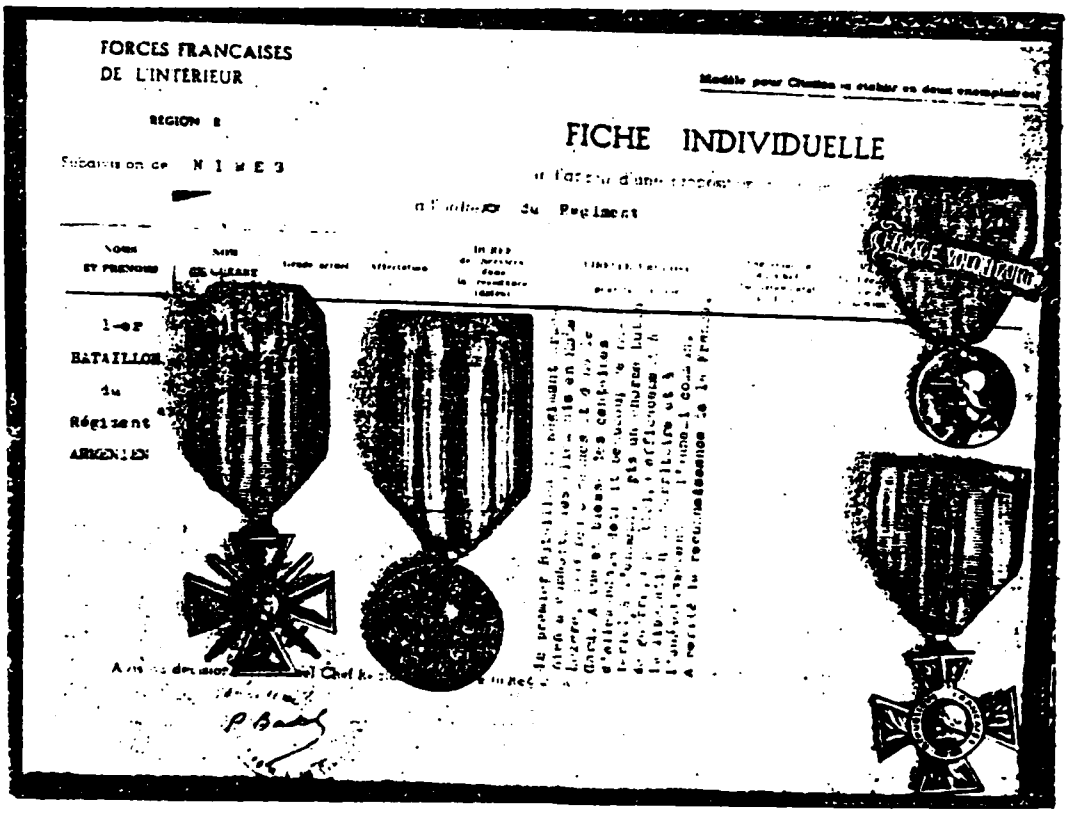
partisans destroyed and damaged 65 railroad trains, 76 locomotives, over 1,000 train cars, 50 automobiles with arms, 9 electrical lines, 3 militarily /494 important bridges, and 90 telegraph and telephone lines, and seized over 100 automobiles, 50 machine guns and 850 submachine guns.[1]



Newspapers issued by Soviet partisans in the territory of France in 1944.

[1] See Gaston Laroche. The Soviets in the French Resistance. "Cahiers du communisme", 1960, No. 3, p. 410.

The Soviet partisans took direct part in the battles to liberate the French capital. In 1944 the Parisians joyfully greeted their liberators in the Champs Elysees. Soviet partisans passed in precise formation along with the partisans of France.


FORCES FRANCAISES
DE L'INTERIEUR

FICHE INDIVIDUELLE

The statement of the command group of the French Internal Armed Forces on the decoration of the 1st battalion of the Armenian partisan regiment with orders and medals.

With their unparalleled heroism, courage and valor the Soviet people won the deep respect of the French people. On September 22, 1944 the newspaper "Liberte" wrote in connection with the death of V. V. Porik that "Lt. Vasiliy - a hero of the Red Army - is one of those who perished so that France might live." Recommending the soldiers of the 1st battalion of the Armenian partisan regiment for decoration with orders, the command group of the French Internal Armed Forces observed that by their active struggle against the occupiers the battalion had earned the gratitude of France.

In the liberation of Belgium the partisan brigade "Za Rodina," formed from Soviet prisoners of war who had escaped from German concentration camps, took active part. In the provinces of Liege and Namur a combined /495
Belgian-Soviet partisan division acquired widespread fame, completing several bold attacks on important enemy targets during his Ardennes offensive.

Soviet prisoners of war who had escaped from concentration camps also fought bravely in Italian detachments. In the province of Modena a battalion of Russian partisans operated. The partisans of the Georgian battalion fighting in the regions of Upper Piedmont displayed examples of valor and heroism in the battle with the German fascist invaders.[1] "It is difficult to say how many Russians there were among the Italian partisans," recalls Bini, one of the leaders of the Italian resistance movement, "but there was no partisan region in Italy that would not preserve in memory, along with 'Katyusha', the favorite song of the Italian partisans, their Mikhails, their Aleksandrs, their Viktors and Grigoriys."[2] Their activity was highly valued by the patriots of Italy. In an address from Italian partisans to Soviet soldier-partisans operating in the area of Reggio nel Emilia on the day of the 27th Anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution, it was said, "On this historic day we particularly wish to express a feeling of deep gratitude to you who, unhesitating, took up weapons to help us in our armed struggle."[3]

The brave sons of the Soviet peoples F.A. Poetan and Mikhti Guseyn-Zade covered themselves and their Motherland with immortal glory. F. A. Poetan, who fought in the composition of the Italian partisan brigade "Oreste," was given the highest award of the Italian republic, the Gold Medal. In the

---

[1] See Pietro Secchia, Chino Moscatelli. Monte Roza spustilas' v Milan. (Monte Rosa descended to Milan.) Iz istorii dvizheniya Soprotivleniya v Italiyi. M., Gospolitizdat, 1961, p. 251, 262.

[2] Bini. Il contributo dei combattenti sovietici nelle file della Resistenza italiana (manoscritto), p. 4.

[3] "Mezhdunarodnaya zhizn'," 1960, No. 1, p. 156.

decree of the Italian government on his decoration it is stated, "Brought to Italy as a Russian prisoner of war, Fedor Poetan escaped from a German concentration camp and joined the partisan movement, to which he was linked by a common belief in the principle of freedom. Himself an example of discipline and courage, knowing that he was going to certain danger, when the partisans were attacked by large enemy forces Fedor Poetan rushed ahead leading a small detachment into the thick of the enemy and opened fire. The attack was so sudden and bold that the enemy became confused and was forced to surrender. The Germans bore heavy losses, and many prisoners were taken. During the heroic episode, which changed the entire course of events on that day, Fedor Poetan died the death of a hero in the name of the ideals of the peoples' liberty."[1]

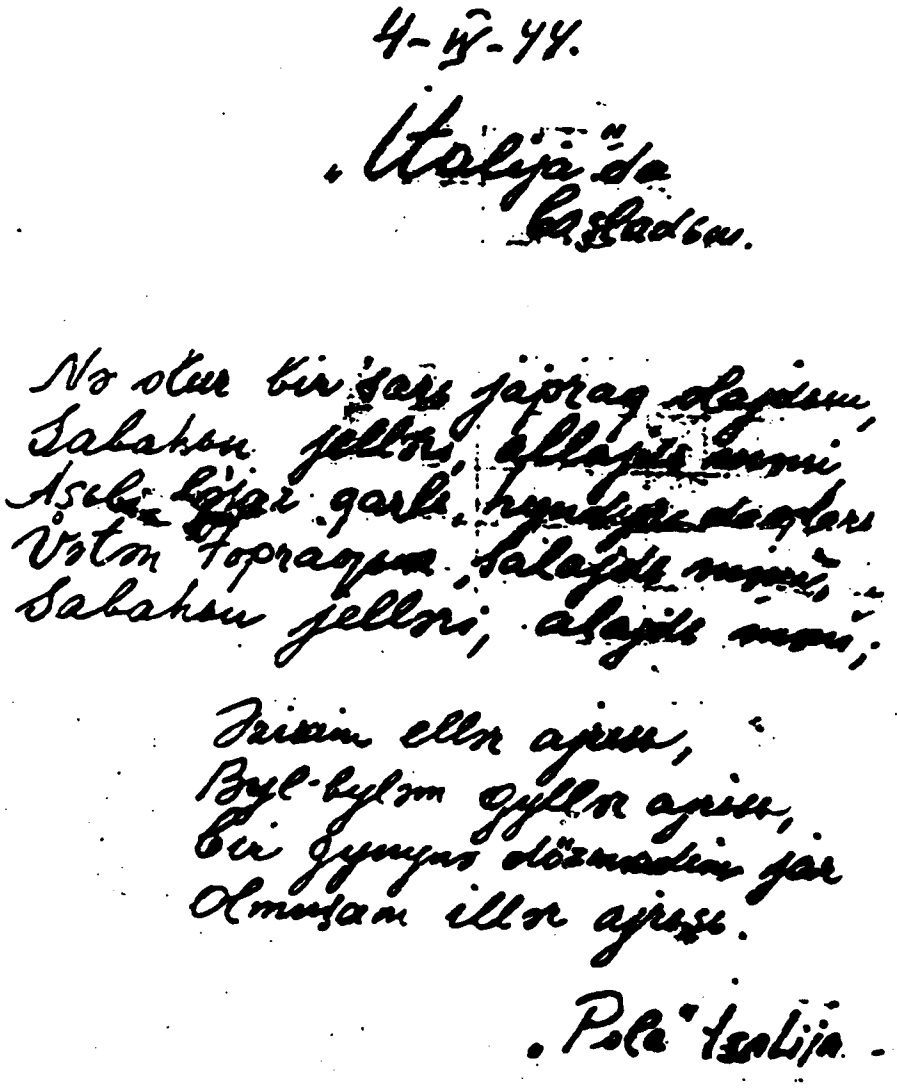
At the meeting place of the Bulgarian, Yugoslav and Greek borders in 1944 a Soviet partisan battalion operated in the Greek partisan movement.

In Yugoslavia a Soviet partisan battalion did battle with the enemy in the composition of the 9th corps of the People's Liberation Army, which was operating in the territory of the Slovenian coastal area. Its nucleus was a group of servicemen who had escaped from captivity. This battalion, the numerical strength of which reached 300 men, was thought by the Hitlerites to be a paratroop unit of the Red Army. For heroism and courage in battles with the fascist invaders the personnel of the battalion received the encouragement of the command group of the Yugoslav army.

The actions of the valiant son of the Azerbajdzhani people, Mekhti Guseyn-Zade, were truly legendary in that battalion. Having been taken prisoner seriously wounded, at the end of 1943 he escaped with a large group of prisoners of war and joined the partisans. M. Guseyn-Zade led a reconnaissance-diversionary group attached to the staff of the 9th corps of the People's Liberation Army of Yugoslavia. Soon the fame of the heroic actions of this group and its commander spread throughout the Adriatic coast.

---

[1] Quot. from "Komsomol'skaya pravda," March 22, 1958.



Verses written by M. Guseyn-Zade, a participant in the Resistance movement in Italy /496

In mid-January 1944 M. Guseyn-Zade and his soldiers captured very important enemy topographical maps. In February, in a German officer's uniform, Mekhti infiltrated German battacks and, placing a mine by the fire extinguishers, blew up the central building. In the city of Udine in Northern Italy

Soviet and local partisans led by Guseyn-Zade made an audacious attack on a fascist prison, freed approximately 700 prisoners, among them 150 Soviet citizens, captured the chief of the prison and delivered him to partisan headquarters. The actions of the partisans were so stunning that in newspapers the attack on the city ostensibly by a whole partisan division /497
numbering about 3,000 persons was reported by the German command group. In April a group of partisans including M. Guseyn-Zade, M. Seydov and others, demolished a cinema and a cafeteria for German officers in Trieste. Approximately 400 Hitlerites were killed or wounded. Later the editorial office and typography of the fascist newspaper "Il Piccolo" were blown up.

The brutalized fascists set a 400,000 lire reward on Mekhti's head. But the courageous partisan could not be caught. In a short time he completed several audacious diversions: he destroyed two military aircraft at a German airfield, and he penetrated a bank, taking and delivering to partisan headquarters a million Italian lire. In November 1944, returning from his most recent assignment, M. Guseyn-Zade fell into a fascist ambush. The hero fought until the last possible moment. In order not to be taken alive by the fascists he fired the last bullet into his own heart.

Fighting the fascists in far Italy, M. Guseyn-Zade always remembered his Homeland. In a poem, a facsimile of which is presented above, he recalled his dear Motherland with great warmth:

I wished to become a crimson autumn leaf,
So a gust of wind would seize me,
And lifting me above the trees, above the snowy crest,
Would put me down in my native land...

The Soviet people highly valued the service of their renowned son. He was awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union.

Soviet partisans fighting in the territory of the countries of Western Europe enjoyed the boundless moral and material support of the workers of those countries. Soviet people in Hitlerite concentration camps, working

in factories, plants and mines in the territory of France, Belgium, Holland, Norway, Italy and other countries received the same support. Thanks to this many citizens of the USSR, languishing in fascist captivity, were saved from death and were able once again to take active part in the struggle of freedom-loving peoples.

Soviet people recall with exceptional warmth their French, Belgian, Dutch, Norwegian and Italian friends, who helped them to escape from fascist forced labor and join the active war against the Hitlerite oppressors. Thus B. N. Starikov, escaping from forced labor in France, tells what enormous support the French peasants gave him. They hid him from the fascist authorities, fed and dressed him and helped him to reach the partisan detachments of the Jura and Doubs departements. In May and June 1944 B. Starikov took part in battles with the German fascist invaders, commanding a battle group of one of the partisan detachments. The commander of a partisan detachment that fought in Belgium, N. S. Zubarev, particularly stresses in his memoirs that throughout his entire stay in that country he was not aware of a single case of betrayal of Soviet people by local inhabitants.

The help of the USSR to the partisan movement in the countries of Europe had great military importance. The victories of the Soviet Union, its direct support of the Resistance movement, inspired millions of simple people to join the struggle against fascism, instilled in them faith in their own strength. "The Italian partisans, all Italian democrats," writes the leader of the Ganisti (city partisans) of Milan and Turin, D. Pesce, "followed the operations of the valiant Red Army and all of the peoples of the Soviet Union with a sincere feeling of empathy. Their heroic feats lit a fire in the hearts of our soldiers."[1]

The great organizational and mass political work of the Communist Party promoted the strengthening of the Soviet people's struggle in /498

[1] Giovanni Pesce. Soldaty bez formy. (Soldiers without a uniform.) M., Voyenizdat, 1959, p. 62.

the enemy's rear. The measures carried out by the CC AUCP(b) and CC of the Communist Parties of the union republics ensured the further consolidation of the Party organizations of the partisan formations and underground, the higher level of their political work among the population of as yet unliberated areas. This led in 1944 to the expansion of the zones of activity of the partisan struggle. The supply of the partisans and underground workers with arms, ammunition, and provisions, as well as resources for conducting mass propaganda work in the occupied territory, was greatly improved.

A major place in the partisan movement and in the activity of the underground in 1944 was occupied by the armed struggle. The avengers of the people inflicted great damage on the enemy, weakened his rear, and thwarted attempts to exploit the human resources and material treasures of the occupied areas to reinforce the war-economic potential of Germany.

The characteristic features of the partisan war in 1944 were closer in operational and tactical cooperation than in previous years of the partisan detachments and formations with the troops of the Red Army, the expansion of reconnaissance activity in the interests of the Soviet Armed Forces, and raids by large partisan formations on the rear services of retreating enemy groupings.

Fulfilling their international duty, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union rendered great assistance to the peoples of Central and Southeastern Europe in their liberation struggle against the fascist invaders. On the instructions of the Party many Soviet partisan formations moved their military operations outside the boundaries of the Motherland. Organizational groups consisting of experienced partisans were transferred to Czechoslovakia, Poland and other countries. Foreign partisans received weapons, ammunition, and equipment from the Soviet Union. Thousands of Soviet patriots, who had escaped from captivity or fascist forced labor, fought heroically in the partisan ranks of many countries of Europe. The brotherly aid of the Soviet Union played a significant role in the struggle of the peoples of Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Albania, Greece, Bulgaria and Hungary for freedom and independence.

THE RESULTS OF THE MILITARY OPERATIONS OF THE RED ARMY IN THE SUMMER-FALL CAMPAIGN OF 1944

/499

The summer-fall campaign of the Soviet Armed Forces in 1944 occupies an outstanding place in the history of the Great Patriotic War as one of the most significant in itspolitical and military results. Completing the liberation of Soviet soil from the German fascist invaders, the Red Army totally achieved the extremely important political objective assigned it by the Communist Party and the Soviet government. The state border of the USSR, perfidiously violated by the Hitlerites in June 1941, was restored along its entire length from the Barents Sea to the Black Sea. In the summer-fall campaign the Red Army liberated approximately 600,000 square kilometers of Soviet territory from the occupiers, in which before the war approximately 20 million persons lived.[1] In all in the course of the campaign

[1] According to data of the CSD (Central Statistical Directorate) of the USSR. IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #9605, p. 39.

in 1944 906,000 square kilometers of Soviet soil where approximately 39 million persons lived and worked before the war were cleared of the enemy. If one considers that in the course of war the troops of fascist Germany and its satellites temporarily occupied 1,926,000 square kilometers of the territory of the USSR, the population of which before the war was approximately 85 million persons, it is seen that in 1944 46 percent of the territory subjected to occupation was liberated.

With the enormous sympathy and active support of the workers of the countries of Europe, in the summer of 1944 the Soviet Armed Forces began to fulfill the next important task - to render assistance to the peoples of Southeastern Europe and Central Europe in their liberation struggle. The Communist Party proceeded in this from the well-known position of V. I. Lenin on the international obligation of a socialist state, and on the liberating mission of its armed forces. The Hitlerite invaders were driven out of Rumania, Bulgaria, a considerable part of Poland, and a large part of Hungary. The Red Army entered the territory of Czechoslovakia, taking liberation to its people. The Soviet troops, cooperating with the People's Liberation Army of Yugoslavia, cleared the eastern regions of that country of the German fascist oppressors. Under the direct effect of the Red Army's victories and under the blows of the people's armies of Albania and Greece the oppressors were forced in the fall of 1944 to leave those countries. The Red Army brilliantly justified the hopes placed on the Soviet Union as their liberator and friend by the peoples of Europe who had suffered under the Hitlerite yoke.

Taking the war to the borders of Germany and into the territory of its vassal countries was the most important military-political result of the summer-fall campaign of the third period of the Great Patriotic War. The /500
blows struck by the Red Army on the Hitlerite Wehrmacht brought the coalition of fascist powers to ruin. The victories of the Soviet forces not only put an end to the participation of Rumania, Bulgaria and Hungary in the aggressive, unjust war. They promoted the active inclusion of the peoples of those countries with the support of the USSR in the struggle against Germany, with the armed forces of Rumania and Bulgaria, starting in September 1944,

conducting military operations shoulder to shoulder with the Red Army against the German fascist forces.

In the summer-fall campaign the Red Army thwarted the foreign policy plans of the high Hitlerite circles. Their calculations on stopping the Soviet Armed Forces far from the borders of Poland and their satellites collapsed. Fascist Germany lost its European allies and found itself in a position of international isolation. Nor were the hopes of the Hitlerites for a clash within the antifascist coalition justified. ..

The defeats suffered by the German fascist army on the Eastern front in the summer and fall of 1944 sharply worsened the internal position of Germany. With the liberation of the Soviet Baltic region, Belorussia, the western regions of the Ukraine and Moldavia by the Red Army the German fascists were deprived of the opportunity to shamelessly plunder these expansive regions and satisfy at their expense the economic needs of their armed forces and rear. After the occupiers were driven out of the countries of Southeastern Europe, Germany could no longer barbarously exploit the human, industrial, agricultural and other resources of these countries for the conduct of the war. Rumanian oil, Hungarian bauxite and nickel from Pechenga stopped arriving at German plants. The appearance of Soviet troops in the Balkans forced the ruling circles of Turkey to finally refuse to supply Germany with strategic raw materials. The breakthrough of the Red Army by the end of 1944 to the border of Austria and Czechoslovakia and the entrance into East Prussia placed the German war industry in those regions under threat.

The armed forces of fascist Germany suffered colossal losses in the summer-fall campaign of 1944. All army groups - "North," "Centre," "North Ukraine" ("A"), "South Ukraine" ("South")- were subjected to crushing defeat. A considerable part of their forces were surrounded and either destroyed or taken prisoner. The remaining segment of army group "North" was blockaded by the Soviet troops in Kurland. In all during this campaign the Armed Forces of the USSR totally destroyed or captured 96 divisions and 24 brigades and routed 219 divisions and 22 brigades, 33 divisions, and 17 brigades,

bore such heavy losses that they were disbanded.[1] The German fascist army lost 1,600,000 men, 6,700 tanks, 28,000 guns and mortars, and over 12,000 airplanes in the summer-fall campaign.[2]

The defeats and enormous losses of the vaunted Wehrmacht at the Soviet-German front opened the eyes of the German people to Germany's true position. Although the Hitlerite clique still held the population and army in obedience, no vain attempts of Goebbels' propaganda could hide from the German workers the fact that the territory of their country had become the theater of military operations.

The growing economic might of the USSR, the gigantic victories of the Red Army, and Leninist foreign policy toward the peoples who were liberated from the fascist yoke caused warm feelings of empathy and support toward the Soviet Union by the national masses of the European countries. The most important result of the summer-fall campaign of 1944 was a further increase in the international authority of the Soviet Union, the consolidation of the /501 coalition of antifascist states. In the second half of 1944 the coordinated military operations of the participants in the coalition had the most effective results. The opening of the second front meant victory for the common cause of the antifascist coalition. Thanks to the victories of the Armed Forces of the USSR a further expansion of the coalition occurred - it was joined by Rumania, Bulgaria and Hungary.

The rapid advance of the Red Army in the summer and fall of 1944 on the southern sector of the Soviet-German front conclusively buried the intentions of the British reactionary circles to forestall the Soviet forces in their breakthrough to the Balkans. Their plans of armed intervention in the countries of Southeastern Europe collapsed (with the exception of Greece). The Red Army and the forces of democracy thwarted the plans of the American

---

[1] Col. mats. on the comp. of forces of fascist Germany, 4th ed., pp. 98-214; 5th ed., pp. 20-42. The total number of losses does not include the losses of army group "South" for the period from January 1 through February 15, 1945.

[2] IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #17936, p. 744.

imperialists to bring their troops into Rumania, Bulgaria, Hungary and Yugoslavia, establish antinational regimes in those countries and turn them into satellites of Washington and London.

The entrance of Soviet troops into the territory of the countries of Southeastern Europe restrained the internal reactionary forces there that were attempting to preserve old social orders. The victory of the Red Army over Rumania, Bulgaria and Hungary deprived the internal reaction of these countries of their last opportunity to use their main support - the army - in the struggle against the workers. The presence of the Red Army in the territory of the countries it liberated had enormous revolutionary significance for them, as it created favorable circumstances for the strengthening of the democratic forces. The popular masses of Poland, Czechoslovakia, Rumania and Hungary, led by Communist and worker's parties, began a struggle to create new social and governmental orders based on the principles of people's democracy.

The victories of the Armed Forces of the USSR in the summer-fall campaign of 1944 sharply altered the strategic situation on the Soviet-German front. As the result of the thrust of our troops in Belorussia and in the western regions of the Ukraine that merged with it, a large number of Soviet combined-arms, tank and airborne armies as well as reinforcement means were moved out to the eastern and southeastern borders of East Prussia, into Eastern Poland, to the bank of the Vistula. These forces found themselves on the shortest paths to the central regions of Germany and to its heart - Berlin. The subsequent blows of our troops in the Baltic region and south of the Carpathians led to the rout of the enemy in these areas as well. As a result of the catastrophic defeat of the German fascist forces in the south, the people's liberation armies of Yugoslavia, Greece and Albania received the opportunity to cooperate with the Red Army on the left flank of its strategic front and conduct still more active operations against the occupiers in the territory of their countries. Thus by the end of the summer-fall campaign the Red Army had seized very advantageous strategic lines to strike the final blows on Germany from the northeast, east and southeast.

The operations conducted in 1944 were a new stage in the development of Soviet strategy. The experience accumulated by Headquarters in the previous years of centralized control of the armed conflict allowed them during the summer-fall campaign to organize ever more precise cooperation of the fronts and branches of the Armed Forces. In the second half of 1944 Headquarters of the Supreme High Command applied a system of successive blows on the enemy at different, often very distant sectors of the front, more fully than in any other campaign before that. The political and strategic goals of this campaign were achieved by conduct of a group of operations by a group of fronts, or less often by several operations by a group of fronts, or less often by one front. Blows were executed in the summer and fall of 1944 in the Western and Southwestern theaters of military operations the dependence of one operation on another, their interconditionality, was shown especially clearly. Each of them not only led to an alteration in the strategic situation or large political changes in a given region, but it also created favorable conditions for inflicting strikes in other directions or even in other theaters of military operations. /502

In the summer-fall campaign the Soviet Armed Forces conducted military operations on their own soil and in the territory of eight foreign countries. The offensive was conducted on the entire Soviet-German front - from the Barents to the Black Sea. The depth of our forces' progress reached unprecedented scale. For example, in the Southwestern theater of military operations it was over 1,200 kilometers. The speed of the Red Army's advance was great. Thus, in certain operations it ranged from 15-20 to 30-35 kilometers per day.

Greater skill in the handling of troops made it possible in many operations of the summer-fall campaign to achieve encirclement of the enemy's forces. This campaign stands out from all of the campaigns of the Great Patriotic War in that in it the greatest number of encirclements of large enemy groupings were effected: at Vitebsk, Bobruisk, Minsk, Brody, Kishinev, and Budapest. The length of time to liquidate the encircled enemy was

shortened. While at Stalingrad, for example, over two months were required for this, east of Minsk seven days were needed, and at Kishinev five days on the whole. Great progress was also achieved in the development of means of forming the outer perimeter of encirclement. Only west of Budapest did the Soviet troops go over to defensive operations on the outer perimeter. In the remaining cases the troops located on the outer perimeter of encirclement continued their rapid advance and thereby ensured to the troops of the inner perimeter better conditions for the liquidation of the encircled enemy grouping.

An enormous role in the achievement of such brilliant results in the encirclement operations belonged to the armored and mechanized troops. Tank armies, detached tank and mechanized corps, as a rule, were designated for development of operations after breaching the enemy's defense, for pursuit and encirclement of his groupings, and for battle with approaching enemy reserves. Bringing the tank armies into the battle and their rapid progress to the depth of the enemy's defense with the goal of seizing important operative or strategic targets were the main task. This rich experience can be used with success by highly mobile ground forces in a modern war.

Supplying the Red Army with constantly improving fighting equipment greatly improved its offensive capabilities in 1944. The operations took on still greater scope and were distinguished by the decisiveness of their aims. Increasing the effectiveness of a fire strike by artillery, tanks and aircraft made it possible to breach the enemy defense at high speed, and rapidly bringing large masses of mobile troops into battle made it possible to rapidly develop the success achieved, pursue and rout the enemy. A characteristic feature of the tactics of the Soviet troops in many operations of the summer-fall campaign was breaching the enemy's main zone of defense without a pause on the first day of the operation. Neither the rain and thick mud in the summer and fall of 1944, nor the water obstacles and complex mountain relief of the Carpathians, nor the difficult conditions of the Arctic, could stop the Red Army.

Thus the operative skill and tactics of the Soviet Armed Forces responded to the problems of strategy, which led to the achievement of the campaign's

goals. It should, however, be noted, that in certain operations the fronts did not achieve all of the objectives assigned them. These operations include: the advance of the 2nd Baltic front in January-February; the Proskurov-Chernovitsa operation of the 1st Ukrainian front in March-April; the advance of the Western front in the central sector in January-April; the Riga operation of the 2nd and 3rd Baltic fronts in September-October.

The achievement of major victories by the Red Army in 1944 became possible thanks to the great patriotic upsurge and military skill of the soldiers. The enemy hoped that when the war was moved onto the territory of foreign countries the morale of the Red Army's personnel would drop. /503
But his calculations failed. Inspired by the human ideas of the liberation struggle, the Soviet troops were filled with the inflexible resolve to overcome all difficulties on the road of battle. They revealed truly mass heroism. During the period of the two campaigns of 1944 the number of servicemen decorated in the army and the navy increased twofold, reaching 3 million. The number of Heroes of the Soviet Union - the finest sons and daughters of our Motherland - increased almost twofold. In 1944 the famous fighter pilot, two-time Hero of the Soviet Union A. I. Pokrushkin, was awarded his third "Gold Star" medal, and twenty other Heroes of the Soviet Union were awarded their second "Gold Star" medal. In the same year Cols. I. N. Boyko, A. V. Vorozheykin, S. F. Shutov and I. I. Yakubovskiy and Capt. 3rd Rank A. O. Shabalin were twice decorated with this highest military award.

The gigantic scale of the armed conflict in 1944 demanded that the Red Army effect great shipments. While in 1943 the total volume of centralized supply shipments was 1,164,000 cars, in 1944 it reached 1,465,000 cars.[1] During that year approximately 118,000 cars of ammunition alone were unloaded.[2] Automobile transportation completed a huge amount of work. Fifty percent of the cargos shipped during the entire war were shipped in 1944. The Red Army expended over 3.8 million tons of fuel in 1944, as opposed to 3.2 million tons in 1943, which comprised approximately 30 percent of the fuel expended

[1] Archives of MD USSR, col. 67, inv. 267215, div. 677, p. 3.
[2] Ibid, col. 81, inv. 119120, div. 7, p. 160.

throughout the entire war.[1] Military medical services dealt well with their assignments

The battles in the campaigns of 1944 confirmed that the Red Army had grown into a terrible force, exceeding the enemy in all respects. In 1944 it inflicted major defeats on fascist Germany and the armies of its satellites. During both campaigns 126 divisions and 25 brigades were totally destroyed or taken prisoner, and 361 divisions and 27 brigades were routed, of which 47 divisions and 20 brigades bore such losses that they were disbanded.[2] These losses comprised approximately 65 percent of the total quantity of enemy divisions and brigades destroyed, captured and routed on the Soviet-German front in the offensive campaigns of 1941-1944.[3] Such losses could not be made up. The chief of the general staff of the German ground forces, Col. Gen. Guderian, was forced to admit in a document on casualties of November 2, 1944, "Heavy losses in August-October 1944 led to a much more acute situation with the personnel in the active ground army."[4] These data are also presented in the document: in August, September and October losses of ground forces on the Eastern front were 672,000 men, and at the same time troops received 201,000 reinforcement troops (including those who had recovered from wounds), including a battalion of marine infantry. Thus the numerical composition of the Eastern front for only three months decreased by almost 500,000 men.[5] "After the losses borne in the summer-fall campaign of 1944," admits K. Tippelskirch, "and after the Allies succeeded in effecting the invasion, no prerequisites at all for successful conduct of even defensive operations remained for the German army... The general situation in all theaters of the war approached that which had developed in the beginning of June 1940 in France: in the military respect it was irreparable."[6] The successful military operations of our /504

---

[1] See M. M. Kormilitsyn. Slushba snabzheniya goryuchim v Velikoy Otechestvennoy Voyne. (Fuel supply service in the Great Patriotic War.) M., Voyenizdat, 1960, pp. 118-119.

[2] Col. Mats. on the comp. of forces of fascist German, 4th ed., pp. 8-82, 98-214; 5th ed., pp. 20-42. It should be borne in mind that in the course of both campaigns many enemy divisions were subjected to defeat several times.

[3] IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #17936, p. 918.

[4] Defeat of German imperialism in the second World War, p. 260.

[5] Ibid, p. 262.

[6] Results of the Second World War. Col. arts. M., Izd-vo instr. lit., 1957, 87.

troops in the campaigns of 1944 played a decisive role in the final rout of the German fascist armed forces in 1945 and predetermined the outcome of the Second World War.

The vast scope of the military operations that unfolded from sea to sea demanded skillful leadership on the part of the Supreme High Command, the command groups of the fronts and fleets, and the commanders of the Armed Services and branches of service, capable use of colossal masses of fighting technology and means of material supply. Much creative initiative was contributed to executing the plans of Headquarters by the command group of the fronts, fleets and armies. In the campaigns of 1944 the eminent Soviet generals L. A. Govorov, I. S. Konyev, R. Ya. Malinovskiy, K. A. Meretskov, K. K. Rokossovskiy and F. I. Tolbukhin received the title of Marshal of the Soviet Union for their skillful guidance of the operations of their troops. The title of Admiral of the Fleet was awarded to I. S. Isakov, of Chief Marshal of Artillery to N. N. Voronov, and Chief Marshal of the Air Force to A. [illegible] Golovanov and A. A. Novikov. Such eminent military leaders as F. A. Astakhov, M. P. Vorob'yev, G. A. Vorozheykin, S. F. Zhavoronkov, I. T. Peresypkin, P. A. Rotmistrov, N. S. Skripko, F. Ya. Falaleyev, Ya. N. Fedorenko, S. A. Khudyakov, M. N. Chistyakov and N. D. Yakovlyev received the title of Marshal of Arm.

The historic victories of the Red Army in 1944 were the natural consequence of the great heroism, fiery patriotism and military ability of the soldiers, officers and generals at the front, and also of the selfless labor of Soviet people at the rear. Ideological and political educational work in the country and in the army was raised to a higher level. Inspired and guided by the Communist Party, the working class, kolkhoz peasantry and Soviet intelligentsia supplied the Armed Forces of the country with everything necessary to rout the enemy.

PART 3

MILITARY-POLITICAL EVENTS IN OTHER THEATERS OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR

CHAPTER 17

THE EXPULSION OF THE FASCIST OCCUPIERS FROM CENTRAL ITALY, FRANCE AND BELGIUM

1. Plans of the American-British command group for 1944. Military operations in Italy.

The military-political situation in Europe by the beginning of 1944 /507
was characterized above all by the victories of the Soviet Armed Forces and the broad scope of the national liberation struggle of the peoples of the European countries against the fascist occupiers. The final consolidation of strategic initiative with the Red Army means the transfer of initiative to the armed forces of the entire antifascist coalition. The successful military operations of the Soviet troops created exceptionally favorable conditions for the United States of America and England to conduct the war

in Europe, enabling them to prepare armies, and accumulate material resources for an invasion of the continent. The plans for such an invasion were worked out for a long time. Even in August 1943 in Quebec (Canada) a conference was held of the heads of government and the chiefs of staff of the USA and England. At it a plan for the further conduct of the war was accepted, calling for the execution of operations in Western, Southern and Southeastern Europe.

Operation "Overlord" was recognized as the most important. The Allies pursued the goal of forcing the English Channel, seizing a beachhead in Northern France and expanding it to such dimensions as to have the opportunity to concentrate and deploy the necessary forces for a further advance to the borders of Germany (maps 21 and 22). The operation was set to begin in the first days of May 1944. To divert the enemy's forces from Northwestern France it was planned to execute an auxiliary operation, "Anvil," in Southern France. Here, in the region of Toulon-Marseilles, American and French troops were to seize a beachhead and develop the advance in the northern direction. It was planned that this operation would be conducted simultaneously with the invasion in Normandy or even slightly earlier.

In the central section of the Mediterranean theater of military operations it was planned to seize Rome, increase the pressure on the enemy in Central and Northern Italy. In the Balkans the Americans and British planned/508 to supply the partisans from the air and by sea, and to airlift small diversionary groups into the Balkan countries. The task was also assigned of bombing important strategic targets.

The plan also called for blows to be struck by strategic aircraft on the most important political and economic centers of Germany. These strikes were to disrupt the German economy, destroy vitally important communications and, consequently, undermine the morale of the German rear.

The resolution of the Quebec conference did not fully respond to the interests of the British government, which considered an invasion in the

Balkans, and not into France, of primary importance. Nevertheless, due to the position taken by the United States, and under pressure from the Soviet Union, the government of England was compelled to approve that decision at the Teheran and then at the Cairo conferences. On December 5, 1943 the Cairo conference decreed, "The most important operations in 1944 will be 'Overlord' and 'Anvil.' They should be begun in 1944. No other actions that might prevent the success of these two operations should be undertaken in any other region of the world."[1] At the same time the necessity to develop military operations in Italy and to prepare for the operation in the Aegean Sea to seize the Greek Islands, above all the island of Rhodes, was indicated. The military operations in Italy were undertaken in order to support operations 'Overlord' and 'Anvil', but their main purpose was to create conditions for the subsequent advance of American and British forces from Northern Italy to Vienna through Istria, Trieste and the Ljubljana Gap.[2]

By the end of 1943 full agreement was achieved between the governments of the USA and England on the creation in Europe of two Allied command groups: the high command in the European theater of military operations, to which was entrusted the leadership of the Allied forces in Northern France, Belgium, Holland and Germany, and the high command in the Mediterranean theater of military operations, which was to control operations in Italy, Southern France and the Balkans. The American general D. Eisenhower was appointed commander in chief of the expeditionary armed forces in the European theater of military operations, and the high command of the Mediterranean theater of military operations was led by the British general G. Wilson.

The plan of military operations of the American and British troops in Europe, which called for the main blow to be struck in Northwestern France, corresponded with the situation that had developed. Its persistent execution could give assistance to the Red Army and hasten the final rout of fascist Germany.

---

[1] Quot from G. Erman. The Great Strategy. August 1943-September 1944, pp. 210, 211.

[2] See W. S. Churchill. The Second World War. Vol. V. London, 1952, pp. 114, 121, 358.

After the capitulation of Italy Hitlerite Germany continued to hold the coast of the Mediterranean Sea with its forces alone. This task was extremely difficult for the German fascist command group. As the result of enormous, unredeemable losses on the Soviet-German front an acute shortage of forces and equipment was being felt. In the occupied countries the Resistance movement was taking on an ever more massive character. A real threat had arisen of an invasion by American and British troops at any point of the coast from Turkey to the Spanish border. The position of German army groups "F" and "E," which were located in the Balkans, had worsened. A part of the Italian occupation forces positioned there were disarmed by the Germans, and part by the Yugoslav and Albanian people's liberation armies. The people's war in Yugoslavia, Greece and Albania /509
intensified. In spite of all of this, the Hitlerite high command decided to hold the Balkans, because it believed that the loss of that region would weaken German's strategic position in Europe, worsen the situation of the German forces on the Soviet-German front, and also complicate the situation on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. Furthermore, the withdrawal of German troops from the Balkans could promote Turkey's entrance into the war on the side of the antifascist coalition. In order to preserve the Balkans as one of the most important links in the strategic defense of Europe, at the end of 1943 the Hitlerite command group kept 21 divisions and one brigade there.[1] They were assigned the task of continuing the struggle against the people's liberation armies and the partisans of Yugoslavia, Albania and Greece, and repel attempts at invasion by American and British troops.

In Italy, after the seizure of Sicily and Sardinia as well as the southern part of the Apennine Peninsula, by the end of 1943 the American and British forces (15th army group including the 8th British and 5th American Armies) had reached the enemy defensive line of Ortona a Mare - the Garigliano River, where they met resistance. Preparations began for the advance on Rome. The low speeds of advance of the American and British forces enabled

[1] Captured German OKH map for December 28, 1943.

the German high command to organize the defense in Central and Northern Italy. While extended battles were underway north of Naples, three defensive lines were prepared between the Garigliano River and Rome, and one north of Florence in the approaches from the south to the Po River valley. The Hitlerites calculated on containing as many American and British forces on these defensive lines as possible. The 10th and 14th German Armies occupying Central and Northern Iraly (21 divisions in all) were subordinated to the "Southwest" high command formed November 21, 1943 under the command of Field Marshal A. Kesselring. The German air force in Italy had approximately 370 airplanes. Ten divisions were designated for the defense of the Mediterranean coast of France.[1]

Thus at the end of 1943 the Hitlerite command group still had considerable forces at its disposal in the Mediterranean Sea basin. But since these forces, scattered over a huge territory from Turkey to Spain, had limited maneuvering capability, they were insufficient to repel the blows of the USA and England from the sea and the air. A large part of the ground forces were paralyzed by the people's armies and partisan detachments, which in the three Balkan countries alone - Albania, Greece and Yugoslavia - numbered almost 400,000 persons. By the start of 1944 the Allied forces located in Italy included 16 infantry, 2 armored and 1 paratroop division, and approximately 4,000 airplanes; the Allied fleet numbered over 3,000 war ships and vessels of various types.[2]

The Allied command group could bring the number of divisions in Central Italy up to 28, which would give them numerical superiority over the enemy. Furthermore, they had 4 more divisions in the whole Mediterranean theater.[3]

In spite of the fact that by the beginning of 1944 the battles in Italy had become drawn out, the American-British command group hoped to take

---

[1] Captured German OKH map for December 1943.

[2] See Second World War 1939-1945, p. 664.

[3] See G. Erman. The Great Strategy. August 1943-September 1944, p. 272.

Central Italy with comparative ease and speed, and then to break through to the Po River Valley. It calculated on completing military operations in five to six months,[1] that is before the invasion in Normandy.

The plan of the operation to seize Central Italy was approved on December 25, 1943. The immediate objective of the 15th army group (commander Gen. G.Alexander) was to seize Rome. The Allied troops were further /510
to break through to the line of Rimini-Pisa. The plan of the operation was for the main forces of the 5th American Army (nine divisions), which was commanded by Gen. M. Clark, to contain the main forces and reserves of the 10th German fascist Army at Cassino and on the line of the Garigliano River, and then to make an amphibious landing in the area of Anzio and cut off all routes leading to Rome from the south. With these actions the American-British command group intended to force the 10th German Army either to capitulate or to retreat,and thereby to open the road to Rome to the 5th American Army, the main forces of which were to join the amphibious landing force on the eighth day after its landing. The 6th American corps consisting of three American and 1 British division and units of reinforcement were intended as the landing force. To ensure its landing 126 war ships and 250 amphibious landing ships and landing craft were designated. The 8th British Army was given the assignment of containing the enemy in the Adriatic sector of the front.

After massed air strikes on enemy troops and targets lasting three days, on January 5 the advance of the troops of the 5th American Army began. By January 11, having overcome the forward defense zone, they broke through to the forward edge of the main zone of the German defense. On January 12, Gen. Alexander gave a new order, in accordance with which the 5th American Army was to take Rome, seize the line of Terni - Civitavecchia, and break through to the line of Florence - Pistoia - Pisa, and the 8th Army to the area of Ravenna - Faenza. The amphibious assault landing was planned for January 22.

The offensive was renewed on January 17. But the Allied forces struck uncoordinated blows, which gave the enemy the opportunity to counter their

1 See W. S. Churchill. The Second World War, Vol. V, pp. 295, 431-432.

offensive. And although the main forces of the 5th Army were unable to breach even the first defensive position of the enemy, they forced him to bring up his reserves and concentrate all of his attention on repelling the frontal blow. As a result of this no troops that might have frustrated the amphibious landing remained in or near the area of Anzio.

The amphibious landing began at 200 hours on January 22 after powerful shelling of enemy positions by naval artillery. The assault landing troops were supported by aircraft, which carried out 840 airplane flights. Meeting no serious resistance, the landing units seized a beachhead. The forward subunit of one German division reached the landing area only toward evening of the following day. Nonetheless, the 6th American corps acted with excessive caution. Its commander decided to consolidate on the beachhead, gather the forces and equipment called for in the plan and only then begin to fulfill its objectives. Assessing the actions of this corps, the former chief of staff of the "Southwest" German high command, Lt. Gen. S. Westphal, writes, "The enemy behaved amazingly calmly. To all appearances he was completely occupied with the construction of his beachhead. Therefore we were able to form a new front, command of which was assumed by the headquarters of the 14th Army under Col. Gen. Makenzen, who had previously been in Upper Italy."[1] Until the end of January both sides gathered forces and equipment in the area of Anzio and undertook no active operations. By February 6 all of the forces of the 6th American corps had been landed on the beachhead. In the first days of February the main forces of the 5th American Army halted their offensive.[2] Exploiting the Allies' passivity, the enemy strengthened his grouping of forces in the area of Anzio - Rome and on the night of February 7 began to counterattack the units of the 6th corps.

In February both belligerents tried to achieve success in Italy. Hitler believed that liquidating the beachhead at Anzio would increase Germany's military prestige, force the American-British command group to build up its

---

[1] Seigfried Westphal. Army in Shackles. Bonn, 1950, p. 243.

[2] See W. S. Churchill. The Second World War, vol. V, pp. 429-430.

forces in Italy and delay the invasion in France. Therefore the 14th German Army, which had eight divisions in its composition, received the /511
assignment to liquidate the enemy beachhead. At this time the American-British command group also reinforced the 5th American Army with the New Zealand corps consisting of three divisions, and the 8th British Army with two divisions. The commander of the 15th army group demanded that the 5th American Army seize Cassino at all costs, and then advance on Rome. But the second advance in that direction also ended in failure for the Allies.

On February 16, five divisions of the 14th German fascist Army, supported by the fire of 450 artillery guns and aircraft, made a counterstrike on the assault landing forces of the 6th American corps. Deeply penetrating its position, the Germans created a threat of liquidation of the beachhead. The Allied command group was forced to direct its main air forces to support the operations of the 6th corps at Anzio, thereby weakening the support of the advance by the main forces at Cassino and on the Garigliano River. On February 20, when the Americans and British were already preparing to evacuate their forces from the beachhead, the Hitlerite command group was forced to halt the offensive due to a shortage of artillery, aircraft and tanks, the Allied air forces' domination in the air, and heavy fire from naval guns. However, it did not abandon its plans. On February 29 a new blow was struck by nine divisions. The troops of the 6th American corps, which had by now had time to prepare a strong defense, repelled the blow. The Germans needed fresh troops to achieve their goal. None were available. The fascist command group was forced to abandon the idea of liquidating the beachhead.

The 5th American Army prepared to begin the third offensive to seize Cassino. In the second half of February five more divisions, transferred from Northern Africa, arrived in Italy. On March 15 the New Zealand corps with the support of 700 artillery guns and over 500 heavy and medium bombers struck a blow on the enemy defending Cassino. On that day the corps seized half of the city of Cassino, but was unable to progress further and halted the offensive on March 23.

After the failure of three attempts to break into Rome the American-British command group began to prepare a new thrust. The regrouping of troops and gathering of supplies occupied approximately two months. Particular attention was devoted to the achievement of superiority over the enemy. The total number of divisionsin Italy was brought up to 28 against 22 German and 1 Italian division.[1] The main forces of the Allies were to strike a blow north of the crest of the Apennine Mountains. It was proposed that a simultaneous advance be conducted on the entire front from Cassino to the Tyrrhenian Sea. Fifteen divisions with over 2,000 artillery guns were concentrated in a 40-kilometer sector. In all for the advance on Rome it was planned to use 21 divisions including the assault landing division at Anzio. Throughout April and in the first ten days of May Allied aircraft struck blows on the German communications in Central Italy along the line of Rimini - Pisa.

On May 11 the 8th British and 5th American Armies, after 40-minute artillery preparation, went over to the offensive. Taken unawares, the Germans nevertheless recovered quickly from the first blow and offered stubborn resistance. In seven days the Allied forces progressed only 8-12 kilometers. On May 18 they seized the city of Cassino. In order not to allow the enemy the opportunity to consolidate on the Liri River, the commander of the 15th army group ordered the main forces of both armies to develop the offensive, and the 6th American corps to strike a blow from the beachhead and join the 5th Army.[2] The German fascist command group was unable to form a strong defense in the approaches to Rome. Holding back the progress of the American troops to the Tyrrhenian coast with rearguard battles, the enemy attempted an orderly withdrawal of the main forces of the 10th Army. /512

On May 23 the troops of the 8th Army broke through to the Liri River; the 5th American Army, meeting no serious resistance, continued to progress

---

[1] Captured German OKH map for May 6-10, 1944.

[2] See W. S. Churchill. The Second World War, vol. V, pp. 529-534.

toward Rome. On the same day the 6th American corps went over to the offensive. It struck a blow in the general direction of Cisterna di Roma - Velletri. The German fascist forces stubbornly resisted, ensuring the retreat of the main forces of the 10th Army. Only on May 25 did the American troops seize Cisterna di Roma and begin to move toward Velletri. In the morning of the same day the 6th American corps joined the main forces of the 5th American Army, which had arrived from the south. The 10th German Army was thrown back to the valley of the Liri and to the mountains north of it. The conditions had developed for the encirclement and complete destruction of the German troops. But the American-British command group directed the forces of the left wing of the 15th army group toward Rome. This eased the fate of the 10th German fascist Army, which gained the opportunity to retreat to the north.

The 8th British Army, progressing frontally, forced out the enemy. The 14th German Army was ordered to break away from the Allied forces and, abandoning Rome without a battle, to retreat to the north. The 10th Army also received the order to retreat.

On the night of June4 the rear guards of the 14th Army left Rome, and that day the troops of the 5th American Army entered it. The 10th German Army left the valley of the Liri and withdrew to the north. In the second half of June in the region of Orvieto they joined the 14th Army, and together they continued to retreat to the north. The Allied forces slowly pursued the retreating enemy.

Thus, the plan of the American-British command group to seize Central Italy and break through to the Po River Valley before the start of operation "Overlord" was not carried out. In his memoirs Churchill writes that the Anglo-American troops, containing the German divisions located there in Italy, promoted the success of the invasion of Allied troops in Normandy.[1] Of course, the operations of the Allies in Italy somewhat contained the Gestapo troops. It would be wrong to deny this. But Churchill clearly

[1] See W. S. Churchill. The Second World War, Vol. VI, pp. 51-52, 60.

exaggerates the significance of the containing operations of the American-English forces in the Apennine Peninsula. In reality, in 1943 19 Allied divisions operated against 21 German divisions, and against 22-28 by the beginning of June, 1944. Bringing in greater forces than intended disrupted the Allied plan that had been accepted in Quebec and later clarified at the conferences in Teheran and Cairo. Such a deviation from the plan outlined reflected American-British conflicts on the question of where their main efforts should first be directed in Europe, and testified to American concessions to the British, who wished to seize Italy in order to break into the Balkans later. Increasing their forces on the Italian front by nine divisions, the Allies thereby deprived themselves of the opportunity to use them in the main operation. All of this could not avoid having a negative effect on the conduct of military operations in Western Europe.

The former Hitlerite general, S. Westphal, analyzing the military operations of the American-English forces in Italy, states, "If the western Allies had displayed greater daring in resolving operational questions they could have victoriously completed the campaign on the Apennine Peninsula much sooner and with far fewer losses for themselves and others."[1]

[1] World War. 1939-1945, p. 121.

2. The national liberation movement in the countries of Western Europe on the eve of the opening of the second front

By the summer of 1944 the national liberation movement in the countries /513
of Western Europe, particularly in France and Italy, had taken on broad scope, become massive and better organized. On the initiative of Communist Parties in 1943 and 1944 underground control centers were created there, which united the operations of all Resistance forces. The victories of the Red Army had enormous influence on the development of the liberation movement. They weakened Hitlerite Germany and thereby promoted the creation of favorable conditions for the expansion of the national liberation struggle. The courage and heroism of the Soviet people inspired the workers of all countries to massive and resolute actions against the fascist oppressors.

The scope of the Resistance movement can be judged by the fact that to suppress it the German command group was compelled to form new police and auxiliary units and draw on more regular forces. The total numerical strength of the German fascist forces (occupation troops, police, gendarmery, local formations) in 1944 reached almost 500,000 in France and 100,000 persons each in Belgium and Holland.[1]

The Resistance movement in the Western European countries was democratic, international, in its character. Its most consistent organizers and leaders, the most courageous and resolute fighters against the occupiers and their minions, were Communists.

Expressing the interests of the workers, above all the working class, the Communist Parties of France, Italy, Belgium, Holland and Denmark made it their goal to drive out the Hitlerite invaders as soon as possible, and ensure the freedom and independence of their countries. To achieve this it was essential to unite all antifascist forces and step up their struggle, bringing it to its highest form - a national armed rebellion; to punish and remove from the political arena all accomplices of the occupiers; to create truly people's governments, which would conduct an independent policy responsive to the interests and traditions of their countries; and to strengthen friendship with the Soviet Union.

The French Communist Party (FCP) conducted enormous work to unite the national forces under conditions of the violent terror of the German fascists and Vichy traitors. During the occupation 75,000 French Communists were shot. The FCP was called the "Party of the shot" among the people. But in spite of such huge sacrifices it consolidated ideologically and organizationally, and its ranks were filled out by the finest sons among the workers, peasants and intelligentsia. The influence of the Communists on the broad masses of workers grew more and more.

---

[1] See Ferdinand Mikscha. Secret Forces. The Technique of Underground Movements. London, 1950, p. 73.

Long before the landing of the American-English troops in Normandy the French Communist Party had begun to prepare a national rebellion under the extremely difficult conditions of the underground. In April 1943 in "Humanite" directives of the FCP on preparation for an uprising were published. The Central Committee and Party committees in the provinces began daily organizational work directed toward maximum strengthening of the armed struggle of French patriots. In February 1944 the Communist Party addressed all organizations of the Resistance movement in a call to accelerate preparations for an armed rebellion. The Party stated that for this it was essential /514 to step up the armed struggle against the occupiers, obtain arms from the French Committee of National Liberation, form detachments of workers who had escaped being forcibly sent to Germany to work, and everywhere to create "patriotic committees" to direct the revolt in the provinces. The Party called on franc-tireurs and partisans to intensify the struggle against the occupiers and police. The FCP also devoted great attention in the plan of preparation for a national rebellion to the organization of a general strike.[1]

At the end of 1943 and start of 1944 there was unification of antifascist armed groups into a single organization - the French Internal Armed Forces (FFI). A decisive role in the formation of the FFI was played by the initiative and tireless activity of the Communist Party. The main core of the Internal Armed Forces was composed of detachments of franc-tireurs and partisans. The FFI was led by a National Headquarters, the head of which was the Communist Gen. A. Mallere (Juanvil). The Internal Armed Forces and their headquarters were subordinate to the Commission of Military Operations of the National Resistance Council (NRC). Of the three members of the Commission, two - P. Villon and K. Valrimon - were also Communists. In June 1944 the unification of all military organizations of the Paris region was completed. The Ile de France regional headquarters, which was located in Paris, was led by the Communist, Col. A. Rolle-Tanguy.

---

[1] See "L'Humanite," 1 February 1944.

The National Resistance Council, the main task of which was to lead the struggle against the occupiers and their Vichy accomplices, also began to be involved in the problems of the future France, its economic renewal and democratic development, as liberation approached.

On March 15, 1944 the NRC passed a program that had been developed on the initiative of the Communist Party. At its basis lay the principles and proposals of the FCP, which were advanced even in July 1940 and May 1941 in addresses in connection with the formation of the National Front. The program consisted of two parts: in the first a plan of immediate actions was outlined, and in the second measures were defined that should be executed after the liberation of the country. The program called for providing democratic liberties, and realizing a number of reforms; for example, nationalization of private monopolies, eliminating the financial-industrial oligarchy, and punishing traitors. It contained an address to the governments of the USA and England demanding that they open the second front, and also to Gen. de Gaulle with an insistent recommendation that he obtain arms from the Allies and give them to the patriots. "A true alliance of all patriotic forces in the aims of national liberation," it was said in the program, "can be achieved only by organization and intensification of the struggle being waged by the armed forces and organizations created by the masses of the people."[1] The National Resistance Council declared solemnly that the French people, in spite of the truce concluded at Compeigne, were in a state of war with Germany and wished more than ever to intensify their struggle, in order to take active part in the liberation of the country, and the winning of victory. The NRC proposed that all responsible leaders of Resistance groups organize city, village and factory-plant liberation committees and coordinate the operations of already existing formations of the FFI. The liberation committees should mobilize the broad masses of the French people to a resolute armed struggle with the German fascist occupiers and agents of Vichy.

---

[1] IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #8232, p. 19.

In the plan of immediate operations the tasks of the national headquarters of the French Internal Armed Forces were defined for . joint operations with the American-English forces in the event of their landing. /515 It was proposed that Headquarters would carry out the following measures: give the order to all formations of the FFI to immediately begin the armed struggle against the occupiers and their accomplices; to distribute arms from supply depots to those units and formations that could begin military operations against the fascist occupiers and Vichy immediately or in the near future; to coordinate these operations with actions of the broad masses of the people. The last point of the plan was directed against the policy of the ruling circles of the USA and England as well as the policy of de Gaulle, who wished to limit the scope of the Resistance movement and prevent a national rebellion. The plan of immediate actions called for the creation of a true people's army. It stated that "as the result of the close alliance of all patriots without distinction of political, philosophical and religious views, in the course of the armed struggle an experienced army, seasoned in battle, will be formed, led by fearless and courageous cadres, an army capable of playing its part when conditions are ripe for a national rebellion."[1] The reactionary forces of France and the ruling circles of the USA and England backing them feared the formation of such an army. They wished to create a professional army, torn away from the people and opposing them, which could be used in their interests.

Toward development of the plan of the National Resistance Council, on March 19, 1944 the Commission of Military Operations issued a directive in which along with the tasks stemming from the need for joint actions with the American-English forces, the Internal Armed Forces were assigned tasks for the independent struggle against the fascist occupiers. The most important of these was "to support strikes and mass demonstrations by mobilizing local elements of the FFI, who should receive arms for that purpose."[2] The Commission of Military Operations proposed that the armed forces prepare

---

[1] IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #8232, p. 21.

[2] R. Villate (Rethal). The Battle of Paris 919-25 August 1944). "Revue d'histoire de la deuxieme guerre mondiale", No. 30, April 1958, p. 59.

thoroughly for the coming operations, and stubbornly and persistently perform their assigned tasks when they began. Thus the Internal Armed Forces were to become the nucleus around which the broad masses of workers of city and country would unite during the national rebellion.

Thanks to the great, persistent work of the Communist Party of France, in the first half of 1944 the struggle against the occupiers was intensified in all departements of the country. According to the social composition of the population, the alignment of forces, and the geographical and conditions, resistance to the invaders took on various forms and scope. The franc-tireurs and partisans operated most aggressively and resolutely. In Normandy, in the departement of Orne, they annihilated German soldiers and officers, thwarted plans to drive the population away to Germany, destroyed railroad lines, damaged locomotives and train cars, conducted reconnaissance and conveyed the information obtained to the American-British command group. Upper Savoie was enveloped by the flames of the liberation movement. The occupation authorities, attempting to suppress the armed actions of the people, frequently conducted punitive expeditions. In February 1944, 16,000 Bavarian alpine riflemen, several SS battalions and 26 battalions of Petain police were sent against the patriots.[1] In March on the Gliere plateau a punitive force surrounded a detachment numbering 500 Frenchmen and 60 Spaniards. The heroes resisted stubbornly. Then the German fascist command group threw approximately 7,000 soldiers, officers and police against them, /516 supported by aircraft.[2] The tragedy that was played out in Gliere did not break the fighting spirit of the patriots of Upper Savoie. At the end of March, and later in the beginning of May, they struck new blows on the occupiers and contained considerable numbers of their forces. The operations of the franc-tireurs and partisans took on great scope in February and March in the departement of Ain. Detachments of patriots more and more often

---

[1] See I. A. Koloskov, N. G. Tsyrul'nikov. The people of France in the struggle against fascism. (From the history of the liberation movement in France in 1939-1944) M., Sotsekriz, 1960, p. 242.

[2] See Marcel Baudot. The French Resistance and the Allies, p. 25. Report at the 2nd International Conference on the history of the Resistance movement in Europe held in Milan in March 1961.

attacked subunits of the enemy and units of Petain police, seized weapons from the enemy, and took reprisals on traitors. This forced the Hitlerite command group to transfer approximately three divisions to the departement.

Diversions became more frequent on the most important enemy communications leading to Normandy from the east, south and southwest, which hindered the transfer of German fascist troops from one area to another. Diversions on railroads were also conducted constantly in southeastern France (in the departements of Drome, Isere and the Upper Alps). On the eve of the invasion by the American and English forces into Normandy FFI detachments conducted two major operations on the southwestern slopes of the Central Massif (departement of Dordogne) and in Vercors. Although they were unsuccessful, since they received no help from the Allies, serious damage was nonetheless inflicted on the occupiers. Numerous diversions were arranged on railroads and highways in Northwestern France, especially in Brittany. On June 6, 52 locomotives were blown up with mines in the railroad depot of Ambere. The number of diversions on railroads alone reached 500.[1] As the results of a strike of railroad workers, for six weeks in southeastern France approximately a thousand railroad trains were idle.

During preparations for a people's rebellion in the departements liberations committees were formed, the task of which was to coordinate operations against the enemy. In a number of places the liberations committees also took administrative functions upon themselves, becoming provisional representative organs of the population. In May 1944 at the majority of enterprises, especially large ones, groups of the Commission of Military Operations were formed by the liberation committees. In Avignon a convention of departement committees of the southern zone was held.

On May 18 the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the French Communist Party, M. Torez, addressed the French by radio. He observed that

---

[1] See Marcel Baudot. The French Resitance and the Allies, pp. 25-26.

thanks to the victories of the Red Army and the military operations of the Anglo-American forces in Africa and Italy favorable conditions had arisen for an offensive against Hitlerite Germany in the West, and that the hour of the armed rebellion for the liberation of France was drawing nearer. "Everything should be subordinated to the fulfillment of this sacred task," Torez emphasized. "Now is not the time to discuss the future regime in France. The people will concern themselves with this when they find freedom. At the present every Frenchman must have only one concern, one slogan, one goal: to unite, to take arms, to return to our country its greatness and independence."[1]

One of the important resources for preparing for the national rebellion was to draw the workers into a strike struggle led by the Communist Party and the General Labor Conference. Beginning on May 1, 1944 huge strikes were held by railroad workers, metal workers, workers at public service enterprises and so on. On May 25-26 a general strike was called in Marseilles. At this time in many cities detachments of patriotic militia were formed, which were a reserve of the armed Resistance forces.

An important part was played in the common struggle of the peoples against the Hitlerite oppressors by the patriots of Italy, who especially intensified their activity after the rout of the Italian fascist army on /517
the Soviet-German front and the fall of the bloody dictator, Mussolini. Under the guidance of the Communist Party a mass Resistance movement, a national partisan war, developed in the country. It acquired its greatest scope in the northern regions where the antifascist parties were supported by a powerful army of the industrial proletariat.

The leadership of the Resistance movement, considering the mass nature of the struggle against the German invaders, the expansion of the offensive

---

[1] Maurice Torez. Selected works. V. I (1930-1944). M., Gospolitizdat, 1959, p. 599.

operations of the partisans and the need to improve cooperation between partisan formations, effected important organizational-political measures. In January 1944 the Committee of National Liberation of Milan was transformed into the Committee of National Liberation (CNL) of Upper Italy. On the initiative of the Communist Party, on June 9 a single military command group attached to the CNL was formed under the name of the High Command of the Freedom Volunteer Corps. Its leading position was occupied by the left wing of the CNL headed by the Communist, L. Longo. As the result of political and organizational unity the scale of partisan operation operations expanded still more, and the number of regions they controlled increased. A part of the territory of Lombardy, Apuane and Marke was under the control of the partisans. The acknowledgements of Italian fascists testified quite eloquently to the growth of the partisan struggle. In a report note of April 4, 1944 the command group of the so-called National Republican Guard in the province of Pesaro indicated the "extreme seriousness of the situation that has developed in the province...due to the activity that is being developed simultaneously by all partisan detachments of the province - activity which even earlier had a serious and disturbing nature, and now has become intolerable in view of the more frequent attacks of large partisan forces..." "The entire mountain zone," it was stressed in the report note, "is essentially under the control of the rebels..."[1]

In the cities groups of the patriotic movement formed by the Communist Party fought actively. These groups, consisting of 4-5 persons, were united by a single city or regional command. Their task included "sowing panic and decay in the enemy's ranks, to demoralize him... to constantly attack the Germans and (Italian - Ed.) fascists... to create conditions advantageous for raising the masses to the struggle, mobilizing them and impelling them to take action against the enemy."[2] The commanders of the groups of the patriotic movement were supported by close contact with the Freedom Volunteer corps.

---

[1] Luigi Longo. Narod Italiyi v bop'be. (The People of Italy in the Struggle.) M., Izd-vo inostrannoy literatury, 1952, p. 202.

[2] D. Pesce. Soldaty bez formy. (Soldiers without Uniform.) p. 18.

In the villages the Communist Party organized detachments of the patriotic movement, which in contact with the partisans acted against fascist extortion and requisitions, and made reprisals against the local fascists and traitors. Gradually many of these detachments became real military units, gathered into brigades and divisions. Not limited to the defense of their villages, they began to inflict ever more telling blows on the enemy.

The actions of the armed forces of the Italian people were combined with the mass demonstrations of the workers. The leaders of the Resistance movement called on the workers and employed people to increase sabotage, and on the peasants to block the delivery of food products to the Italian fascist authorities, to give nothing to the German occupiers, to defend their houses, cattle and production with weapons in hand, and not to pay taxes to the exploiters.[1]

The popular masses responded to the call of the leaders of the Resistance movement. On March 1 in Turin and Milan a general strike, preparations /518 for which had been carried out by the Communist Party since the end of 1943, began with demonstrations by the proletariat. Soon the strike enveloped the entire occupied section of the country. In it 1,200,000 persons took part. A characteristic feature of this vast demonstration of the Italian workers was a high degree of organization. By the time it began all of the armed forces of the Resistance had been brought into combat readiness, and to them was entrusted the task of supporting the striking workers. The strike demonstrated the enormous power of the people and their fervent desire to achieve freedom and independence. This was the first national general strike in Europe under the fascist regime. In May 1944 a wave of mass demonstrations against the Italo-German fascists rolled over all of Northern Italy. This month was marked by daring attacks on the troops and military targets of the enemy, major acts of sabotage, strikes at plants in Turin, Milan and Genoa, and open demonstrations in the provinces of Emilia and Tuscany.

---

[1] See L. Longo. The People of Italy in the Struggle, p. 193.

On June 2 the Committee of National Liberation of Upper Italy took upon itself the function of "extraordinary government" and announced that its goal was to prepare for a national rebellion. The General Secretary of the CC of the Communist Party, P. Togliatti, addressing the Italian people on June 18, said, "The task that faces all Communists, all anti-fascists and Italian patriots today is to organize, without wavering, without further hesitation, a general revolt of the entire people in the cities and villages to expel the German occupiers, to destroy the Hitlerite occupation forces, and to expel without pity the fascist traitors who are in their service."[1]

By summer the national liberation movement in Upper Italy had achieved great scope. The front of the armed struggle broadened. In spite of the brutal repressions of Italian fascists and the punitive expeditions of the occupiers, in which the Hitlerite command group used several regiments at once, the numerical strength of the partisan detachments continued to grow. While in February-March the detachments had numbered 20,000-30,000 fighters, in May-June there were already 70,000-80,000.[2] The Armed Forces of the Resistance constantly attacked the enemy, destroyed retreating German troops, seized their weapons and supply depots, disrupted communications. In June "raiding detachments" began to be formed, which, unlike ordinary brigades that operated as a rule in the areas of their bases, moved in automobiles and struck blows on the enemy in the places he least expected.

The underground press played an enormous role in strengthening the Italian Resistance movement. The largest Resistance parties - the Communist, Socialist, Party of Action - issued their own central organs: "Unita," "Avanti," "Italia Libera." In addition, many provincial newspapers were published. The Communist Party issued the largest number of newspapers. In all in 1944

---

[1] "L'Unita," 18 June 1944.

[2] See R. Battaglia. Istoriya ital'yanskogo dvizheniya Soprotivleniya (History of the Italian Resistance Movement) Sept. 8 1943 - April 25 1945. Moscow., Izd-vo inostrannoy literatury, 1954, p. 357.

l'Unità

ITALIA LIBERA

ORGANO DEL PARTITO D'AZIONE

Italia e Europa

IL CAMMINO DI UN ANNO

Avanti!

GIORNALE DEL PARTITO SOCIALISTA ITALIANO DI UNITÀ PROLETARIA

ROMA

L'UNITA' - AVANTI

L'UNITÀ D'AZIONE PROLETARIA FORZA MOTRICE DELLA LOTTA DI LIBERAZIONE E DELLA RICOSTRUZIONE NAZIONALE

EDIZIONE STRAORDINARIA

LA FABBRICA

ORGANO DELLA FEDERAZIONE MILANESE DEL PARTITO COMUNISTA ITALIANO

"CITTA' PER CITTA', CASA PER CASA..."

IL COMBATTENTE

1 OTTOBRE 1944 NUMERO 16 GIORNALE DEI VOLONTARI DELLA LIBERTÀ

Armi e braccia italiane
libereranno dai barbari le nostre città

NAPOLI

ALL'ORDINE

Antifascist newspapers published in Italy in 1944.

approximately 500 different underground publications were issued in the country.[1]

In 1944 the national liberation struggle was also intensified in Belgium, Holland and Denmark.

The most significant organization of the Resistance movement in Belgium was the Front of Independence and Liberation. It included many political parties, but the most influential was the Communist Party. The military activity of the armed detachments of the Belgian Resistance movement was intensified and their numerical strength increased. By the beginning of 1944, according to official, far from complete data, they numbered over 150,000 persons.[2] The most combat worthy part of the Resistance forces were /520 the partisan army, which was organized as early as 1940, and the patriotic militia. Striking blows on communications, fuel depots, repair workshops and other military targets, the Belgian patriots shattered the rear of the German fascist forces. The population of Belgium gave great assistance to the partisans. The German military authorities were forced to admit that the population not only hid the partisans and supplied them with provisions, but also gathered important information for them on accommodation and movements of German troops.[3]

The partisans waged a particularly intense struggle in the Ardennes. In the beginning of 1944 the occupiers held only certain fortified towns there. The German fascist soldiers admitted that in Belgium the Hitlerite army was "as if in hell."[4]

The ranks of the partisan army were constantly reinforced. The "total mobilization" declared by the occupation authorities in 1943 failed: an ever greater number of Belgians, largely workers, joined the partisans. In the

---

[1] See La Resistenza in Italia 25 July 1943-25 April 1945, Milano, 1961.

[2] See The Liberation of Belgium. Published by the Belgian Government Information Center. New York, 1944, p. 5.

[3] See Leo Lejeune. Tableau de la Resistance belge, 1940-1945. "Revue d' histoire de la deuxieme guerre mondiale," No 31, July, 1958, p. 41.

[4] Ronald Seth. The Undaunted. The Story of Resistance in Western Europe. London, 1956, p. 274.

spring of 1944 the detachments of the "untamed," that is, of people who had evaded mobilization, united approximately 23,000 persons in the Ardennes alone.[1] The majority of these detachments maintained close contact with the organizations of the Communist Party and operated under its leadership.

In addition to the partisan army in Belgium there also existed other armed Resistance organizations. The largest of these, the so-called "Secret Army," subordinated to the Belgian emigre government in London, numbered approximately 55,000 persons on June 1, 1944.[2] In spite of its considerable forces and capabilities, upon the landing of the American-English forces on the coast of Normandy the "secret army" took no noticeable part in the military operations of the Resistance movement. The Prime Minister of the emigre government gave a strict order to that army as early as 1943 to undertake no actions "prematurely" in order "not to draw down upon the country horrible repressions and tortures."[3] For over four years the partisan army waged the armed struggle against the German fascist invaders essentially totally alone.

The inspirational and organizational force of the partisan movement was the Communist Party of Belgium, which prepared for a general revolt against the occupiers and their accomplices. The committees for the labor union struggle formed on its initiative in enterprises were an important support for the Communist Party. In the beginning of 1944 these unions of workers began particularly aggressive activity to prepare the revolt. "Thanks to a considerable degree to the committees of the labor union struggle," it was stated at a meeting of the Central Committee of the Belgian Communist Party, "the working class of Belgium, led by Communists, was able to play a decisive role in the liberation struggle."[4]

In Holland on July 3, 1944 the representatives of 20 organizations that had participated in the struggle with the fascists formed a center to lead

---

[1] See L. Lejeune. Tableau de la Résistance belge, 1940-1945. "Revue d'histoire de la deuxième guerre mondiale," No 31, July 1958, p. 41.

[2] See Ibid, pp. 33-34.

[3] Lucien Deleuze. Apercu sur l'Armée secrète, groupement militaire de Résistance armée. "Revue d'histoire de la deuxième guerre mondiale," No 31, July 1958, p. 46.

[4] Edgar Lalmand. Rapport présenté au Comité Central du Parti Communiste de Belgique le 21 October 1944, p. 9.

the forces of the Resistance - the Committee of Five. Later the Supreme Council was formed, which was the headquarters of the armed forces of the Resistance.

In Denmark in the summer of 1944, as a sign of protest against the /521
occupation and terror, the workers held a general strike. The partisan detachments, whose numerical strength had reached 45,000 persons, intensified their actions at that time.[1]

Thus in France, Italy, Belgium, Holland and Denmark long before the landing of the American-English forces in Normandy, the popular masses led by the Communist Parties had developed the struggle against the German fascist invaders and their accomplices. In 1944 it became more decisive, more and more often taking the form of armed demonstrations.

In the struggle against the German fascist occupiers the peoples of Europe and the ruling circles of the USA and England pursued different goals. The workers made it their goal to expel the invaders and establish democratic orders that would exclude the possibility of foreign interference in their internal affairs and that would limit or entirely liquidate the rule of reactionary forces in their countries. The American-British imperialists wished after the war to preserve antinational bourgeois regimes in the countries of Western Europe and to plant governments there which would obediently fulfill their instructions in domestic and foreign policy. In the liberated territories the governments of the USA and England attempted to introduce their administration directly. According to the testimony of de Gaulle, in the United States an "allied military government" was to take the control of France into its hands.[2]

Executing the imperialist policy, the USA and England attempted by every means to suppress the urge of the workers of Europe for broad social

---

[1] See Denmark during the German Occupation. Copenhagen, 1946, Preface, pp. 3,4.

[2] See Charles de Gaulle. Voyennyye memyary. (War Memoirs.) V. 2, Yedinstvo (Unity). 1942-1944. M., Izd-vo inostrannoy literatury, 1960, p. 249.

reorganizations and the establishment of genuinely democratic regimes. The American-British command group, exploiting the liberation struggle to rout the Hitlerite forces, did all it could at that time to prevent national rebellions in the occupied countries. The bourgeois parties of the Western European states, fearing to lose their influence on the masses, participated in the Resistance movement, but also attempted to prevent the growth of the liberation struggle into a general revolt. The command group of the Allied armies and the leaders of the bourgeois parties encouraged only passive sabotage, diversions in the rear of the German forces, reconnaissance operations, motivating this with the fact that the armed struggle against the occupiers provoked cruel repressions on their part not only in relation to the partisans, but toward the entire population. Acting against the resolute operations of the workers, the bourgeois parties called upon them to passively await liberation from Hitlerite occupation by the Allied forces. This policy of the bourgeois parties in France received the name of attentism.[1]

In an article published in the newspaper "Humanite" on March 15, 1944 exposing the supporters of attentism, the Secretary of the CC FCP, J. Duclos, wrote, "Fear of the people is provoking some 'specialists' to develop more and more plans based on the desire to protect the interests of the trusts; under the influence of this fear they sacrifice the rights of the masses of people and even make significant infringements on national independence."[2]

Limiting the opportunities of the Resistance movement to merely offering assistance to the Allied forces, the American-British command group, as well as the reactionary circles of France, Italy, Belgium, Holland and Denmark, planned to subordinate this movement to their influence, and deprive it of political independence.

On the eve of the invasion of the American and English troops into France the Allied command group and de Gaulle's representative, General

---

[1] Attentism - from the French verbe attendre, to wait.

[2] Jacques Duclos. Selected Works. Vol. I (1925-1949), M., Gospolitizdat, 1959, p. 318.

Koenig, reached an agreement in accordance with which Koenig was appointed /522
commander in chief of the French Internal Armed Forces. He was to issue his orders through the headquarters of the special forces, a division of the headquarters of the Allied expedition forces in Europe. Koenig's appointment to the post was above all in pursuit of the goal of removing the Commission of Military Operations as the military organ of the National Resistance Council from the leadership of FFI operations. Subordinating the forces of the Resistance to the attentists, de Gaulle and the Allies hoped to prevent a national rebellion. Koenig and his staff did not lead the struggle of the French Internal Armed Forces, they hindered it. While detachments of the Resistance movement were conducting fierce battles with the occupiers and Vichyites in Central and Southern France and on the Brittany peninsula, on June 14, 1944 Koenig gave the following instructions to his representatives, who were sent to the organs leading the Resistance movement: "Considering the impossibility of supplying weapons and ammunition at the present time, maximally curtail, I repeat, maximally curtail the activity of the partisans. Cease contact with the enemy wherever possible until we are ready to supply numerous paratroops."[1] In fact no paratroop landing in the interests of the Resistance movement was even being planned.

By de Gaulle's admission the ruling circles of England and the USA feared the strengthening of the partisan war in France.[2] In London it was felt that the formation of armed underground groups was most likely dangerous. It was no accident that on January 17, 1944 in a conversation with Gen. E. d'Astye concerning the question of the nature and prospects of the Resistance movement, Churchill asked if he could guarantee that the French would not turn the weapons received from the British against the British themselves, and whether they would obey the orders of Gen. Eisenhower. Several representatives of the American command group also feared that the arms they provided might be used for a future civil war in France.[3] Therefore the ruling circles of the USA and England unwillingly

---

[1] The Documents of Our Time. Paris, 1948, p. 12.

[2] See C. de Gaulle. War Memoirs, vol. 2, p. 328.

[3] See Emmanuel d'Astye. Syem' raz po syem' dnyey. (Seven days, seven times), M., Izd-vo inostrannoy literatury, 1961, p. 164.

provided the French partisans with arms, not giving them at all to those detachments which were strongly under the influence of the Communist Party, for example the military organizations of the Paris region. One of the participants of the uprising in Paris, R. Villate (Rethal) observes that the department of Seine and Oise did not receive the weapons that were issued by the Allies for the Resistance movement. "Even if one believes," he states, "that this was due to the lack of suitable areas for dropping cargos with parachutes (which is possible), it still must be stated that only the following were sent to the departement of Seine and Oise, to which we could turn for weapons before the battle: 114 'Sten' submachine guns, 18 pistols, 150 rifles, 24 'Bren' machine guns, 2 bazookas, 158,940 cartridges and 180 grenades."[1]

De Gaulle conducted the same policy in questions of supplying the partisans with weapons. Beginning in March 1943 de Gaullist detachments in Upper Savoie regularly received weapons, ammunition, personal equipment, clothing and provisions by air from London. However, they did not conduct active operations, awaiting the landing of American-English troops in the territory of France. At the same time, until August 1, 1944 the franc-tireurs and partisans were not sent a single load of weapons, although they fought more resolutely against the occupiers in that region. To deprive the detachments of france-tireurs and partisans of the peoples' support, the leaders of the de Gaullist army attempted by any means to discredit them in the eyes of the local inhabitants. In spite of the plotting of the reaction, the authority of the franc-tireurs and partisans among the people grew day by day. The people saw that they were the true patriots. /523

Attempting to prevent the expansion of the national liberation movement in Belgium, the governments of the USA and England completely ceased deliveries of arms and war materials to the country from November 1943 through February 1944 although by that time active operations by the partisans and other armed detachments had begun. Deliveries were renewed in the middle of 1944, but on such a small scale that they could not satisfy even the most

[1] R. Villate (Rethal). The Battle of Paris (19-25 August 1944). "Revue d'histoire de la deuxième guerre mondiale," No 30, April, 1958, pp. 68-69.

minimal requirements of the Resistance forces.[1] The Belgian patriots were forced to obtain weapons themselves. They took weapons from the enemy by force, searched for guns and ammunition hidden by the Belgian army during its capitulation in 1940, and took explosives from mines and plants.

A comparatively large quantity of arms began to be supplied to Holland only in the fall of 1944 when the right wing organization "Internal Forces" was formed in the Resistance movement, led by officers of the former Dutch army.[2] The guns and ammunition were largely intended for this organization, and not for the forces that were actively fighting the enemy.

The American-British command group also hindered the development of the armed struggle in every way it could. This is indicated, specifically, by instructions of the British secret service in which orders are given: to block the unlimited expansion of the armed detachments' numerical strength; to support only organized acts of sabotage that supplemented the planned operations of the Allied armed forces; to increase shipments of nonmilitary materials to maintain the morale of the partisans.[3]

But the reactionary forces were unable to narrow the scope of the Resistance movement and split the ranks of its fighters. The national liberation movement of the peoples of the countries of Europe grew ever broader. By the summer of 1944 the war entered the phase when the popular masses who had risen to the struggle could, with the Red Army, complete the rout of fascist Germany, completely liberate their countries from the occupiers, punish the traitors and establish a truly democratic regime.

---

[1] See R. Seth. The Undaunted. The Story of Resistance in Western Europe, p. 272.

[2] L. Jong. The Allies and Dutch Resistance 1940-1945, pp. 20-21. Report at the 2nd International Conference on the history of the Resistance movement in Europe held in Milan in March 1961.

[3] See R. Battaglia. History of the Italian Resistance Movement, pp. 568-569.

3. The military operations of the American-English forces in Western Europe in June-August 1944

The outstanding victories of the Red Army on the Soviet-German front as well as the strengthening of the national liberation movement in the countries of Western Europe, especially in France and Italy, forced the ruling circles of the USA and England to hasten the opening of the second front in Europe. Intensive preparations for the landing of American-English

forces in France started at the beginning of 1944. On February 12 the Joint Committee of Chiefs of Staff issued a directive to the commander in chief of the Allied expeditionary forces in Western Europe, Gen. Eisenhower, in which it was stated that the main objective of the American-English forces was to effect "an invasion of the European continent and, jointly with other united nations, to undertake operations with the goal of breaking /524 through to the heart of Germany and destroying its armed forces. The date of the invasion of the continent is May 1944. After seizing the corresponding ports of the English Channel, the development of success should be directed toward seizing the region that would ensure the conduct of operations against the enemy by ground and air forces."[1]

Because the ruling circles of the USA and England feared that the German fascist army might be conclusively routed on the Soviet-German front before the landing of the Allied forces began in Western Europe, in the same directive Gen. Eisenhower was ordered to be prepared to exploit favorable conditions at any time, for example an enemy retreat, to make the incursion onto the continent with the forces at his disposal.[2]

By June 1944 there were 37 divisions (23 infantry, 10 armored, 4 paratroop) and 12 brigades (1 parachute, 8 armored, 3 infantry) and reinforcement means in the British Isles. In addition, one French and one Polish division were also located there. The numerical strength of the divisions was: British infantry, 18,000 men, armored 14,000; American infantry 14,000 men, armored 11,000. The Allied air forces numbered approximately 11,000 military airplanes, over 2,300 transport airplanes and approximately 2,600 gliders. The expeditionary fleet had in its composition 6 battleships, 2 monitors, 22 cruisers, 93 destroyers, 159 other light ships (not including motor torpedo boats and mine layers), 255 mine sweepers and other vessels. The number of transport ships and landing craft of all types concentrated in British ports exceeded 6,000.

---

[1] Report by the Supreme Commander to the Combined Chiefs of Staff on the Operations in Europe of the Allied Expeditionary Force 6 June 1944 to 8 May 1945. Washington, 1946, p. VI.

[2] Ibid.

The total numerical strength of the expeditionary force was 2,876,439 soldiers and officers.[1] All of the American and English formations were fully manned and equipped. Some of the divisions had combat experience acquired in Northern Africa and Italy.

Hitlerite Germany could oppose this powerful grouping of American-English forces with the ground forces located in France, Belgium and Holland. In a zone from the northern border of Holland to the mouth of the Loire army group "B" was concentrated, comprised by the 88th detached army corps, the 15th and 7th Armies. From the mouth of the Loire to Nice along the west and south coasts of France was located army group "G," which included the 1st and 19th Armies. In all the Germans had 60 divisions in the west, 10 of them tank divisions, and 1 motorized. For operations against the American-English forces in Northern France, Belgium and Holland the German command group could employ 45 divisions, including 7 tank divisions and 1 motorized. The German fascist divisions in Western Europe numbered from 8,000 to 11,000 men. Twenty-two divisions were staffed with older soldiers and boys of 17 who had not received essential combat training. The shortage of personnel reached 20-30 percent in almost all divisions. Approximately half of the divisions had no means of transportation and were considered stationary.

The 3rd German Air Force, numbering up to 500 military airplanes, was located in Western Europe.[2] The German fascist navy in the Atlantic Ocean and the Northern and Baltic Seas had in their composition 4 battleships (2 of them of obsolete design), 7 cruisers and 419 submarines, including 90 training submarines.[3] The submarines were the main strike force of the fleet, but due to the weakness of the German air force and the power of the Anglo-American antisubmarine defense they were unable to strike effective blows on

---

[1] See D. Eisenhower. Crusade in Europe. New York, 1948, p. 53.

[2] See Hans Speidel. Invasion 1944. Chicago, 1950, p. 39.

[3] See Brassey's Naval Annual, 1948, p. 376.

the Atlantic communications. For direct defense of the coast of France a command group of the "West" group of naval forces was formed, which by the beginning of June 1944 had at its disposal several destroyers and torpedo ships, 30 motor torpedo boats and 36 submarines, patrol ships and a flotilla of mine sweepers.[1] These forces were in no condition to offer serious resistance to the approach of the amphibious landing of the Allied expeditionary forces to the shore of Northern France. /525

It should be borne in mine that in 1944 the German fascist high command was preparing to utilize the FAU-1 cruise missiles and FAU-2 rockets - the only weapon with massed use of which the strategic concentration and deployment of the American and British forces could be significantly complicated. However, due to technological unpreparedness, the utilization of the new weapon did not have the anticipated effect: the first FAU-1 exploded in southeastern England on the morning of June 13, and a massed attack by cruise missiles was undertaken at 2230 on June 15 when the main forces of the amphibious landing had already reached the beachhead. This strike was made on cities and therefore could not cause any serious damage to the troops.

By the time of the landing of American-English forces in France the general alignment of forces in the European theater of military operations was in favor of the Allies: they exceeded the enemy in men by 2.1 times, in tanks by 2.2 times and in military aircraft by almost 22 times. As regards the American-English fleet, it had complete dominion in the Atlantic Ocean and the North Sea.

The German fascist command group (commander in chief in the West, Gen. Field Marshal G. Rundstedt and commander of army group "B" Field Marshal E. Rommel) calculated on defending the sea coast with ground forces. Therefore a large part of the infantry and all of the artillery were positioned directly by the sea. The tank and most battleworthy infantry divisions of

[1] See World War. 1939-1945, p. 375.

the armies were located at a distance of 20-40 kilometers from the coast, and the reserve of the army group 50 to 250 kilometers away.[1] However, as the result of poorly organized reconnaissance as well as successfully realized misinformation by the Allies, the German fascist command group was confused regarding the region of the landing of the amphibious assault landing force of the American and British troops. The Hitlerites considered the region of Pas de Calais the most likely, and even the possibility of a landing at the mouth of the Seine and in the area of Antwerp was granted. The possibility of an invasion in Normandy was considered debatable.[2] On the basis of such assumptions the fascist command group concentrated its main forces and prepared a strong defense north of the Seine River. In the areas of the actual amphibious landing in Normany on a 70-kilometer front only two divisions occupied the defense.

The construction of the Atlantic rampart (as the Germans called their defense on the west coast) began even in 1942, but was carried out slowly. In 1944 the work was intensified. The main attention was devoted to engineering fortifications. By that time, however, fascist Germany no longer had the necessary forces and equipment to complete construction of the rampart. Of the50 million mines that the German command group planned to lay on the north coast of France, by May 20 only 4 million had been laid. The Hitlerites completed 68 percent of the plan of the engineering works in the region of Calais-Boulogne, and only 18 percent in the zone of the 7th Army, i.e. where the Allied amphibious landing was planned. Consequently the Atlantic rampart widely proclaimed in Goebbels' propaganda was not a serious obstacle for the Allies.

In the plan of operation "Overlord" prepared by Gen. Eisenhower and his staff only its first stage was worked out in detail, including the amphibious landing in Normandy, the seizure of a beachhead, its expansion /526

[1] Captured German OKH map for May 28 - June 6 1944.

[2] See K. Tippelskirch. History of the Second World War, p. 396.

by the twentieth day to 100 kilometers on the front and 100-110 kilometers in depth, and the breakthrough on the ninetieth day to the line of the Loire and Seine Rivers. The conduct of the amphibious landing operation was entrusted to the 21st army group (1st American, 2nd British and 1st Canadian Armies), strategic and tactical aviation, and expeditionary naval forces. The composition of the 21st army group included 19 infantry, 9 armored and 4 paratroop divisions, 1 parachute, 8 armored and 3 infantry brigades.[1] It was planned further to bring the 3rd American Army into the battle in the course of the military operations in Normandy.

The amphibious landing in Normandy was set at last for June 6, 1944. By that time all measures for training and concentration of troops and material and technical supply of the operation had been completed. In the southern ports of England transport and specially prepared landing craft had been concentrated with no interference on the part of the enemy. On June 3 all troops and equipment of the first echelon of the amphibious landing were loaded onto the ships.

The crossing of the English Channel by the fleet with the assault landing force began on the evening of June 5. During the crossing approximately 40 percent of the Allied aircraft designated to support the landing force struck massed blows on the enemy defenses on the coast; the remaining aircraft covered the loading area and the caravan of ships, and struck blows on rear targets of the German fascist forces.

On the night of June 6 larger paratroops assault forces - three paratroop divisions - were landed in Normandy 10-15 kilometers from the coast and with the purpose of securing the flanks of the troops alighting on the beachhead and seizing roads on which the assault landing units could rapidly progress to depth in the coastal area. The amphibious landing of the 1st

---

[1] See B. Montgomery. Normandy to the Baltic. London, 1948, p. 13.

American Army in Normandy began on June 6 at 0630, and of the 2nd British Army at 0730. At that time German submarines set out from ports in the Bay of Biscay and rushed under water toward the English Channel. But the covering Allied aircraft and ships did not allow them into the straits.

The selection of a less convenient region for the landing as well as unfavorable weather made surprise possible. This considerably facilitated the amphibious landing and the operations of the landing force on shore. The American-English troops landed in five areas simultaneously under cover of naval artillery and aircraft. On the first day of the operation the Allied aircraft conducted approximately 11,000 airplane flights.[1] The Hitlerites had no strong fortifications either on the coast or at depth. The few batteries of coastal artillery and strong points in the landing sectors were suppressed by aircraft and naval artillery. The enemy resisted stubbornly only in the landing area of one American division, where there was found to be a German infantry division undergoing training. In that sector the amphibious landing force was able to gain only a toehold on the shore.

During the first days the German fascist command group did not take necessary countermeasures. This enabled the American troops to seize two beachheads 3-5 kilometers in size on the front and up to 10 kilometers each in depth with relative ease, and the British troops to seize a beachhead of up to 35kilometers on the front and 6-12 kilometers in depth. On the same day the amphibious landing force joined the paratroops. On June 8 the American and English troops formed a single beachhead, and by June 12 they had broadened it to 80 kilometers on the front and 10-17 kilometers in depth. On the beachhead were concentrated 16 divisions, two of them armored, and units of reinforcement. By this time the German fascist command group had brought its grouping up to 12 divisions, of which 3 were tank divisions and 1 was motorized.

---

[1] See B. Montgomery, Normandy to the Baltic. London, 1948, p. 27.

After seizing the beachhead the Allied troops were to take the port of Cherbourg as quickly as possible, because the two artificial harbors created in the landing area did not have sufficient port capacity and were not protected from storms. A storm that broke out on June 19 wrecked both harbors and destroyed approximately 300 vessels, as a result of which supplies to the troops located on the beachhead and the transfer of new forces were cut off for four days. /527

By the end of June the American-English ground forces, with the support of the navy and air force, had cleared Cotentin Peninsula of the enemy and seized the port of Cherbourg, which was found to be heavily mined and so damaged that approximately a month was required to restore it. During this whole period the battles to expand the beachhead were conducted at a slower rate than was called for in the plan. Therefore, by the end of June the Allied forces were 45-80 kilometers from the planned line.

The slow speed of the advance of the American-English forces in Normandy deprived them to a certain extent of the advantages that they had achieved through surprise. Exploiting this, by the beginning of July the Hitlerite command group had deployed 23 divisions [1] in Normandy against 25 Allied divisions.[2] However, these forces were insufficient to liquidate the beachhead. Moreover, the Germans did not have either aircraft or heavy artillery to suppress the fire of the naval artillery of the Allies and cover their forces from the air. The German divisions were brought into the battle by units as they approached the front line.[3]

At the beginning of July the 2nd British Army went over to the offensive with the purpose of seizing the important road junction of Caen; the 1st American Army was to advance first to the south toward the Loire, then to the east toward Paris. In view of the fact that the offensive was poorly prepared and began in disorganization, the battles became drawn out. In

---

[1] Captured German OKH map for July 1, 1944.

[2] See D. Eisenhower. Crusade in Europe, p. 270.

[3] On July 3 Hitler removed Rundstedt from command and in his place assigned Field Marshal G. Kluge.

seven days the American troops progressed 4-8 kilometers. After lengthy battles in which approximately 2,000 bombers took part, on July 19 the British troops finally seized Caen. On July 20 Eisenhower's adjutant, Capt. H. Butcher, wrote in his journal the response of his chief to this advance: "Yesterday Ike (Eisenhower - Ed.) observed that, having dropped approximately 7,000 tons of bombs, as the result of the most thorough bombing to which the enemy positions had ever been subjected we progressed only 7 miles. Can we permit ourselves to drop a thousand tons of bombs for every mile? The air force is extremely dissatisfied with the lack of success."[1]

Thus the Allied expeditionary force required one and a half months to seize a beachhead approximately 100 kilometers long on the front and up to 30-50 kilometers in depth, and consolidate on it. By July 25 the American-British command group had concentrated in Normandy 37 divisions (7 of them armored), 10 armored and 3 infantry brigades and 11 detached tank battalions. In the composition of the Allied forces there were approximately 2,500 tanks. The number of aircraft in the Allied air force remained as before. But the position of the Allies was made difficult by the fact that the capacity of the port of Cherbourg and the artificial harbors in the Seine bay was insufficient to ensure timely supply of new reinforcements and necessary material resources to the beachhead. Therefore the American-British command group attempted, in addition to fulfilling the objectives assigned earlier, to seize the ports of Brittany as quickly as possible.

The possibilities of the German fascist forces continued to remain limited. By July 25 the German command group was able to concentrate in /258
Normandy 29 divisions (9 of them tank divisions) and 3 detached tank battalions.[2] The headquarters of the Allied expeditionary force in Europe believed that the forces of the enemy were equivalent to 16 full divisions.[3] The enemy had at his disposal 900 tanks and approximately 500 airplanes to

---

[1] Harry C. Butcher. Three Years with Eisenhower. London, 1946, p. 531.

[2] Captured German OKH map for July 25, 1944.

[3] Report by the Supreme Commander to the Combined Chiefs of Staff on the Operations in Europe of the Allied Expeditionary Force 6 June 1944 to 8 May 1945, p. 34.

support the ground forces. Thus the Allied forces on the beachhead exceeded the German fascist forces: in men by 2.5 times; in tanks by 2.7 times; and in aircraft, as before, by 22 times.

While the American-English forces were conducting battles in Normandy, the Soviet Armed Forces, conducting their vast summer offensive, routed the enemy on the Karelian isthmus, at Petrozavodsk and in Belorussia, liberated part of Poland and approached the border of East Prussia. At the same time the Red Army was advancing in the Soviet Baltic region and in the western regions of the Ukraine. The operations of the Soviet troops facilitated the actions of the Allies in France. The success of the Red Army and a considerable intensification of the forces of the Resistance movement in Western Europe seriously alarmed the reactionary circles of the USA and England. During these days their press sharply criticized the American-British command group, which had clearly not exploited all opportunities to complete the struggle to expand the beachhead in the shortest time and begin the advance from there into the depths of France. Military-political conditions had developed in such a way that further delay by the Allied forces in Normandy was dangerous for them from both the political and the military points of view. The Hitlerite command group could at that time transfer the larger part of the forces of the 15th Army from Northern Italy to Normandy and make the further operations of the American-English forces difficult.

All of this compelled the Allied command group to take measures to begin the advance from the beachhead. On July 20 Eisenhower conferred with the commander of the 21st army group, Field Marshal B. Montgomery. "The main subject (of the conference - Ed.)" Butcher wrote in his journal, "was a discussion of the situation that has developed, which dictated that Monty (Montgomery - Ed.) rush forward with maximum force and fervor. In addition to purely military considerations, the political situation also demanded this. The domestic front[1] of both countries is naturally upset and is expressing impatience, as there they see the great success of the Russians."[2]

---

[1] By the "domestic front" Butcher means public opinion in the USA and England.

[2] H. Butcher. Three Years with Eisenhower, p. 532.

The new offensive of the American-English forces was planned for July 25. In it the forces of two American, one British and one Canadian army included in the composition of the 21st army group were to participate. According to the plan of the Allied command group the 1st American Army was to breach the defense of the enemy on the right wing of the Allied armies' front and develop the advance in the direction of the city of Avranches. With the seizure of Avranches the 3rd American Army was planned to be brought into the battle. Both of these armies were combined into a new, 12th American army group under the command of Gen. O. Bradley, and the 2nd British and 1st Canadian Armies remained in the 21st army group. Field Marshal Montgomery effected general control of the operations of the Allied ground forces in Northwestern France.

The main forces of the American troops were further to advance to the east toward Paris and the Seine River, to the southeast, south and southwest, with the goal of breaking through to the line of the Loire River and seizing the Brittany peninsula. The 2nd British and 1st Canadian Armies were assigned a passive task for the following week - to contain the opposing German fascist forces, largely tank divisions, south of the city of Caen and prepare for an advance on Falaise, which was to begin in the first days of August.

The advance of the 1st American Army, which began on July 25 after /529
heavy air preparation, developed slowly for the first three days. The main reason for this was that the air force did not suppress the enemy defense at the entire depth. In addition, the advance American units had borne heavy losses from the blows of their aircraft and could not go over to the attack in time. Only on July 27 did the American forces breach the enemy defense, progress 15-20 kilometers, and create a threat of seizure of the German fascist forces' left wing in Normandy, then of flanking them. On August 1 they took Avranches. The 3rd American Army was brought into action and began to move to the west, south and southeast. On August 6 Montgomery gave the order to advance to the Seine on the entire front.

The German command group, fearing that the American forces might outflank its grouping in the area of Mortain, began to transfer its tank divisions to the threatened sector and rapidly draw up divisions to Normandy from the 15th Army as well as units from Southern France. It calculated not only on reinforcing the defense, but also on making a counterstrike in the direction of Mortain - Avranches with the purpose of cutting off the American troops who had broken through into Bretagne from their supply bases. Concentrating five tank and seven infantry divisions on the Vire - Mortain front on August 7, the command group of German army group "B" undertook an offensive, striking its main blow with four divisions on Avranches.[1]

Although the counterstrike by the Hitlerite forces on Avranches did not bring them success, nevertheless it forced the Allied command group to change its plans somewhat. Instead of continuing the advance to the Seine, the main forces of the 1st American Army were forced to fight in the region of Vire - Mortain. Only the 3rd American Army was able to progress eastward, and on August 8 it seized Le Mans. During that time the 1st Canadian Army moved 6-8 kilometers in the direction of the city of Falaise. As the result of the breakthrough of the 3rd American Army to Le Mans and the 1st Canadian Army's movement out to the south a threat was created to both flanks and rear of the 5th Tank and 7th German Armies. However, the Allied command group was unable to exploit the advantageous conditions to encircle and destroy the main forces of these armies.

American and British historians now persistently seek for guilty parties: the former place all blame on Field Marshal Montgomery, and the latter on the American generals. There is no basis for acquitting either. The causes of the failure are hidden in the very plan of the operation: too few forces were assigned to form the perimeters of encirclement, two corps in all - one corps of the 3rd American Army for operations from the south, and one corps of the 1st Canadian Army for operations from the north. The forces of light divisions were found to be clearly insufficient to create dense inner and outer perimeters of encirclement of a large enemy grouping (over 20 divisions). Furthermore, both corps acted slowly and indecisively.

---

[1] Captured German OKH map for August 10-17 1944.

On August 13, when it was essential to cut off the German grouping's lines of retreat to the east between the cities of Argentan and Falaise, the commander of the 3rd American Army, Gen. G. Patton, carrying out the orders of Gen. Bradley, ordered the 15th corps to slow the rate of progress to bring up the rear services, and then halted the corps at Argentan. The following day Eisenhower approved this decision, citing the fact that the further advance could lead to confusion at the front. For the same reason Montgomery was also against the movement of the American forces to the north from Argentan.

The German fascist command group, seeing the collapse of the counter-strike and fearing encirclement of the entire grouping of forces in Northwestern France, gave the order on August 12 to withdraw all forces beyond the Seine. On August 14, when the most battleworthy tank formations of the Hitlerites had retreated, the 2nd Canadian corps undertook a new attempt to seize Falaise. On August 17 that city was taken. Only on August 19 the Polish tank division, progressing in the rear guard of the Canadian forces, joined the forward units of the 3rd American Army, and closed the ring of encirclement. Thus for an entire week the neck of the "Falaise bag," 20-40 kilometers on the front and up to 60 kilometers in depth, remained open. /530

The 7th German Army and units of the 5th Tank Army found themselves in the encirclement. On August 20 the fascist forces breached the perimeter of encirclement. Some of them broke out through the passage that had formed; the majority of the divisions remaining in the encirclement seeped out in small groups through the loose front of the American-English forces. The most battleworthy tank and infantry divisions of the 5th Tank and partially the 7th Army broke out of the "bag," ensuring the retreat of all of army group "B." The main forces of this army group, which had borne considerable losses in the battles, retreated beyond the Seine by August 26. The Allied forces reached the Seine after them and began to force the river.[1]

---

[1] At this time more changes took place in the command of the German forces in the West. Learning of Kluge's participation in a conspiracy, Hitler replaced him with Field Marshal V. Model.

Thus from July 25 through August 26 the American-English forces seized the entire territory of Northwestern France, with the exception of several port cities on the Brittany peninsula. The preparation, landing and military operations of the Allied forces took place without significant resistance on the part of the German fascist navy.

On August 15, when the struggle in Northwestern France had been largely completed, American and French troops landed in the south of France. The operation was effected under conditions of an absolute Allied superiority in forces. Its conduct was by no means caused by the need to hasten the rout of the German fascist grouping in Western Europe. At that time the Allied forces had already reached the Seine and Paris. The main factor that compelled the American-English to bring its forces into Southern France was the great activity of the French Resistance movement. Its armed forces, numbering over 500,000 fighters, had gone over to the offensive and liberated entire departements south of the Loire and west of the Rhone, as well as the Western Alps east of Grenoble. In August a favorable situation had developed for the complete liberation of Southern France by the forces of the Resistance. The Americans did not want to permit this, wishing to increase their influence in Western and Central Europe.

The incursion into Southern France was effected by the 7th American Army and the French Army "B"[1] consisting of ten divisions (three American and seven French) under the general control of the commander and headquarters of the 7th American Army. The plan of the Allied command group called for an assault landing and the seizure of a beachhead west of the city of Cannes, the accumulation of forces and equipment there, and then an advance along the beachhead and seizing the ports of Marseilles and Toulon. Only after that was it considered possible to begin an advance to the north.[2]

---

[1] In August 1944 army "B" was renamed the 1st French Army.

[2] See Seventh United States Army. Report of Operations, France and Germany, 1944-1945. Vol. 1, Heidelberg, 1946, p. 57.

The amphibious landing was effected in the area west of Cannes after the landing of paratroops. Meeting weak enemy resistance, from August 15 through 19 the American and French troops seized a beachhead up to 90 kilometers on the front and approximately 60 kilometers in depth.

On August 19 the Germans began to retreat from Southern and Southwestern France to the West German border. The American-French command group, unaware of the enemy's intentions, directed its forces not into the depths of the country, but to the west, along the coast toward Toulon and Marseilles, which promoted the retreat of the German forces. By August 28 the French forces, with the help of the armed forces of the Resistance and the rebelling population, seized Toulon. A revolt flared up in Marseilles. In it 20,000 fighters of the internal armed forces took part, drawing with them tens of thousands of people of Marseilles. The rebels almost completely /531 cleared the city and port before the arrival of the French forces. Meanwhile, the Americans, moving slowly northward, broke through to the Durance River.

The 19th German Army, sensing no strong action by the American forces, completed its retreat to the Rhone valley by August 25 and began to retreat to the north. In spite of the fact that the situation had changed radically, the American command group held to the previously developed plan of operations. The Allied forces continued to move after the retreating enemy extremely slowly. This allowed the 19th Germnn fascist Army to retreat without obstacle through St. Etienne and Dijon to the north.

4. The liberation of Paris

After the landing of the American-English forces the Central Committee of the French Communist Party issued a proclamation in which it called on the French people to increase the struggle for the liberation of their country, for the establishment of a democratic order. In the address it was explained that national liberation was unthinkable without a national rebellion. The CC FCP sharply condemned wait-and-see tactics. "The sacred duty of all patriots, and above all of Communists," it stressed, "is to unite,

to take arms, to fight, in order to draw all of France as quickly as possible into a merciless struggle against the invaders and traitors and thereby to bring the day of victory nearer."[1]

The Commission of Military Operations of the National Resistance Council stated in a directive issued in June 1944, "A national rebellion, which is inseparable from national liberation, is an urgent necessity for the country... Rebellion is more expedient than waiting it out or liberation by the Allies."[2] In the directive the tasks of the Internal Armed Forces were defined. They were to conduct operations on the instructions of Allied headquarters and block the supply of troops to the enemy, as well as their retreat. Coordination of the operations of the Internal Armed Forces was entrusted to the Liberation Committees. On June 21 a special order was issued supplementing this directive, in which it was said that as the result of operations of the Internal Armed Forces part of the territory of France had already been liberated, and that to hasten the liberation of the country it was necessary to "seize enemy arms depots, attack and disarm isolated enemy units, take prisoners."[3] The need to mobilize to clear the territory of all resources of the enemy for the final liberation of France was particularly stressed.

While Communists were calling on the people to revolt, the bourgeois parties participating in the Resistance movement were attempting to prevent it. The right wing Socialists also held such a position. However, the policy of these and others met a sharp rebuff from patriots. Under the leadership of the Communist Party the workers of France intensified the struggle for liberation. Mass strikes, which seized the most important centers of France in May 1944, grew in the beginning of June into a people's rebellion against the German fascist occupiers and Vichyites. "After June 6," writes M. Torez, "we became witnesses to mass revolts from Bretagne to the

---

[1] "L'Humanité," 15 June 1944.

[2] R. Villate (Rethal). The Battle of Paris (19-25 August 1944). "Revue d'histoire de la deuxième guerre mondiale," No 30, April, 1958, p. 60.

[3] Ibid.

Alps and from the Pyrenees to the Jure. Whole departements were liberated by their own efforts. This was a national rebellion in the true sense of the word."[1]

The armed rebellion took on ever greater scope. The detachments of the /532
Resistance movement and the rebelling workers liberated many cities, including such major ones as Lyons and Toulouse, and cleared a considerable part of the territory south of the Loire and west of the Rhone of the enemy. By mid-August the occupiers had been expelled from 18 departments of that region, as well as from the entire territory from the Western Alps to the Italian and Swiss borders. The local liberation committees and the detachments of the patriotic militia introduced order in those places and liquidated detached groups of fascist troops.

The culmination of the struggle of the French people for the liberation of their homeland was the rebellion in Paris, which began on August 19. There were riots there even in July. In connection with the national holiday celebrating the taking of the Bastille on July 14 an address was published by the National Front, in which calling a general strike and expanding the armed struggle in every way were presented as immediate objectives. The National Front called on patriots to join the ranks of franc-tireurs and partisans, to sabotage the enemy's production, attack his transportation, disrupt means of communication, and seize supply depots of arms and ammunition. "The hour of liberation has struck! The fate of the homeland is in the hands of 40 million French people!" - the address ended with these words.[2] On the same day 45,000 Parisians went out into the streets of the city.[3] This was an unusual demonstration. For the first time the columns of demonstrators walked under the protection of the Internal Armed Forces. On July 16 the railroad workers of Paris went on

---

[1] Maurice Torez. Syn naroda (Son of the People). M., Izd-vo inostrannoy literatury, 1960, p. 175-176.

[2] Pierre Bourget et Charles Lacretelle. Sur les murs de Paris 1940-1944. Paris, 1959, p. 169.

[3] See. J. Hugonnot. Les journées d'août 1944 a Paris. "Cahiers Internationaux de la Résistance." No 5, 1961, p. 36.

strike. They were also supported by workers in other regions of France. In spite of the fact that the occupiers and their accomplices arrested many striking workers, the struggle of the workers did not cease, but rather continued to grow. On August 10 on the call of the Communist Party the railroad workers of almost the entire Parisian center stopped work. Communications workers joined them.[1]

The Provisional Government of the French Republic in Algeria, led by de Gaulle, which was formed on June 2, 1944 on the basis of the National Liberation Committee, andthe reactionary circles of France, fearing the Communists' coming to power, took all measures to impede the rebellion in Paris. De Gaulle's henchment, with the help of the chairman of the NRC J. Bido, attempted to prevent the passing of a resolution on a rebellion by the National Resistance Council, and when they were unsuccessful they began to rally the reactionary forces in Paris and openly called on the masses not to raise a rebellion.

The reactionary circles of France had great hopes that the American forces would rapidly take Paris and that the 2nd French tank division under the command of Gen. F. Leclerc, which operated in the composition of the American Army, would be brought into the city. This division, which was formed by the National Liberation Committee, was largely staffed by de Gaullists. De Gaulle's chief representative at the National Headquarters of the FFI in Paris, Gen. J. Shaban-Delmas, proposed that the Allies be petitioned to bring their forces into the city quickly.[2] De Gaulle supported him, and on August 21 sent a letter to Eisenhower in which he informed him of the situation in the capital and proposed "that Paris be taken as soon as possible by French and Allied forces..."[3] Simultaneously negotiations were being held with the command group of the German fascist forces through the Swedish consul in Paris, R. Nordling, on concluding a truce and handing the city over to the Anglo-American command group.

---

[1] The Paris Uprising 19 August-26 August 1944. Preface by Jacques Duclos. Paris, p. 10.

[2] See "Novaya i noveyshaya istoriya," 1959, No. 1, p. 90.

[3] C. de Gaulle. War Memoirs, Vol. 2, p. 850.

14 JUILLET 1944,
TOUS AU COMBAT !

Pas un homme, pas une femme, pas un jeune, pas un vieux au travail, grève générale !
Les Alliés se battent. L'Armée Rouge est sur la route de Berlin.
Les Forces françaises intérieures (F.T.P.F., Corps-Francs, Maquisards) se couvrent de gloire.
Tous les Français et Françaises doivent se lever et se battre.

Parisiens, Parisiennes,

FORMEZ vos Milices patriotiques ! RENFORCEZ les F.T.P.F. !

ARMEZ-VOUS en désarmant l'ennemi ! SABOTEZ sa production ! HARCELEZ ses convois montant en Normandie ! ATTAQUEZ ses transports ferroviaires, fluviaux et routiers ! EMPAREZ-VOUS de ses dépôts d'armes et de vivres ! DETRUISEZ ses moyens de transmissions et de liaisons, ses poteaux indicateurs, ses postes d'observations ! ABATTEZ les boches, les miliciens de Darnand et les traîtres ! LUTTEZ pour la libération de la Patrie !

Plus les Français se battront, plus la guerre sera courte, moins la France sera meurtrie.

En ce jour anniversaire de la prise de la Bastille chaque Patriote doit, par tous les moyens, abattre un boche, un milicien, un traître ! Chaque Patriote doit participer aux manifestations devant les Monuments aux morts, devant les Mairies, dans les grandes artères.

Chaque Patriote doit hisser le drapeau tricolore, mettre une cocarde à la boutonnière, diffuser des milliers de tracts et de journaux.

Chaque Patriote doit s'enrôler dans les F.T.P.F. ou dans la Milice patriotique.

« Le combat est un devoir sacré », a dit le général de Gaulle.

Aux armes, citoyens ! Formez vos bataillons !
Marchons ! Marchons !
Qu'un sang impur abreuve nos sillons !

Les armes à la main, drapeau tricolore en tête, la « Marseillaise » aux lèvres :

Attaquons, toutes les Bastilles hitlériennes !

Précipitons la défaite de l'ennemi, par l'insurrection nationale, inséparable de la Libération nationale.

UNISSONS-NOUS ! ARMONS-NOUS ! BATTONS-NOUS !

A l'action, avant le 14 Juillet !

A l'action, le 14 Juillet !

A l'action, après le 14 Juillet !

L'heure de la revanche a sonné ! Le sort de la Patrie est entre les mains des 40 MILLIONS de Français !

Pas de traînards ! Donnons le coup de grâce à l'ennemi, déjà chancelant ! Paris, capitale de la Liberté, doit montrer l'exemple.

Sauvons notre honneur ! Sauvons notre avenir ! Sauvons nos enfants !

Comme en 1792, Volontaires de la Liberté : Debout ! En avant !

Au bout du combat, il y a la victoire, comme à Valmy !

Il y a la France qui sera libre, démocratique et indépendante !

Le FRONT NATIONAL de lutte pour la libération et l'indépendance de la France

The call of the National Front for the struggle for the liberation and independence of France

/533

All of these antinational actions were thwarted by the Communist Party of France, supported by the Internal Armed Forces of the Paris region (they numbered over 35,500 persons by August 15) and the patriotic militia, which consisted of approximately 50,000 persons. /534

In the last underground issue of the newspaper "Humanite," which was published on August 15, an article was printed by the Secretary of the CC FCP, J. Duclos, "The Battle for Paris." Recalling the heroic struggle of the French patriots against the fascist invaders and Vichyites, and the revolutionary traditions of the Parisian proletariat, he asserted that the time for the battle for the capital of France had come. "... Paris will show again that it is true to its traditions," wrote Duclos. "Paris will be the main forger of its own liberation..." Essentially the article set forth the plan of the rebellion, and outlined the tasks of the partisans, franc-tireurs and patriotic militia of the Paris region. The article ended with this fervent call: "Parisian men and women, young and old, all join the battle, take part with every means you have, so that in our great capital, in the heart of France, a general strike will break out - a national rebellion. This will help us to win the battle for Paris in the shortest possible time and draw nearer the hour of the complete liberation of our homeland."[1]

On August 18 the General Labor Confederation as well as the Paris Liberation Committee called on all workers to raise the rebellion. "Beat your oppressors mercilessly!"[2] - the summons ended with these words. A group of deputies, Communists, selected at the last National Assembly for the Paris region, also addressed the workers with a similar call. The buildings of the police prefecture and the city hall fell into their hands. Youth detachments attacked German troops and seized weapons. In the afternoon clashes of the insurgents with the occupiers took place in all streets of the city. By the end of the day the rebels fully controlled 43 out of 80

---

[1] J. Duclos. Selected Works, Vol. I, p. 345, 347.

[2] The Liberation - the Work of a People and Not of One Man. Paris, 1958, p. 17; "L'Humanite," 21 Aug., 1944.

blocks of Paris. The Hitlerites were concentrated at several strategically important points, but they could no longer oppose the rebellion that had begun. On the following day it embraced all of Paris and its suburbs with the exception of the western sector of the city, where the population was predominantly bourgeois.

With each day the rebellion in Paris expanded. The patriots built barricades, not only in the city, but on the main highways leading toward it as well. By evening of August 22 the insurgents had liberated 70 blocks of the capital. All attempts by the occupiers to wrest the initiative from the hands of the rebels were unsuccessful. The German command group did not have the equipment or forces to help its garrison in Paris. In helpless rage it gave the order to cause as much destruction in the city as possible, and above all to blow up the bridges. "Leaving Paris," it said in the orders, "will be possible only on the condition that the destruction indicated has been carried out, and if losses of German troops reach 30 percent of the available numerical staff."[1]

However, the patriots did not allow the occupiers to effect their vile plans. On August 23 and 24 the main forces of the German fascist troops were routed, and the remnants were blockaded at several points (the Senate, the Military School, the Hotel "Majestic," the Champs Elysees, the barracks of Prince Eugene and the Place de la Republique). In the morning of August 25 the last storm began, ending in the total victory of the rebels. Tanks from a tank company of Gen. Leclerc's 2nd tank division, which had entered the city the previous evening, also took part. By evening the remnants of the German garrison capitulated. The capitulation was accepted by Col. Rolle-Tanguy along with Gen. Leclerc, which was an indication of the enormous /536 role that the population of Paris had played in the liberation of the city. On the day of the victorious conclusion of the rebellion de Gaulle arrived in the capital.

---

[1] Quot. from "Novaya i noveyshaya istoriya," 1959, No. 1, p. 103.

Some of the underground newspapers that were published in France in 1944. In the foreground is the central organ of the French Communist Party, the newspaper "Humanite" of August 23, with a call for a general rebellion.

L535

By the start of the rebellion the 3rd American Army was 20-50 kilometers from Paris. There were no German fascist forces in their path capable of offering serious resistance. Nevertheless, on the orders of the American command group they did not enter the city and did not help the rebels. The plan of the Allied command group called only for the encirclement and blockading of Paris. Gen. O. Bradley, whose troops were in the approaches to the city, said during those days, "...we will first get Paris in a pincers, and then we will enter its streets when we deem it necessary... I may admit that we are not rushing to liberate Paris right now by any means, although I ask you not to pass my words on to the French... It would be good for Paris to draw its belt a little tighter and live with the Germans a little longer... In spite of the threat of hunger in Paris, I am firmly resolved not to deviate from the intended plan."[1] And only after it became obvious that the victory of the rebels was inevitable did the American command group, on 24 August send the 2nd French tank and 4th American divisions to Paris.

Bringing their troops into the capital, the Anglo-American command group and de Gaulle began to take measures to weaken the Resistance forces. In his memoirs Eisenhower writes, "...Gen. de Gaulle informed me of some of his concerns and difficulties...The rapid establishment of his authority and protection of order were an important task, because life in the city was disorganized. He asked me to provide for his disposal two American divisions, so he could use them, as he said, for a demonstration of strength and to consolidate his position...I understood de Gaulle's difficulty, and since I had no divisions that could be left in Paris temporarily, I promised him that two of our divisions moving toward the front would pass along the main roads of the city. I proposed that these divisions should march ceremoniously through Paris, and asked him (de Gaulle- Ed.) to arrange to review the troops."[2]

---

[1] O. Bradley. Zapiski soldata. (Notes of a Soldier.) M., Izd-vo inostrannoy literatury, 1957, p. 416-417.

[2] D. Eisenhower. Crusade in Europe, p. 297-298.

On August 28 de Gaulle signed a decree disbanding the French Internal Armed Forces. He simultaneously disbanded the Commission of Military Operations and the National Headquarters of the FFI. The forces created by the people and tempered in the struggle against the German fascist invaders, numbering over 500,000 patriots, were to be disarmed. The interests of the further conduct of the war demanded the organization of a million-strong army on their foundation. The progressive forces, above all the Communist Party, met the decree with indignation. De Gaulle did not succeed even so in putting it into effect. The FFI existed until the complete liberation of France. Until the end of September they covered the French-Italian and French-Spanish borders and blockaded enemy garrisons in fortified posts on the west coast of the country.

The growth of the influence of the French Communist Party increased the anxiety of the reactionary circles of the USA and England. Even before this these circles had conducted a policy of preventing France's rebirth as a great power. In his memoirs Eisenhower recalls that when he was assigned to the post of commander in chief of the Allied expeditionary force in Europe he received certain instructions from Roosevelt on the matter. Eisenhower writes that, discussing the question of whether France could regain its prestige in Europe, Roosevelt was quite "concerned with the question of methods of establishing control over certain strategic points in the French empire which, he felt, France would no longer be in a condition to hold."[1] De Gaulle described the position of the USA regarding France thus: "Since America entered the war Roosevelt had resolved that the world will be an American world, and that he alone has the right to dictate the terms for the organization of that world - he wanted the countries that were crushed by the trials of the war to recognize his right to judge, and believed, specifically, that he would be the savior of France and the ruler of its destiny. Thus the circumstance that at the very height of the struggle France could rise...as a sovereign and independent state was contrary to his intentions."[2] /537

[1] D. Eisenhower. Crusade in Europe, p. 136.

[2] C. de Gaulle. War Memoirs, Vol. 2, p. 95.

The governments of the USA and England used any pretense to delay giving help to France in forming an army in the liberated territory. When on July 8 the chief of the French general staff, A. Betoir, who was at that time in Washington, requested that the government of the United States provide arms to equip 25 French divisions (above all 30 infantry battalions, 92 artillery batteries and 30 tank battalions) Eisenhower did not support him. The American command group planned to use the forces formed in the liberated countries only as work teams and to serve as observation forces on lines of communication. On September 7 the French general staff again raised the question in Washington of the supply of weapons for five divisions. However, the chief of staff of the American Army, Gen. D. Marshall, responded that only three divisions could be considered, and expressed regret that the French did not wish to form observation service units and work teams.[1] Eisenhower finally agreed to provide arms for two French divisions, demanding, however, that France provide 243,000 men by October 31, 1944 for auxiliary services.[2] The British agreed to take part in arming the French army only on November 20.

The imperialist ruling circles of the USA and England particularly feared the coming to power of progressive forces led by the Communist Party. Therefore, in spite of the fact that the policy of the National Liberation Committee led by de Gaulle was not completely in the interests of the United States and England, they were forced to support it. On October 23 the Provisional Government of the French Republic was officially recognized by the Soviet Union, the USA and England. But this did not mean that the policy of the American and British ruling circles had changed concerning France. The goal of the policy was, as before, to prevent the rebirth of France.

The Soviet government conducted an essentially opposite policy. True to the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of

---

[1] See M. Baudot. The French Resistance and the Allies, p. 13.

[2] Ibid, p. 14.

other countries, it respected the national rights of France, and sincerely tried to help the French workers to restore the national independence of their country. The desire of the French people to strengthen the relations of friendship and cooperation with the Soviet people that had developed during the struggle against the common enemy met with the complete understanding of the government of the USSR.

In the aims of consolidating the international position of France, the government of the Soviet Union achieved its inclusion in the five great powers that were permanent members of the Security Council. On November 11, 1944 on the insistence of the Soviet government the Provisional Government of the French Republic joined the European Consulting Commission as the fourth permanent member, whereby the question of Frances' participation in the occupation of Germany and in the work of the Supervisory Council in Germany was predetermined.

Simultaneously the government of the USSR took steps to further improve Franco-Soviet relations. The negotiations held between the Soviet government /538 and de Gaulle in Moscow in December 1944 were of great significance. The main question in the negotiations was that of mutual assistance in the struggle against German aggression. The government of the Soviet Union felt that the interests of both countries, their geographical positions, the constant threat from German imperialism, demanded a close alliance between France and the USSR. "...France and Russia," the head of the Soviet government emphasized, "must understand one another better, because they are the first to take the blow. They must be closer to one another than other countries."[1]

During the negotiations it became clear that the leaders of France then understood the vital need for an alliance with the USSR to prevent any threat on the part of Germany in the future and to restore France as a great power. Analyzing the history of Franco-German relations from 1870

---

[1] Soviet-French Relations during the Great Patriotic War 1941-1945. Docs. and Maters. M., Gospolitizdat, 1959, p. 378.

through 1940, de Gaulle said, "France was subjected to German invasion three times. During the first invasion France was crushed, and lost its provinces and prestige. The second time the French gained the victory after the German invasion, but only at the cost of huge losses. During the third invasion France was totally occupied by the enemy and almost lost its independence."[1] In the opinion of de Gaulle, the main cause of the defeat of France during the third German invasion was that "France was not with Russia, it did not have an agreement or an effective treaty with her."[2] De Gaulle admitted that between France and the Soviet Union there were "no discrepancies," and that they had "identical interests in relation to Germany," that both states "were concerned with rapid and reliable security means." Therefore, de Gaulle stated, "French policy compells the French to wish above all for a mutual aid pact with the Soviet Union."[3]

As the result of the negotiations, on December 10, 1944 in Moscow a treaty of alliance and mutual aid between the USSR and the French Republic was signed.[4] Both Contracting Parties assumed the obligation to render mutual aid in the war against fascist Germany and not to conduct any peace negotiations with that country except by mutual consent. The Parties accepted the obligation not to participate in any alliances or coalitions directed against the other Party, to take joint measures for the disarmament of Germany, and to render each other military aid in the event that a final new aggression should be unleashed.

The Soviet-French treaty, which was concluded for a twenty-year period, was directed not only toward achieving victory over Hitlerite Germany, but also toward ensuring the peace and safety of the peoples of Europe in the postwar period. The treaty responded to the fundamental interests of the peoples of both states. However, the representatives of the ruling classes of France very soon forgot this.

---

[1] Soviet-French Relations during the Great Patriotic War 1941-1945. Docs. and Maters. M., Gospolitizdat, 1959, p. 375.

[2] Ibid, p. 340.

[3] Ibid, p. 377.

[4] See Foreign Policy of the Soviet Union during the Patriotic War, Vol. II, pp. 326-330.

5. The expulsion of the enemy from France, Belgium and Central Italy

The intense struggle and the huge losses that the German fascist army bore on the Soviet-German front in the summer of 1944 did not permit the Hitlerite command group to adequately reinforce its forces in the west. By the end of August the losses of the German forces in Western Europe /539
had reached 300,000 men;[1] the total numerical strength of units and reinforcements arriving at the front in June-August did not exceed

[1] See F. S. Pog'yu. Verkhovnoye komandovaniye. (High command.) M., Voyenizdat, 1959, p. 267.

40,000.[1] Under these conditions the German fascist command group was forced to transfer two tank and one infantry division to France from the reserves of the high command, and two motorized divisions from Italy.[2] By the end of August, of the 35 divisions operating in Northeastern France, Belgium and Holland, 25 were in the region of Chantilly - Dieppe - Laon. There were no fascist forces in the direction of Rheims - Saarbrucken, and there were only an insignificant number in the direction of Rheims - Brussels - Antwerp.[3] Extremely favorable conditions had developed to destroy the main forces of the enemy in Northeastern France. The American and English forces on the left wing of the front and in the center broke through to the Seine, on the right wing to the Marne, and seized beachheads on its east bank, encircling the enemy grouping from the south. An extremely dangerous situation had developed for the Hitlerites. The German command group was forced to reject plans to organize a defense on the east bank of the Seine from Havre to Paris and further along the Somme River, and decided to withdraw its grouping from Northern France. On August 26 the German forces began to withdraw to the Siegfried defensive line toward Germany's border.[4]

The Allied command group did not exploit the possibilities available to rout the German fascist forces in France. Furthermore, the American and English generals were unable to agree quickly on the goals of the further advance. Montgomery insisted that the main blow be struck on the northern flank, circling the Ruhr from the north. He demanded that a large part of the American forces located in Western Europe be made subordinate to him and that he be given a considerable amount of transportation equipment and supplies. General Bradley considered it more expedient to circle the Ruhr from the south and force the Rhine in the sector of Karlsruhe - Wiesbaden. In this argument the point was not to develop the best plan to rout the enemy, but political prestige: which of the Allies would play the greater

---

[1] See "Voyenno-istoricheskiy zhurnal," 1960, No.5, p. 91; H. Speidel. Invasion 1944, S. 121-137.

[2] Captured German OKH map for July-August 1944.

[3] Captured German OKH map for August 20-30 1944.

[4] On September 4 Rundstedt again became commander in chief of the forces in the West. Model was appointed commander of army group "B."

role in achieving the final victory, whose troops would penetrate to the center of Germany sooner. The commander in chief of the Allied forces, Eisenhower, made a compromise decision - to progress forward on the entire front, join the forces advancing from Southern France, break through to the Rhine on its entire length from the Swiss border to the sea, seize beachheads on the east bank of the river, and create a threat to the Ruhr.[1] Eisenhower did not set the Allied forces the task of completing the rout of the enemy's armed forces in Western Europe. He set the goal of breaking through to the Rhine as soon aspossible, in order to develop the advance in the central part of Germany, and make an incursion into Czechoslovakia and Austria.

After regrouping the American, English and French forces began to pursue the enemy. During the period from August 26 through September 1 the 21st army group, meeting almost no resistance, crossed the Seine and moved to the northeast. With this the troops of the 1st Canadian Army, blockading Havre, broke through to the lower reaches of the Somme northwest of Amiens. The 2nd British Army advanced rapidly in the direction of Brussels and Antwerp.

The successful progress of the Allied forces was promoted by the armed rebellion of the Belgian patriots, begun in September 1944 under the leadership of theCommunist Party. Before the arrival of the British forces the rebels liberated several provinces and cities from the occupiers, including /540 one of the largest ports in Europe, Antwerp. They struck blows on the retreating enemy and conducted reconnaissance in the interests of the Allied forces.[2] In an order of October 3, 1944 Gen. Eisenhower, speaking of the speed of the Allied forces' advance, observed that it was determined to no small degree by the help of the Belgian patriots. "Now," he stressed, "when the land of Belgium has almost been liberated, I, as the commander in chief of the Allied expeditionary forces, wish to render what is due to the officers

---

[1] See D. Eisenhower. Crusade in Europe, p. 293.

[2] See R. Seth. The Undaunted. The Story of Resistance in Western Europe, p. 276; George Lovinfosse. La Resistance belge et les Allies, p. 19. Report at the 2nd International Conference on the history of the Resistance movement in Europe held in Milan in March 1961.

and soldiers of the Resistance, who fought splendidly. They can be proud of their outstanding heroism, which was displayed so well during the liberation of their dear homeland."[1]

On September 3 the advance British units of the 21st army group entered Brussels, and the following day they entered Antwerp, which had been liberated by the Belgian patriots. The Hitlerite forces still continued to hold the ports of Northern France and to blockade the mouth of the Schelde River, through which naval vessels entered the port of Antwerp. This hindered the supplying of the American-British forces. To the right the 3rd American Army from the 12th army group progressed toward the Saar, meeting no serious resistance. North of that army the 1st American Army advanced to the northeast from the region of Paris.

As a result of the Allies' breakthrough to Antwerp the main grouping of German fascist troops found itself split into two parts: the 15th Army consisting of ten divisions was thrown back to the coast south of Dunkirk, and the 7th Army (approximately nine divisions) retreated under the blows of the 1st American Army to the line of Namur - Charlesville. To the south eight divisions of the 1st German Army retreated to the line of Sedan - Metz - Nancy under the onslaught of the 3rd American Army. Conditions were created to blockade and completely destroy the 15th Army of the enemy in the coastal region and simultaneously to complete another important task - to open an access from the sea to Antwerp and thereby considerably facilitate the supplying of the Allied forces, whose bases were still in Normandy.

But on September 4 Gen. Eisenhower issued an order to the 21st army group and the 1st American Army to advance to the east in order to cross the Rhine as quickly as possible, create a threat to the Ruhr from the west and flank it from the north.[2] This enabled the enemy to break out of the

---

[1] Quot from R. Seth. The Undaunted. The Story of Resistance in Western Europe, p. 273.

[2] See B. Montgomery. Normandy to the Baltic, pp. 128-129.

"bag" formed on the coast. From September 5 through 12, while the American-English forces were moving out to the planned lines, the German fascist command group withdrew the main mass of its forces and organized a defense in the southern part of Holland and on the Siegfried line. The attempts of the Americans to overcome the Siegfried line on the move were not successful.

In southern France the American and French forces were moving slowly in the northern direction after the retreating enemy. At the end of August the patriots, not awaiting the arrival of the Allies, cleared Lyons of the fascist invaders by their own efforts. When on September 3 the American units entered the city it had already been completely liberated. Since the Americans had organized almost no pursuit of the enemy, by September 5 the 19th German Army had retreated to the region of le Creusot - Besancon - Dijon. Soon they were joined by the troops retreating from the coast of the Bay of Biscay. Thus all German forces had left Western and Southern France. By evening of September 12 they adjoined the left flank of army group "B" in the region south of Nancy. On September 10 the forward units of the 1st French Army in the region of Dijon joined the right flank units of the 10th American Army. By mid-September a continuous front had formed at the western border of Germany.

The plan of the further operations of the American-English forces in /541
Europe was considered at the second Quebec Conference, which was held from September 11 through 16, 1944. The main strategic goals came to the following: to strengthen their position in France, overcome the Siegfried line, force the Rhine, seize beachheads on its east bank and thereby create favorable conditions for an invasion of Germany; to continue the advance in Italy in order to break through later to the Danube Valley; to bring troops into Greece. At the conference the question of the need to seize important political and strategic centers of Europe before the arrival of the Red Army was also considered.[1] On September 22 Eisenhower's headquarters in Versailles

[1] See W. Churchill. The Second World War, vol. VI, pp. 131, 137.

approved the final version of the plan of military operations in Europe. It called for the main blow to be struck on the northern wing of the front of the American-English forces with the goal of flanking the Ruhr from the north; the second blow was to be struck in the center for a breakthrough to the Rhine south of the Ruhr. The advance was then to be further developed into the depths of Germany.

On September 17 the 21st army group began to advance with the objective of seizing a beachhead on the Rhine north of the Ruhr, clearing the mouth of the Schelde River of the enemy and creating conditions for the further progress of the American-English forces. The 2nd British Army, the 1st Allied Paratroop Army (three paratroop divisions and a Polish parachute brigade), and the 1st Canadian Army participated in the operation. The striking of a blow by the 2nd British Army on a narrow front and a paratroop landing in three regions (total depth approximately 90 kilometers) on the line of movement of its main forces made it possible even on the first day to effect a deep breach. This was promoted by the strike of railroad workers in the Netherlands that began on September 17, and in which approximately 30,000 persons took part.[1] However, the operation of the 2nd British Army was unsuccessful. The passivity of the American and Canadian Armies gave the German fascist command group the opportunity to draw up to the breakthrough sectors forces retreating from near Dunkirk and from other sectors of the front, and to create a threat of encirclement of the main forces of the 2nd British and 1st Allied Paratroop Armies. Only at the end of the month was it possible to improve the position of the British forces. It required great efforts to hold the beachhead on the Maas River at Nijmegen. However, the Allies did not break through to the Rhine.

In connection with the excessive length of communications it grew more difficult to supply the forces every day. The greater part of military cargos arrived through the ports of Normandy. Therefore the American-English

---

[1] See A.J.C. Ruter. Stop and Go. The Netherland railway in wartime. The Hague, 1960, pp. 221-228, 475.

command group was forced to put off the seizure of a beachhead on the Rhine temporarily in order to raise the blockade in the approaches to Antwerp. The military operations, which from the very start took on an extended character, lasted for over a month. In the course of these operations the troops of the 21st army group cleared the mouth of the Schelde of the enemy and broke through to the Maas River from Grave to its mouth. The first Allied mine sweeper entered the port of Antwerp on November 4, and the first caravan of vessels on November 28.

To the south, in October and November the troops of the 12th army group were also drawn into extended battles, but were unable to break the Siegfried line. Only in the zone of operations of the 6th army group[1] did American and French troops break through to the Rhine and seize Strasbourg.

Thus in seven months the Allied forces, with the help of the rebelling French and Belgian patriots, almost completely liberated France and Belgium from the German occupiers.

The advance of the Red Army in the summer and fall of 1944, which swallowed up the main reserves of the enemy, created favorable conditions for the operations of the Allies of American-English forces on the Turin shore, and the enemy tried in an organized way to draw off the main forces of the 10th army.

On 23 May the troops of the 8th British army left for the Liri River; the 5th American army, not encountering serious resistance, continued to advance toward Rome. On the same day the 6th American corps turned to the offensive. It delivered an attack in the general direction toward Cisterna di Roma and Velletri. The German-Fascist forces stubbornly resisted, ensuring the withdrawal of the main forces of the 10th army. Only on 25 May the American troops occupied Cisterna di Roma and began to advance toward Velleteri.

[1] The 6th army group was formed on September 15, 1944. It included the 1st French and 7th American Armies.

In the morning of this same day units of the 6th American corps were joined with the main forces of the 5th American army, which approached from the south. The 10th German army was thrust back into the valley of the Liri and to the mountains north of it. Conditions were formed for the encirclement and complete annihalation of the German troops. But the American-British command directed the troops of the left wing of the 15th army group toward Rome. This facilitated the fate of the 10th German-Fascist army, which was able to withdraw to the north.

The 8th British army, in advancing frontally, forced the enemy out. The 14th German army was ordered to disengage from the allied forces, having left Rome without a battle, and withdraw to the north. The 10th army also received the order to retreat.

On the night of 4 June the rear-guards of the 14 army left Rome, and during the day troops of the 5th American army entered into it. In the second half of June, in the region of Orvieto, it was joined with the 14th army and together with it continued to retreat to the north. The allied forces slowly made headway after the retreated enemy.

Thus the plan of the American and British command to occupy prior to the beginning of the operation "Overlord" the Central Italy and depart into the valley of the Po River was not carried out. Churchill wrote in his memoirs that the Anglo-American forces, having pinned down in Italy the German divisions found there, furthered the success of the invasion of the allied forces into Normandy.[1] Of course, operations of the allied forces in Italy somewhat contained the German-Fascist troops. It would be incorrect to deny this. But Churchill clearly overstated the importance of the containing operations of the American-British troops on the Apennines peninsula. In fact, at the end of 1943, 19 divisions of allied forces operated against 21 German divisions and by the beginning of 1944, against 22-28 divisions. The drawing up of greater forces than was assumed

[1]W. Churchill, Op. cit., pp. 51-52, 60.

disrupted the plan of the allied forces adopted in Quebec and refined then at conferences in Teheran and Cairo. Such a deviation from the outlined plan reflected the American and British contradictions on the question as to where, in the first place, their main forces should be directed in Europe, and it was indicative of the concessions the Americans made to the British, who tried to capture Italy in order to break through to the Balkans. Having intensified their forces on the Italian front with nine divisions, the allied forces thereby deprived themselves of the possibility of using them in the main operation. All of this could only affect negatively the conducting of military operations in Western Europe.

The former Hitlerite general, Z. Westfahl, in analyzing the combat operations of the American-British forces in Italy, confirms: "...if the western allied forces showed more boldness in the solution to the operational problems, they could have victoriously concluded their campaign on the Apennines peninsula much earlier and with considerably fewer losses for themselves and others."[2]

---

[2]World War, 1939-1945 Years. p. 121.

On the Gothic line the German command group kept 18-19 of its 25 available /543
divisions. The rest waged the struggle, with the police units, against the Italian partisans and guarded the Ligurian and Adriatic coast and the troops' lines of communication.[1] In the second half of August the Allies prepared to breach the Gothic line. At this time the 15th Army group had 23 divisions in its composition. Air support was entrusted to the American and British airborne armies.

The plan of the operation called for the striking of two blows: the main blow with nine divisions of the 8th British Army along the Adriatic coast from the region of Pesaro on Rimini and further on Bologna, and the second with five divisions of the 5th American Army from the region of Florence, also on Bologna.

The advance of the 8th British Army, which began on the night of August 26, and of the 5th American Army, which began on the night of August 29, developed slowly. By September 5 they were able to overcome the forward defense zone and reach the Gothic line, and in the zone of the 8th British Army they penetrated it. In the period from September 6 through 14 regrouping of forces was carried out, after which the breaching of the Gothic line itself began. In September-October the speed of the advance remained quite slow, and the military operations took on the nature of wearing down the enemy. However, the Allied forces were also worn down in these battles. On October 6 the commander of the 5th American Army requested reinforcements and rest for the troops in letters to Alexander and Marshall.[2] The American-English command group demanded that the offensive continue.

Carrying out this order, Clark concentrated his main efforts in the zone of the 5th American Army in the Bologna direction. The German command group also reinforced its forces in that direction. Stubborn battles were joined,

---

[1] Captured German OKH map for August 23-30, 1944.

[2] See Mark W. Clark. Calculated Risk... New York, 1950, pp. 396-397.

which continued until the end of October. During that time the 5th Army progressed 10-15 kilometers in the main direction. After that, until 1945 spring, battles of local significance were conducted. The 8th British Army also conducted battles on the Gothic line. In October they seized Cesena, in November Forli, and in December Ravenna and Faenza. On January 9, 1945 the offensive operations of the Allied forces in Italy were halted.

Thus again the Allies did not achieve their intended goals in Italy. The American and British troops, although they overcame the Gothic line, were unable to break into the Po River Valley.

The military operations of the Allied forces in Italy developed under the circumstances of major successes achieved by the forces of the Italian Resistance. In the summer of 1944 the armed struggle had risen to a higher level.

The patriots of Tuscany and Emilia, regions lying in the line of the American and British troops' advance, wished to liberate the Italian territory by their own efforts. On August 9 the mountain detachments operating in the region of Florence joined the rebelling population of the city and, after three days of constant fighting, cleared the capital of Tuscany of the fascists. The American-British units entered the city only six days later.

As the result of the successful offensive operations of the partisans in Piedmont, Lombardy, Liguria, Emilia and other regions, one liberated area after another appeared, 15 in all by the end of the summer. With the arrival of the partisans, genuine people's authority was established in cities and towns. The national liberation committees resolutely suppressed the resistance of pro-fascist elements and effected radical reorganizations: they instituted just distribution of produce, and a large progressive tax was placed on the property of wealthy people. By the autumn of 1944 the Italian fascists had ceased to be the masters in the northern part of the country. "In Northern Italy," wrote the newspaper 'Unita,' "fascism exists /544

only nominally, in the form... of decrees."[1]

Under these extremely favorable conditions the establishment of cooperation between the American-English forces and the partisans operating in the enemy's rear was natural.

The command group of the Freedom Volunteer Corps recognized this necessity and attempted to enter contact with the American-English military leadership. However, the Allies did not undertake this, leaving the partisans in a difficult position. It was also aggravated by the fact that the German fascist command group, exploiting the drawn-out nature of the Allied forces' operations, threw considerable forces and equipment against the Italian patriots. Thus to liquidate the liberated regions the Hitlerites sent approximately 6 divisions. In fierce, bloody battles the partisans were forced to leave several regions that had been cleared of the occupiers during the summer battles.

At this time, which was extremely difficult for the Italian Resistance, instead of seeking ways to render assistance to the partisans, on November 10 Gen. Alexander called upon them. He announced that the summer campaign had ended and that it was necessary to cease organized operations in anticipation of "new instructions."[2] This address, which was transmitted by radio, did a great service to the enemy. It was not difficult for the Hitlerites to understand that the American-English command group did not intend to intensify military operations in the near future and that they, consequently, could increase the struggle against the patriots. Alexander's address inflicted great damage on the morale of the Resistance movement. Representatives of the bourgeois parties in the Committee of National Liberation began to demonstrate the hopelessness of further resistance to the invaders.

---

[1] "L'Unità," November 1944.

[2] See R. Battaglia. Istoriya Ital'yanskogo dvizheniya Soprotivleniya (History of the Italian Resistance Movement.) p. 524.

But the democratic forces, above all the Communist Party, occupied an implacable position on the question of ceasing the armed struggle. In a special response of the command group of the Freedom Volunteer Corps, written by L. Longo, the senselessness and perniciousness of Alexander's counsels were exposed. "We must foresee in the next weeks and the next hours," read the document, "not a curtailment, not a weakening of the partisan struggle, but its intensification and an expansion of armed detachments... Our command organs can and must orient themselves not toward demobilization, but toward more powerful organization of its units and their increased military activity."[1]

In spite of the address of the Allied command group and the Hitlerites' repressions, the Italian patriots continued to operate actively. Throughout occupied Italy a "partisan week" was held. The unity and organization of the people were increased and their assistance to the partisans grew.

The American-British command group, seeing the ever greater strengthening of the partisan movement, was compelled in December 1944 to enter negotiations with the Committee of National Liberation of Upper Italy. The result of the negotiations was the signing of the so-called "Roman Protocols," in accordance with which the CNL was recognized not only in fact but in law as the government of Upper Italy.

This was a great victory of the Italian Resistance, the official recognition of its contribution to the struggle against fascist Germany. The success of the patriots would have been even greater if the American-British command group, in planning and executing the offensive in Central Italy, had established cooperation with the armed forces of the Italian people.

---

[1] See R. Battaglia. History of the Italian Resistance Movement, p. 560.

6. The advance of the German fascist forces in the Ardennes and Alsace

By the middle of December 1944 the position of the Allied forces in Western Europe was as follows. The northern sector of the strategic front, with a total length of approximately 220 kilometers, was occupied by the 21st army group, the composition of which included the 1st Canadian and 2nd British Armies, 15 divisions in all. Its main grouping was located south of Nijmegen. In the center was located the 12 army group, including the /545

9th, 1st and 3rd American Armies. It consisted of 31 divisions and occupied a front approximately 370 kilometers in length. Its strong flank groupings conducted the offensive: one north of the Ardennes with the goal of seizing dikes on the Ruhr River, and the other in Lotharingia. In the Ardennes on a front 120 kilometers in length were the 8th American corps of the 1st American Army. This corps included four divisions, of which one infantry division, having arrived from the USA, had no combat experience, and two infantry divisions that had suffered great casualties in the preceding battles, had been withdrawn to the Ardennes for reinforcement and rest. Only the armored division was battleworthy. In the southern sector of the front the 6th army group, which included the 7th American and 1st French Armies, conducted military operations. The group numbered approximately 17 American and French divisions. In all by the beginning of December 1944 63 Allied divisions were deployed in the three army groups.[1] In the reserve of the high command of the Allied expeditionary force in Europe was the 18th paratroop corps (four divisions). In addition, armored divisions were expected to arrive from the USA.

The American-British command group during this period was especially concerned by the renewal of numerical strength of the infantry divisions, which had decreased as the result of casualties and illness. The supplying of the forces with ammunition, above all artillery, had also worsened. In the autumn and winter, when the activity of the air force decreased sharply and the whole weight of fire support of the infantry and tanks lay on the artillery, the shortage of shells began to be felt very acutely.

On December 7 in Maastricht, Eisenhower, his first deputy Chief Air Force Marshal Tedder, Montgomery and Bradley discussed the plan of further operations of the Allied armies. The participants in the conference reached agreement quite quickly on operations in the northern sector of the Allied front. Here their forces, developing the advance, were to

---

[1] See O. Bradley. Notes of a Soldier, p. 484.

break through before January 12, 1945 to the Rhine on a front from Bonn to Nijmegen. However, the opinions of the Allies were divided in resolving the question of operations south of the Ardennes, and of the further development of operations after the breakthrough to the Rhine. Montgomery, as before, insisted on concentrating the main efforts north of the Ruhr, and the Americans demanded that the second blow be struck south of the Ruhr in the general direction of Frankfurt-am-Main. To eliminate disagreements,on December 12 a meeting was held in London with the participation of Eisenhower, Tedder, Churchill and the British chiefs of staff. But here as well agreement was not reached. Disagreeing on the question of offensive operations, the Allied command group took no measures for the event of the enemy's going over to the offensive.

The Hitlerite leaders saw that the strategic position of Germany at that time was extremely serious. As the result of their brilliant victories in 1944 the Soviet forces had entered East Prussia. It was entirely obvious that Hitlerite Germany had no hope at all of winning the war. Therefore the leadership of Germany counted on a split in the antifascist coalition. In order to avoid unconditional capitulation and preserve German militarism it attempted to drive a wedge into the antifascist coalition, exploiting the conflicts existing there. This is confirmed by Western European military /546
historians and former Hitlerite generals. In the official British publication "History of the Second World War," Erman writes that in December 1944 in a conversation with his generals Hitler stated, "History has never yet seen a coalition composed of such alien elements and with such opposing goals as the coalition of our enemies... Whoever attentively follows the development of events cannot help but see that the conflicts between our enemies are growing hourly. If we can now strike a few more strong blows we will be able to expect that at any moment that much vaunted 'united front' will collapse with deafening claps of thunder..."[1]

However, the German fascist bosses had overestimated the importance of the conflicts. Under these conditions the unity of interests of the members

[1] Quot. from G. Erman. The Great Strategy. October 1944-August 1945, p. 14.

of the antifascist coalition was stronger than their disagreements. After unsuccessful attempts to split the antifascist coalition by diplomatic and propaganda means Hitler resolved to achieve his goal by force, striking a blow on the enemy in the West. It seemed to him, Erman confirms, that "If Germany could strike a strong enough blow on one of the main fronts, it could thereby achieve more or less suitable terms to conclude a peace with that enemy, regardless of the situation on the other front... Hitler hoped that reaching agreement with the western powers would be easier than with the Russians. He placed great hopes on a new Dunkirk, this time fatal for the Allies. Achieving such a situation, he could begin negotiations from a position of strength."[1] According to the former German general, Manteufel, Hitler felt that in the event of success in the Ardennes "the Allies' plans would be disrupted for a long period and the enemy would be forced to fundamentally reexamine his policy."[2] Tippelskirch notes that the success of the counteroffensive in the Ardennes "would, possibly, cause serious political disagreements between Roosevelt and Churchill, and would make it possible to further significantly reinforce the defense in the East, after which serious psychological consequences would soon be seen in our own country, and in the entire world."[3]

Thus it is obvious that the counteroffensive in the Ardennes was undertaken with far reaching, primarily political goals. It was impossible not to see the connection between the decision to conduct a counteroffensive in the Ardennes and the plan, accepted almost simultaneously, to strike a blow on the Soviet forces in the region of Budapest.[4] The German command group believed that the more strongly the Anglo-American and Soviet forces felt its blows, the more compliant the ruling circles of the USA and England would become.

After the Hitlerite command group succeeded in the fall of 1944 in withdrawing its forces from France to the Siegfried line and the southern part of Holland, those forces began to be reorganized and brought up to

---

[1] G. Erman. The Great Strategy. October 1944-August 1945, p. 76.

[2] Z.Westphal, V. Kreipe, G. Blumentritt, F. Bailerlein, K. Zeitsler, B. Zimmerman, H. Manteufel. Fatal Decisions. M., Voyenizdat, 1958, p. 265.

[3] K. Tippelskirch. History of the Second World War, p. 495.

[4] See chapter 13, pp. 393-404.

strength. In August-September boys of 16 and men 55-60 years of age began to be drafted into the army. They were formed into "Volkssturm" infantry divisions. This led to a certain increase in the numerical strength of the German army. By mid-December the Germans had 73 divisions in the West, including 11 tank and 4 motorized divisions, and 3 brigades.[1] In composition and armaments the German divisions were much weaker than the American and British. There was a particular shortage of antitank and field artillery.

The preparation of forces and equipment, which began in October, was complete by mid-December. The Hitlerite command group placed great stakes /547 in a surprise attack in the weakest sector of the front (in the Ardennes) and on rapidly developing the offensive. In this they counted on limited use of Allied aircraft due to poor flying weather.

The plan of the German fascist command group called for the blow to be struck by 29-32 divisions in the Ardennes region in the general direction of the Antwerp - Brussels - Bastogne line, and to achieve a decisive change in the strategic situation in the west.[2] The German command group hoped that after this the USA would be unable to conduct aggressive offensive operations in Europe. Along with the main blow two auxiliary blows were to be struck: one north of the Ardennes, the other in Alsace. Massed night attacks on London were also planned in order to undermine the morale of the British capital's inhabitants.

The offensive, the plan for which was worked out to the last detail, was prepared in total secrecy. However, this could not compensate for the shortage of forces and equipment. The exhaustion of fascist Germany's resources as the result of the serious defeats on the Soviet-German front and the possibility of the Red Army's going over to the offensive on the Vistula prevented the fascist command group from creating a sufficiently powerful assault grouping to achieve the goals it had set in the West.

---

[1] See Second World War 1939-1945, p. 661.

[2] See F. S. Pog'yu. High Command, p. 378; G. Erman. The Great Strategy. October 1944- August 1945, p. 76; Entscheidungsschlachten des zweiten Weltkrieges. Frankfurt am Main, 1960, S. 532.

Furthermore, it was not even able to assign the planned number of divisions for the offensive in the Ardennes. Only 23 divisions (7 of them tank divisions) and 2 infantry brigades from Hitler's personal guard could be concentrated in the direction of the main thrust. Instead of the 3,000 military aircraft called for by the plan the command group was able to gather only 700-900. Ammunition and fuel were in short supply.

The successful choice of the place and time to go over to the offensive, the thoroughness and secrecy of preparations for the operation, the suddenness with which the blow was struck, and the American command group's errors (underestimating the enemy's forces, poorly organized reconnaissance, poorly prepared defenses) enabled the German fascist troops to begin the offensive successfully. At dawn on December 16 after brief artillery preparation three German armies (the 6th SS and 5th Tank Armies and the 7th) struck a blow in the Ardennes that was completely unexpected by the American forces. Small paratroop forces and diversionary groups were dropped in the rear of the 8th corps and seized communication centers and bridges.

The American command group did not grasp the full danger of the enemy's offensive. Only on December 17 did it become clear to them that the Germans had undertaken something serious. Meanwhile the enemy infantry had easily overcome the line of strong points of the 8th American corps northeast and southeast of St. Vith, and tank divisions had driven deep into the American defense. On December 19 the forward tank units were already 40 kilometers south of Liege, and the main forces of the 5th Tank Army were moving rapidly toward Maas. Only on the right flank was the infantry of the 6th SS Tank Army unable to break the resistance of the American troops and was drawn into lengthy battles. In spite of the fact that the offensive was quite rapid, by the end of the third day the German forces had not reached within 30-40 kilometers of the line they were to have taken on the second day. Therefore even on December 18 the high command rescinded the order to strike an auxiliary blow north of the Ardennes, and ordered that all forces be used in the main direction.

On December 20 Gen. Eisenhower gave the order to organize the defense and hold Liege, Antwerp, the British forward bases in the region of Antwerp and Brussels at all costs. The headquarters of the American-British forces /548 took all measures to prepare the defense on the Maas and create a reserve. However, it was unable to create a reserve. The enemy's rapid advance forced the American command group to remove divisions from other sectors of the front and throw them into the battle. It must be noted that the Allied forces would not have found themselves without reserves at such a critical moment if de Gaulle, with the cooperation of the American-British command group, had reorganized the French Internal Armed Forces into a regular army.

Under the conditions that had developed, in order to use the British forces to repel the Germans' blow Eisenhower assigned to Montgomery the command of all Allied forces located north of the Ardennes. The 1st and 9th American Armies were subordinated to Montgomery. Churchill approved of Eisenhower's actions. "...The decision that has been made," wrote Churchill,"will make it possible to utilize the British reserves regardless of the zones established earlier."[1] The American generals received this decision with ill-will. Bradley protested openly. The disagreements between the British and American generals and officers increased still more when at the end of December the British press, expressing the mood of the ruling circles, began to demand that Montgomery be designated to the post of deputy to the commander in chief and commander of all American-British ground forces in the theater of military operations. In connection with this, on December 30 Gen. Marshall sent a telegram to Eisenhower in which he demanded that the British not be deferred to under any circumstances.[2] Thus at the most dangerous moment for the Western front the American-British conflicts became more acute.

The Allied command group and French authorities brought all they could into the battle. Thus the 101st American paratroop division was transferred

---

[1] Quot from D. Eisenhower. Crusade in Europe, p. 356.

[2] D. Eisenhower. Ibid, p. 356.

to the region of Bastogne by truck (by December 20 they found themselves cut off by the enemy and continued to wage battle in encirclement); two corps of the 1st American and the 2nd British Armies were moved out to the northern face of the salient, and two corps of the 3rd American Army were moved to the southern face of the salient. To organize the defense on the Maas River it was necessary to use rear units of the American forces and several units from the composition of the security forces of the military districts of Northern France. However, aggressive operations were undertaken only on the southern face of the Ardennes salient. Here on December 22 the 3rd American Army, regrouping its main forces, made a counterstrike, as the result of which it succeeded in progressing to Bastogne by December 26 and joining the encircled paratroop division.

The American-British command group understood that without the help of the Red Army it would be difficult for the Allied forces to withstand the enemy's onslaught. It wished to know when and where the Red Army would go over to the offensive. On December 21 Eisenhower addressed the Combined Committee of Chiefs of Staff in a letter: "If...the Russians intend to undertake a decisive offensive in this or the next month the knowledge of that fact would be of great significance for me: I would reorganize all of my plans in accordance with that. Can something be done to achieve such coordination?"[1] He added that he was prepared to send the most senior officer of his staff to Moscow.

Learning of this proposal, on December 24 the President of the USA sent a message to the head of the Soviet government in which he wrote, "In order that we might receive information important for coordination of our efforts, I wish to give the order to Gen. Eisenhower to send a fully competent officer from his staff to Moscow to discuss with you the state of affairs with Eisenhower on the western front and the question of coordination with the eastern front."[2] Having received the agreement of the government of the /549
USSR, Eisenhower immediately sent his second in command, Tedder, to Moscow through Cairo.

---

[1] Quot. from Herbert Feis. Churchill, Roosevelt, Stalin. The War They Waged and the Peace They Sought. London, 1957, p. 480.

[2] Coorespondence of the Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers with the Presidents of the USA and the Prime Ministers of Great Britain during the Great Patriotic War 1941-1945, Vol. II, p. 175.

The Allies, according to Montgomery, had too few forces to wrest the initiative away from the enemy. With the aim of creating the necessary reserves, as early as December 23 Eisenhower ordered the commander of the 6th army group, Gen. Devers, to withdraw forces from all salients of the front, "to save manpower, and in the event of an enemy advance to retreat slowly on the northern wing, even if ... it is necessary to retreat all the way to Vosges."[1] Montgomery proposed that the front be shortened by withdrawing American forces from the bulge formed south of the Ardennes, which would make it possible to form a reserve. However, the American generals, fearing that a retreat would have a negative influence on the troops' morale, did not accept this proposal. In the event of a retreat of the 7th American Army it would be necessary to abandon Strasbourg without a battle. The French government protested this strongly, fearing political complications in the country. Thus Franco-British and Franco-American disagreements were added to the American-British conflicts. All of this complicated the strategic control of the Allied armed forces.

At the end of December the situation in the Ardennes remained serious for the American-English forces. Their front had been breached in an 80-kilometer sector. According to German data here 30,000 American soldiers and officers were taken prisoner.[2] This, of course, is a large figure if one considers that by the start of the German counteroffensive in the composition of the 8th American corps occupying the defense in the Ardennes there were over 70,000 men.[3] After the regrouping carried out on the northern face of the Ardennes salient, 10 divisions and 1 brigade of the 1st American Army and the 30th British corps waged battle against 8 German divisions, and on the southern face 9 divisions of the 3rd American Army occupied the defense against 15 German divisions and 2 brigades. One corps consisting of two divisions was taken out to Eisenhower's reserve.

---

[1] D. Eisenhower. Crusade in Europe, p. 352.

[2] See S. Westphal. Army in shackles, p. 284.

[3] See O. Bradley. Notes of a Soldier, p. 487.

It should be borne in mind that until December 23 Allied aircraft were unable to operate due to unfavorable meteorological conditions. Only on that day did American airplanes appear over the battlefield due to a certain improvement in the weather. From December 23 through 27 tactical aircraft completed an average of 447 airplane flights per day, and strategic aircraft struck blows on the rear of the enemy forces in the Ardennes and on airfields. During this period German aircraft also displayed their greatest activity. They made an average of 600 airplane flights per day.

By the end of December all of the forces of the German assault grouping had been brought into the battle. Fuel shortages, the impassable terrain, losses of men and tanks, and the fatigue of the personnel decreased the speed of the advance from 20-25 to 5-7 kilometers per day. A ratio of forces had also developed in which the German fascist forces could not continue the offensive successfully, and the American and British forces could not undertake a counteroffensive with the aim of liquidating the Ardennes salient.

Additional forces and equipment were needed to develop offensive operations. But the situation on the Soviet-German front did not allow the Hitlerite command group to send new divisions to the West. On the contrary, the threat of an offensive by the Red Army in the beginning of 1945 in East Prussia and on the Vistula and the encirclement of a large grouping of German fascist forces in Budapest by Soviet forces compelled the German command group to reinforce the Eastern front. From December 19 through 31, 1944 four new divisions and two brigades of the enemy arrived at the Soviet-German front.[1]

Under these circumstances the fascist command group decided to strike /550
several successive smaller blows in other directions, while maintaining a threatening posture in relation to the Anglo-American forces in the Ardennes. One of these strikes was carried out in the beginning of January 1945 in Alsace.

---

[1] Col. mats. on the composition of forces of fascist Germany, 4th Ed., pp. 207, 213.

On December 28 Hitler, having discussed the plan for a further offensive in the west with the commander of army group "G," Field Marshal M. Blaskovits, called a conference attended by the commander of the German armed forces in the West, Field Marshal G. Rundstedt, and leading generals and officers involved in the coming operation. At this conference Hitler said that the goal of the offensive operations was "to destroy all American divisions south of the region of penetration (the Ardennes - Ed.) by smashing them in parts, one division after another..." He emphasized, "The task of our forces in this region is to contain as many enemy troops as possible... At the present time our task is to destroy the enemy's forces... with several blows..."[1] After execution of this task Hitler planned to renew the advance to the Maas.[2] The plan of the German command group was the usual adventurism. In developing it neither the probable actions of the Red Army nor the actual capabilities of Germany and its armed forces were taken into account.

The advance of the German fascist forces in Alsace began on the night of January 1, 1945. The main blow was struck in the forested Vosges, which made it possible to cover the assault grouping from attacks by Allied aircraft and neutralize the superior mobility of the American troops. In the first three days the Hitlerites progressed approximately 30 kilometers and cut off the highway and railroad leading from Haguenau to Metz and Nancy. The further progress of the German forces to Saverne created a threat of encirclement to the main forces of the 7th American Army.

German aircraft intensified the bombardment of British cities with FAU-1 missiles. On the night of December 25, 1944 over 50 German He-111 aircraft undertook an attack on Manchester. The bombardment of London, Essex, Kent and several other cities of England with FAU-2 rockets continued.[3] On January 1, approximately 800 German airplanes executed a surprise attack

---

[1] Quot. from Hitler Directs His War. The Secret Records of the Daily Military Conferences. Selected and Annotated by Felix Gilbert. New York, 1951, pp. 163-4.

[2] See John Toland. Battle. The Story of the Bulge. New York, 1959, p. 303.

[3] See "Voyenno-istoricheskiy zhurnal," 1960, No. 6, pp. 59, 64, 65.

on the Allies' advance airfields in France, Belgium and Holland and inflicted serious damage on American and British tactical aircraft.

On January 1 Eisenhower ordered that troops be withdrawn from the region east of the Vosges, leaving several large inhabited areas, including the city of Strasbourg. However, the command group of the French forces opposed this. On January 3 de Gaulle arrived at headquarters and demanded in the presence of Churchill that the high command hold Strasbourg at all costs. Receiving a refusal, he declared that the French forces would defend the city themselves. Eisenhower's threat to stop supplying the French army with ammunition and provisions had no effect on de Gaulle.[1] Forced to give in to de Gaulle, Eisenhower assigned the defense of Strasbourg to the 1st French Army.

On January 5 the German fascist troops forced the Rhine north of Strasbourg and increased their activity on the beachhead in the area of Colmar, which they had held after the retreat across the Rhine. The 1st German army continued to advance west of Haguenau. To develop the advance in Alsace, on January 10 Hitler allowed the transfer of almost the entire 6th SS Tank Army from the Ardennes salient to the rear of army group "G."

In the Ardennes stubborn battles continued, but neither of the sides had real success. An attempt on January 3 by the 1st American Army to make a counterstrike on the north face of the salient was unsuccessful. /551
On the southern face the 3rd American Army held off the enemy's attacks with difficulty, and in some places was even forced to retreat.

Thus at the beginning of January the situation of the American forces in the Ardennes and to the south continued to remain very serious. For this reason on January 6 Churchill sent a message to Stalin. "Very heavy battles are underway in the west," he wrote, "and at any time major decisions may be demanded of the High Command. You yourself know from your own experience, how alarming the situation is when it is necessary to defend

---

1 See D. Eisenhower. Crusade in Europe, pp 362-363; F.S. Pog'yu. High Command, pp 414-415.

a very broad front after a temporary loss of initiative... I will be grateful if you can inform me whether we may count on a major Russian offensive on the Vistula front or in some other place during January or at any other time, which you may possibly wish to mention."[1]

The Soviet Union, true to its duty as an ally, decided to help the American-English forces. On January 12, before the intended time, the Red Army went over to the offensive on a wide front from the Baltic Sea to the Carpathians.[2] This was undertaken under conditions when on the southern flank, in the region of Budapest, the troops of the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts had contained an extremely powerful enemy grouping. The decisive offensive of the Soviet forces in the central sector of the Soviet-German front frustrated all of the plans of the Hitlerite command group in the West. Military operations there were ceased. The 6th SS Tank Army, withdrawn from the front, was ordered to retreat to loading areas to be sent to the Soviet-German front.[3] Soon Rundstedt received the order to send the 16 most battleworthy divisions and a considerable part of his artillery to the Eastern front.

The German fascist troops in the Ardennes, weakened by great losses and the transfer of part of their formations to the Soviet-German front, were forced to retreat to their original positions. The Germans' operation in the Ardennes ended in failure. By January 25 the American troops broke through to the Ruhr River, from where 40 days earlier the Hitlerite forces had begun their offensive. By January 20 the enemy's offensive operations in Alsace had also largely ended. Thus the Red Army, going over to the offensive, compelled the Hitlerite command group to resolve to end the advance in the west and thereby fundamentally altered the position of the

---

[1] Correspondence of the Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers with the Presidents of the USA and the Prime Ministers of Great Britain during the Great Patriotic War 1941-1945, Vol. I., p. 298.

[2] This advance is described in detail in Volume 5 of this edition.

[3] See S. Westphal. Army in shackles, p. 284.

American-English troops, giving them the opportunity to throw the German divisions back to their previous positions and prepare for a thrust on the central regions of Germany.

The failure of the German forces' counteroffensive in the Ardennes and Alsace in the winter of 1944-1945 again demonstrated the decisive role of the Red Army in the war against fascist Germany. However, bourgeois historians and sociologists are now making enormous efforts to enhance the defensive operations of the American-English forces in the Ardennes. J. Toland, for example, writes, "This was a battle as great in scope as Stalingrad; over a million soldiers and thousands of civilians were drawn into active operations."[1] In a book written on the basis of the journals and autobiographical notes of the former chief of the British Imperial staff, Field Marshal A. Brooke, A.Bryant affirms that "Hitler's attempt to seize a victory in the West by concentrating almost all of the tanks available to him[2] against Eisenhower played into the Russians' hands... Striking a powerful blow /552 first at one point, then at another, the Red Army breached the enemy's weak defenses and drove westward, to the borders of Silesia and Prussia."[3]

These assertions are a falsification of history. In the first place, the comparison of the Germans' Ardennes offensive and the Soviet offensive at Stalingrad is laughable. The point is not at all how many troops were drawn into military operations there and here, but what strategic consequences these events had for the course and outcome of the Second World War. In the Ardennes and Vosges the German forces retreated to their original positions without significant losses; on the Volga they suffered a total defeat, that is, they were completely liquidated, and this catastrophe was the beginning of a radical change in the course of the Great Patriotic War.

---

[1] J. Toland. Battle. The Story of the Bulge, p. 1.

[2] This can refer only to the tank formations located in the West. It is well known that the greater part of the armored forces of Germany during the German counteroffensive were on the Soviet-German front.

[3] Arthur Bryant. Triumph in the West, 1943-1946. New York, 1959, p. 289.

In the second place, it is unconscientious to state that in undertaking the offensive in the Ardennes the German command group thereby supposedly "played into the Russians' hands," helped the Red Army in the January offensive of 1945. Of course, under conditions of strategic coordination of the forces of the states of the antifascist coalition the Ardennes did have an influence on the course of the war in general, but they could not influence the course and outcome of the January offensive of the Soviet forces. The whole world knows that the Armed Forces of the USSR executed brilliant operations before the Allies began military operations in France and Belgium. The winter offensive of the Red Army as well was planned and prepared by the Soviet command group long before the Ardennes events; the latter only slightly hastened its start, and this occurred, as we have seen, on the request of the heads of government of England and the USA. And finally, in the third place, historians considering the interconnections of the military operations in the West and on the Soviet-German front should not forget a basic, decisive factor - the distribution of the armed forces of fascist Germany. They should be aware that by the end of 1944 the Hitlerite command group had 185 divisions and 21 brigades on the Soviet-German front.[1] On the Western and Italian fronts there were 98 divisions and 3 brigades. Thus two-thirds of the enemy forces were fighting on the Soviet-German front - the decisive front of the Second World War.

Thus attempts to exaggerate the significance of the military operations in the Ardennes are clearly unfounded. They have one goal: to inflate the role of the American-English forces and belittle the role of the Soviet Union and its Armed Forces in the defeat of fascist Germany in general, and the January offensive in particular. But very important documents must not be forgotten. In their time the heads of the governments of England and the USA gave a completely definite appraisal of the Soviet offensive. In a letter to the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR, Churchill wrote on January 17, 1945, "In the name of His Majesty's Government and with

---

[1] Col. mats. of the composition of the forces of fascist Germany, 5th Ed., p. 28.

my whole heart I wish to express to you our gratitude and offer congratulations in the event of the gigantic offensive which you have begun on the eastern front."[1] In a letter received in Moscow on January 18 Roosevelt remarked with joy that "the feats already accomplished by your heroic soldiers and the effectiveness that they have already demonstrated in this offensive, give every basis to hope for the rapid success of our troops on both fronts."[2]

These letters are not mere acts of diplomatic courtesy. Churchill gave his thanks because he saw the direct connection between the start of the Red Army's mighty offensive in January 1945 and the end of the German forces' advance in the West. Roosevelt understood that the January offensive would ensure the success of the American-English forces.

As the result of the operations of the armed forces of the USA and England together with the French troops, as well as the struggle of the peoples of the countries of Europe, Central Italy, France, Belgium and part of Holland were liberated from the German fascist invaders. The victories of the Red Army played an enormous role in this, diverting the greater part of the Hitlerite army toward itself. M. Torez, speaking at a rally of Parisian workers in connection with the 31st anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution, declared, "The Soviet Union, sacrificing millions of its sons, who perished in the struggle against the German invaders, made a huge contribution to the cause of our country's liberation... The French remember those hard days when the fate of France and the entire world was tied to the fate of Stalingrad. The French will always hold in their hearts endless gratitude and thankfulness to the Soviet Army."[3] /553

The influence of the second front, which was opened in June 1944 by the USA and England, in the war against Germany on the strategic situation in Europe was that the Allied armed forces contained the German fascist troops

---

[1] Correspondence of the Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers with the Presidents of the USA and the Prime Ministers of Great Britain during the Great Patriotic War 1941-1945, Vol. I, pp. 303.

[2] Ibid, Vol. II, p. 183.

[3] "Pravda," November 8, 1948.

located in Western Europe and diverted a part of the enemy's strategic reserves toward themselves. However, the opening of the second front did not lead to a significant weakening of the forces of the enemy on the Soviet-German front, which remained, as before, the main front of the Second World War. The crushing blows struck by the Red Army in the winter of 1944-1945 not only helped the American-English forces to avoid defeat, but forced Hitlerite headquarters to call off offensive operations in the West. All of this had a decisive influence on the situation of the Allied forces, which then obtained the opportunity to renew military operations against the fascist invaders.

In the course of the liberation movement in the countries of Western Europe favorable conditions were created for restoration of their national sovereignty and truly democratic development. But the reaction, supported by the American and English forces, immediately waged a decisive struggle against the progressive forces and prevented the victory of the people.

CHAPTER 18

WAR IN THE PACIFIC OCEAN AND ASIA IN 1944

1. The plans of the belligerents. The offensive of the Allied armed forces in the Pacific Ocean.

The defeats of the armies of the fascist bloc on the Soviet-German front in 1942-1943, unparalleled in history, were a turning point in the development of military operations on all fronts of the Second World War, including the Pacific Ocean Basin. /554

Japan, at the beginning of the war in the Pacific Ocean, tied its outcome to hopes for the victory of the Axis powers in Europe. Therefore the Japanese ruling circles constantly aided their German partner in the war against the USSR, thereby crudely violating the Soviet-Japanese neutrality pact of

April 13, 1941. The Kwantun army contained approximately 40 divisions of the Red Army in the Far East. The Japanese put hostile obstacles in the way of Soviet navigation. During 1941-1944 they held 178 vessels of our merchant fleet.[1] Provocation never ceased on the far eastern borders of the USSR. In 1944 alone 144 incidents of violations of our Motherland's borders were observed, and 39 incidents of firing on Soviet territory.[2] All of this indicated that the Japanese government regarded the Hitlerites' war against the USSR as the common affair of Germany and Japan. It was no surprise, therefore, that the defeats of the German fascist forces on the Soviet-German front were a serious blow to Japan as well.

As the result of the fundamental change in the Second World War in favor of the antifascist coalition, the Japanese imperialists were compelled to abandon an invasion of the Soviet Union, for which they had been preparing. By 1944 Japan had radically altered its position on such an important question of Soviet-Japanese relations as the North Sakhalin concessions. /555
When the neutrality pact was concluded, Japan had accepted the obligation to liquidate within a few months the oil and coal concessions given it by the Soviet Union in 1925. However, almost three years passed before the Japanese government fulfilled its obligation. On March 30, 1944 a Soviet-Japanese agreement on the liquidation of the Japanese concessions on North Sakhalin was signed. This document testified to the serious weakening of the foreign policy positions of Japanese imperialism.

The strategy of the Japanese militarists in the war in the Pacific Ocean - "attack regardless of casualties" - was also found to be unsound. In 1943 the armed forces of Japan had already borne several defeats and were forced to go over to strategic defense. In 1944 the United States of America and England intensified their strikes on Japan.

Beginning the war in the Pacific Ocean, the Japanese government placed great hopes on the unpreparedness of the enemy for war. In evaluating the

---

[1] See Foreign Policy of the Soviet Union. Docs. and Maters. 1948. Part One. M., Gospolitizdat, 1951, p. 462.

[2] Central Government Archive of the October Revolution (CGAOR), col. 7867, inv. 2, div. 270, p. 723.

military-economic potential of the USA and England and its own resources it made a very serious miscalculation. Japan was in no position to compete with the United States and England in the raising of forces. The country's production of coal, cast iron, steel, and aluminum, reaching their highest points in 1943, fell sharply even in 1944. In the yield and production of the main types of strategic raw materials and armaments Japan lagged considerably behind the USA in 1944. This pertained to steel above all, the smelting of which was 5,916,000 tons in Japan in 1944, and 82 million tons in the USA. In military aircraft the United States of America exceeded Japan by over threefold: in 1944 they produced 95,000 airplanes, and Japan produced 28,180.[1]

A characteristic feature of the Japanese military economy was the fact that it was designed to count on the broad use of material resources from occupied countries. However, Japan did not have the opportunity for economic exploitation of the territories it seized. Its policy of plunder in the countries included in the so-called "great East Asian sphere of mutual prosperity" met the ever growing rejection not only of the workers, but of the national bourgeoisie and some of the landholders. The "new order" established by the Japanese invaders in East Asia was as unstable as the Hitlerite "new order" in Europe. In the occupied countries the national liberation movement continued to develop. The oppressed peoples fought with gun in hand for their freedom and independence. In the vanguard of the national liberation struggle were the great Chinese people. The armed struggle acquired especially great scope in the regions of China where it was led by the Communist Party.

Attempting to increase the yield of its war production at all costs, in 1943-1944 the Japanese government carried out a number of measures. In September 1943 the Ministry of Armaments was formed. Simultaneously the government passed a law on the institution of military industrial companies, the first list of which was published in January 1944. It

[1] See History of the War in the Pacific Ocean. V. IV. Second Period of the War. M., Izd-vo inostrannoy literatury, 1958, pp. 100-101; Ya. S. Rozenfel'd. Industry of the United States of America and the War, M., Gospolitizdat, 1946, pp. 151, 166; G. B. Kohen. Military Economy of Japan. M., Izd-vo inostrannoy literatury, 1951, p. 226.

included 150 companies connected largely with aircraft construction. They enjoyed privileges in the distribution of materials, finances and manpower. They were guaranteed great profits. The Japanese press admitted openly that the main purpose of the Japanese war industry in 1944 was to increase air power. In spite of the drop in the production of steel, cast iron and aluminum, the Japanese government was nevertheless able to increase the production of airplanes. In 1944 their production increased by 11,500 in comparison with 1943. However, it was possible to achieve this only at /556 the cost of other branches of industry.

At that decisive moment, not only Japan's dependence on foreign sources of strategic raw materials, but the backwardness of its agriculture affected its economic position. Semi-feudal attitudes still prevailed in the country, and farm work was based largely on manual labor. The decrease in the amount of manpower due to the mobilization of men into the army worsened the state of agriculture still more. As Japanese historians observe, agriculture "moved inexorably toward ruin, and the life of the people toward catastrophe."[1]

Thus by 1944 unfavorable political and economic conditions had developed for Japan. In these circumstances the Japanese ruling circles counted on conducting an extended war. The experience of the past two years gave them the basis to assume that in the near future the USA and England would not undertake decisive operations in the Pacific Ocean. Therefore the Japanese command group calculated on drawing the American-English armed forces into a lengthy struggle for the islands of the Pacific Ocean, with the help of its island garrisons, fleet and air force, and thereby preventing them from progressing rapidly toward the metropolis and territories seized by Japan in Asia (map 23).

The strategic plan of the Japanese command group for 1944 not only called for a stubborn defense on the islands of the Pacific Ocean, but for conducting a major offensive in China and intensifying operations in Burma. The main

[1] Quot. from History of the War in the Pacific Ocean, Vol. IV, p. 111.

goal of the offensive in China was, while continuing the resolute struggle against the 8th and New 4th Chinese Armies, to inflict a defeat on Chiang Kai-Shek, seize American air bases in Central and Southern China, establish ground communications with the countries of Southeast Asia and turn China into a base to further conduct the war against the USA and England. The rulers of Japan hoped that the extremely rich human and material resources of China would enable them to conduct a lengthy war against the Allied armed forces even if the latter seized all of the islands in the Pacific Ocean and directly approached the metropolis. Stretching out the war, in the opinion of Japanese political figures, should create conditions to conclude a compromise peace with the USA and England and to jointly suppress the national liberation movement of the peoples of the Far East and the countries of the Pacific Ocean Basin.

To execute these plans, by the beginning of 1944 the Japanese government concentrated 26 divisions, in addition to the Kwantun army deployed on the border with the USSR, in the remaining part of China, including 1 tank division, and 11 detached brigades with total numerical strength over 600,000 persons.[1] In addition, it had the troops of Van Tsin-Vei's from the Russian puppet government, with over 800,000 persons, at its disposal.

The Japanese forces in China, not including its northeastern sector, nominally occupied a huge territory from Baotou in the north to Hankou and Nanchang in the south, as well as the ports of Xiamen (Amoy), Guangzhou (Canton), the islands of Taiwan (Formosa) and Hainan. But in fact the Japanese controlled only the large administrative and industrial centers - Peking, Tianjin, Nanjing, Shanghai and others, ports, railroads and highways. In the remaining territory there were many liberated regions in the rear of the Japanese forces, and partisan detachments operated in many areas. The people's forces, led by the Communist Party of China, fought selflessly with the invaders, containing over 60 percent of the Japanese divisions and almost all of the forces of Van Tsin Vei's government. The heroic struggle of the

[1] See History of the War in the Pacific Ocean, Vol. IV, p. 63.

Chinese patriots limited the offensive capabilities of the occupiers in China and did not permit them to direct large forces to the countries of Southeast Asia and the Pacific Ocean. /557

In the Burma sector of the front the Japanese planned an invasion of the territory of India. It was planned first to begin the offensive in the southwestern section of Burma, in the province of Arakan, in order to place the British port of Chittagong under threat and draw the Allied reserves in Southeast Asia into the battle. After that it was planned to throw considerable forces toward Imphal and Kohima, from where a blow would be struck on the communications in the region of Assam and on the airfields that served the air bridge to China. This was to lead to the seizure of the northeastern sector of India, disruption of the air link between the USA and China, and blocking American lend-lease shipments to the government of Chiang Kai-Shek. With the invasion of India the Japanese also pursued the goal of creating a threat to the interests of the British monopolists, forcing them into negotiations and concluding a compromise peace.

To achieve this objective up to 9 divisions were concentrated in Burma, with total numerical strength of 200,000 men and approximately 300 airplanes.[1] These forces could be somewhat increased by transferring detached formations and units (especially air force) from other countries of Southeast Asia.

In planning military operations in the Pacific Ocean the Japanese command group was guided by the resolution of the Imperial conference held September 30, 1943. At this conference the main headquarters and government worked out a strategic plan "which was to limit the sphere of state defense to a region including the Kurile Islands, the inner section of the South Seas region, the western section of New Guinea, the Zond Islands and Burma, to decrease the previous strategic zone held in accordance with this, and in the meantime to attempt to direct all forces toward reinforcement of combat

[1] See G. Erman. The Great Strategy. August 1943-September 1944, p. 171, 406.

potential, placing the greatest stress on the air force."[1]

In the remaining regions of the Pacific Ocean, including the Marianas, Caroline, and Marshall Islands and the Bismarck Archipelago, the Japanese command group counted on blocking or weakening the advance of the American-English forces with the help of the fleet and air force even while in the approach to the "sphere of state defense." In an operational order of the commander in chief of the Japanese Combined Fleet in the Pacific Ocean, Adm. M. Koga, it was stated, "The region stretching from the Kurile Islands and the waters east of Honshu across Nanpo Syoto (Nampo - Ed.), the Marianas, the Caroline Islands to New Guinea in the west should be regarded as a zone of interception, and the enemy's fleet should be intercepted and attacked here."[2]

The composition of the Combined Fleet, to which this task was entrusted, included 3 battleships, 4 aircraft carriers, 16 cruisers, 2 squadrons of submarines and several destroyers.[3] The main base of the fleet was the Truk Islands. All ground and air forces located in the central and southwestern sectors of the Pacific Ocean were subordinated to the Commander in Chief of the Combined Fleet. The ground forces consisted of 13 divisions: 5 of them defended the Carolina Islands, 2 the Marianas, and the islands of the Bismarck Archipelago and New Guinea were each defended by 3 divisions. On the remaining islands (Ganges, Marcus, Wake, Marshall, Eniwetok) were distributed garrisons of guard forces, one to two battalions. The air forces included formations of the 11th Air Force and the 4th Airborne Army.

In case of necessity the Japanese command group could transfer warships and aircraft in a comparatively short time to the central and southwestern sectors of the Pacific Ocean from the metropolis and the South Seas region.

---

[1] Quot. from History of the War in the Pacific Ocean, Vol. IV, p. 56-57.

[2] Quot. from Campaigns of the War in the Pacific Ocean. Mats. of the Commission for the Study of Strategic Bombing by the Air Force of the United States. M., Voyenizdat, 1956, p. 276.

[3] Ibid, p. 244.

Nonetheless there remained great difficulties for the Japanese, as the region that they were defending stretched for several thousand miles on the front and in depth. Furthermore, the Japanese ground forces in the Pacific Ocean were scattered over numerous islands, which made them very vulnerable and considerably complicated supply and the organization of cooperation between the island garrisons and the fleet and air force. On the whole the strategic plans of the Japanese supreme high command for 1944 were unrealistic, because the country's economy had been undermined and could no longer ensure that all tasks given it would be carried out. /558

The American-British policy and strategy in the Pacific Ocean theater of the Second World War were determined by the fact that in the beginning of 1944 only the American-British armies, fleets and air force that were already in the Pacific Ocean and Southeast Asia, including India, Burma and China, could conduct military operations against Japan. The Allies did not assign reinforcements, as preparations for the opening of the second front in Europe involved concentrating great masses of troops and aircraft in the islands of Great Britain and the Mediterranean Sea basin. Almost all of the British fleet and part of the American fleet were in European waters.

The armed forces of the United States and England operating in the central and southwestern sectors of the Pacific Ocean and in Southeast Asia were combined in the beginning of 1944 into three corresponding independent commands. The command in the central sector of the Pacific Ocean (commander in chief American Admiral C. Nimitz), to which the American forces located in the northern and southern sectors of the ocean were also subordinated, had in its composition the Pacific Ocean Fleet (3rd and 5th Fleets), the 7th and 13th Airborne Armies, the 3rd and 5th corps of marine infantry, several detached infantry divisions and a mobile naval base. The command in the southwestern sector of the Pacific Ocean (commander in chief American Gen. D. MacArthur) included in its command the 7th American Fleet, the 5th Airborne Army, the 1st Australian and the 6th American Armies (10-12 divisions). The command in Southeast Asia (commander in chief British Admiral L. Mountbatten) united the 11th British Army group (10 divisions and 55 air

squadrons), the command group of the northern region (3 Chinese divisions, an American detachment and the 10th American Airborne Army) as well as the British East Asian Fleet.

These forces, the Americans believed, were enough to strike powerful blows on the Japanese ground forces on the many islands of the central and southwestern sectors of the Pacific Ocean, on the enemy's navy and air force as well as on the most important targets of the metropolis.

The American-British command group planned military operations against the Japanese invaders in such a way as to return to themselves their political and economic positions in the colonial and dependent countries and suppress the national liberation movement there. The struggle growing in the countries occupied by Japanese forces could lead to rebellions of the people, to expulsion of the Japanese from certain regions of Burma and the Phillipines, to the further expansion of the liberated regions in China, and so on. The United States of America and England were equally concerned that the people's movement be suppressed. But in addition the former conflicts between them had sharpened and new ones had arisen. Each of the partners wished above all to achieve its own goals. Therefore the central question of selecting the direction of the main blow and distributing their efforts immediately provoked serious disagreements between the Americans and the British.

The Americans advocated a plan of progressing to the Japanese' own islands through the southwestern sector of the Pacific Ocean. The main role in this was assigned to their fleet. The ultimate goal of the operations was to seize the numerous mandated islands of Japan, reestablish American control over the Phillipines and use the beachheads seized to /559 create bases from which the fleet and air force of the USA could exercise complete sway over the entire Pacific Ocean basin.

---

[1] See G. Erman. The Great Strategy. August 1943-September 1944, pp. 170-171, 226, 533-535; Arnold Brophy. The Air Force of the USA. M., Voyenizdat, 1957, p. 74.

The British ruling circles were extremely concerned that with the progress of the Americans England might lose its colonies in Southeast Asia. Churchill writes in his memoirs, "At this stage of the war I feared above all that in the following years the United States of America would say, 'We came to help you in Europe, and you left us to deal with Japan alone.' We had to regain the possessions in the Far East that belonged to us by right on the battlefield, and not wait to have them returned to us at the peace table."[1]

Churchill expressed even greater anxiety in the memorable note that he sent on March 3, 1944 to the members of the British defense committee. It read, "The decision to operate in the Pacific Ocean as an auxiliary force under the command of the Americans places on the agenda the difficult question of the future of our possessions in Malaya. If the Japanese retreat from Malaya or conclude a peace as the result of a powerful blow by the American forces, after the victory the government of the United States will be even more reinforced in its opinion that all possessions in the East Indies must be given over to the trusteeship of some international organ, which would in fact be under the control of the USA."[2]

Churchill felt it essential, on one hand, to send a powerful formation of British ships to the Pacific Ocean, which, even if it could not operate on terms of parity with the American fleet, would at least render appropriate assistance, and on the other hand, to intensify military operations against the Japanese forces in Burma.

The American command group did not agree with this. In a message to Churchill on March 13 Roosevelt wrote, "In 1944 no actual operation will be conducted in the Pacific Ocean on which the absence of the British fleet would have an unfavorable influence." And further, "...Your naval forces will be of great use to our joint efforts if they remain in the Indian Ocean."[3]

---

[1] W.S. Churchill. The Second World War, Vol. VI, pp. 129-130.

[2] G. Erman. The Great Strategy. August 1943-September 1944, p. 438.

[3] W.S. Churchill. The Second World War, Vol. V, pp. 510-511.

The sharpened conflicts caused the Americans and British to begin to independently develop plans for the conduct of military operations, delay their agreement, and introduce numerous changes. Although as the result of active correspondence between Roosevelt and Churchill some of the sharp edges in these relations were smoothed, the main conflicts were not resolved.

The fact that in 1943 the USSR, wishing to shorten the Second World War and decrease the number of its casualties, gave its agreement in principle to enter the war against Japan some time after the defeat of Germany had a great influence on the plans of the American-British command group. In this connection the head of the Soviet government announced at the Teheran Conference, "Our forces in the Far East are more or less sufficient only to conduct the defense, but for offensive operations these forces would have to be increased at least three-fold. This could take place when we force Germany to capitulate. Then - a joint front against Japan."[1] Therefore, in planning military operations for 1944 the Allied command group planned to direct its main efforts toward defeating the naval and air forces, as well as ground forces, located on the islands of the Pacific Ocean. It considered its forces insufficient to strike a decisive blow on Japan and its forces in the metropolis, and calculated on striking such a blow only after the Soviet Union entered the war in the Far East.

The plan of military operations of the USA and England against Japan /560 in 1944 was in general terms as follows. Offensive operations were planned in the Burma sector of the front with the purpose of seizing Northern Burma, blocking the Japanese forces' path to India and establishing ground communications with China. In the Pacific Ocean it was proposed to create military bases and secure control by the USA of the islands in the central and southwestern sectors of the Pacific Ocean, as well as to seize the southern sector of the Philippines in order to prepare conditions for operations in Indonesia and on the island of Taiwan in 1945.

---

[1] Archives of Foreign Policy of the USSR (AFP USSR), inv. 1, div. 23, p. 12.

In accordance with this plan the American Committee of Chiefs of Staff assigned the forces of the central sector of the Pacific Ocean in 1944 an objective - to successively seize the Marshall, Caroline and Marianas Islands and create military bases there. The forces of the southwestern sector were to seize the islands of the Bismarck Archipelago and New Guinea.

It was proposed that the offensive in the central sector of the Pacific Ocean begin in February 1944 with the seizure of the Marshall Islands. For this the American command group formed three assault landing detachments with total numerical strength of approximately 64,000 men. Landings were to be carried out simultaneously at three points (the islands of Roi, Kwajalein, and Majuro), which would secure control over the entire group of Marshall Islands. The 5th American Fleet, which at that time had 217 war ships, including 12 aircraft carriers with 700 aircraft, was to transport the detachment by sea and support their operations.[1]

The landing of American troops on the Marshall Islands began February 1. Two days before that naval artillery had bombarded the intended targets, and then aircraft had made bombing strikes on them. The Japanese garrisons, numbering approximately 8,000 men and possessing 130 airplanes, suffered heavy damage. Defensive installations and all civilian structures were burned or destroyed, and the air force was completely eliminated. The enemy offered almost no resistance. In three days the Americans occupied the islands of Roi, Kwajalein and Majuro, and in the following three weeks they occupied the entire archipelago. Simultaneously with this the Eniwetok islands were seized, and construction of air force and naval bases began there immediately. The Japanese naval base in the Truk Islands was also subjected to bombing strikes from aircraft carriers. Fearing repeat attacks, in the period between February 3 and 10 the Japanese command group redeployed the main forces of the Combined Fleet to the metropolis and the area of the islands of Palau. This worsened the position of the Japanese ground forces on the Caroline Islands.

---

[1] See Campaigns of the War in the Pacific Ocean, p. 231.

Considering the situation that had developed, the American command group resolved, not engaging in battle for the Caroline Islands, to make a strike on the Marianas Islands, which were of great strategic significance both for the American and the Japanese armies. With the fall of these islands the entire territory of Japan came into the zone of operations of the brand new American B-29 bombers. The armed forces of the USA obtained the opportunity to take control of the islands of the central sector of the Pacific Ocean and the naval routes leading from the USA to the Philippines and the zone of the South Seas.

The Japanese garrison on the Marianas Islands consisted of two divisions and two detached brigades. These troops were to be supported from the air by 1,200 airplanes. Cover from the sea was entrusted to a special squadron, which in cooperation with aircraft was to defeat the naval forces of the USA if they attempted to invade the region of the Marianas Islands.

To seize the islands the American command group designated three divisions and a brigade of marine infantry, two infantry divisions, 879 airplanes operating from the available bases, and the 5th American Fleet. In its composition there were 644 ships, including 14 battleships and 29 aircraft /561 carriers,[1] on which over 1,000 airplanes were based.

On June 15, under cover of powerful fire from naval artillery and massed air strikes, the American forces landed on the island of Saipan. Here aerial bombs with napalm were used for the first time, as the result of which many inhabited areas and sugar cane in the fields burned. Attempts by the Japanese ground forces and aircraft to prevent the landing were unsuccessful. The Combined Fleet was also unable to frustrate the operation. In the battles that unfolded on June 19-20 west of the Marianas Islands the Japanese suffered a serious defeat: 3 aircraft carriers were sunk, 640 airplanes were shot down, and many ships received damage.[2] By July 9 the

---

[1] See Campaigns of the War in the Pacific Ocean, p. 293-295.

[2] See History of the War in the Pacific Ocean, Vol. IV, p. 135.

American ground forces, having broken the enemy's resistance, totally possessed the island of Saipan, and during the period from July 21 through August 10 they seized the island of Guam and other islands of the Marianas group.

With the loss of the Marianas Islands the strategic situation worsened for Japan. A threat arose to its navigation in the eastern sector of the Pacific Ocean. The Japanese islands proper found themselves in the radius of operations of American heavy bombers. Conditions were created for the advance of American-English armed forces against the Japanese forces on the islands of Bonin and Ryukyu. Even the Japanese main headquarters considered "a direct attack by American troops on the territory of Japan itself possible!"[1]

Events in the region of the Marianas Islands, located 1,200 miles from the metropolitan area, provoked a sharp worsening of the political situation in the country. Dissatisfaction with the government of H. Tojo and the military establishment grew among the masses of workers, who bore on their shoulders the entire burden of the war. In 1944 diversions at military enterprises and railroad crashes became more frequent, and the number of conflicts between workers and employers increased. Fearing national disturbances, on July 18 the court circles achieved the resignation of Tojo's government. The new cabinet, formed on July 20 and led by Gen. K. Koiso, continued the previous policy regarding the conduct of the war. The position of the Japanese people did not improve, and the tense situation in the country was not eased.

Japan's internal political difficulties created for the USA and England, who exercised total sway on the sea and in the air, still more favorable conditions to strike blows on the islands of Ryukyu, Taiwan (Formosa), or Kyushu. The American Committee of Chiefs of Staff "concluded the possibility of striking a blow directly on Formosa or even on Kyushu, postponing the operation to liberate Palau and the Philippines until a later time."[2]

---

[1] See History of the War in the Pacific Ocean, Vol. IV, p. 143.

[2] G. Erman. The Great Strategy. August 1943-September 1944, p. 477.

However, at the second Quebec Conference in September 1944 it was decided to direct the main efforts of the American-English forces toward regaining previous colonial possessions - Burma and the Philippines.[1]

Proceeding from the resolution of the Quebec Conference, the American command group began to prepare its ground forces and fleet to seize the islands of Palau and Uliti, which were located in the approaches to the Philippines. For that purpose approximately 48,000 men, 800 various warships and 1,600 airplanes were designated.[2] The Japanese garrisons on Palau and Uliti were small and did not have the necessary cover either from the sea or the air. In the battles that developed the Americans routed them and seized the islands by mid-October 1944.

At the same time the American-English forces operating in the southwestern sector of the Pacific Ocean broke through to the approaches to the Philippines. Having gone over to the offensive as early as the beginning /562
of 1944 and blockaded the Japanese garrisons on the islands of the Bismarck Archipelago and in New Guinea in March-April, in May and June, with no real effort, they seized the small islands of Vakde, Biak and Numfoor located near the northern coast of New Guinea, and on September 15 they landed on the island of Morotai (Moluccan Islands), thereby joining the troops of the central Pacific Ocean command. The armed forces of the Allies then conducted military operations in the Pacific Ocean in accordance with the directive of the American Committee of Chiefs of Staff issued in September 1944. According to this directive the commander in chief in the southwestern sector of the Pacific Ocean received the assignment of seizing the central Philippine Islands and setting up bases there, and the commander in chief in the central sector of the Pacific Ocean was assigned to increase the numerical strength of the southwestern sector and provide necessary support with the fleet. With the seizure of the Philippines the Americans deprived Japan of an important source of raw materials and cut off its naval communications with

---

[1] G. Erman. The Great Strategy. October 1944-August 1945, p. 164.

[2] See Campaigns of the War in the Pacific Ocean, p. 344.

the South Seas zone. But in addition they inadvertently provided the Japanese with a respite, permitting them to mobilize additional resources to conduct the war and continue expansion in China.

The decision to land American troops in the Philippines and not on the islands of the metropolis or the islands adjacent to them was determined not only by strategic considerations (isolating Japan from the countries of Southeast Asia), but also by political motivations. In 1944 the national liberation movement intensified in the Philippines. Filipino patriots began to act against the Japanese occupiers with guns in hand. This struggle reached its greatest scope on the main island of the Philippines, Luzon. Here the main forces of the Hukbalahap from the Russian antifascist army, formed in March 1942 and led by the Communist Party, were located. By autumn of 1944 there were approximately 10,000 armed fighters and over 30,000 trained reservists in the army. It enjoyed the great support of the entire people. Hukbalahap set as its main task the liberation of the country from foreign colonizers.

In 1944 with the active participation of the population the people's army cleared several areas of Luzon of the Japanese invaders, where democratic reorganizations were immediately carried out. The lands of landowners who had collaborated with the occupiers, and of traitors, were made the property of the peasants. Democratic organs of authority were created in the provinces, which won great authority among the workers. Supported by the liberated regions and numerous partisan bases, the detachments of Hukbalahap systematically conducted raids into the disposition of the Japanese forces. The Filipinos attacked enemy headquarters and airfields, blew up ammunition and fuel depots, destroyed lines of communication, and disrupted the movement of railroad and automobile transportation. Simultaneously with this they conducted intensified reconnaissance and provided the American command group with exceptionally valuable information on the composition and grouping of Japanese troops.

In the fall of 1944 in the Philippine Islands there were six Japanese divisions and a detached combined brigade,[1] of which five divisions and a brigade were concentrated on the island of Luzon and one division was on the island of Leyte. On the remaining islands of the Philippine Archipelago were located small garrisons of defense forces. To repel a possible landing of Americans in the Philippines the Japanese command group planned to draw upon the main forces of its fleet and air force.

The American-British command group planned to begin the seizure of the Philippines with the island of Leyte, which covered the passages from the Pacific Ocean to the South China Sea and which had coastal sectors convenient for an amphibious assault landing and construction of airfields. The 6th American Army was to effect the landing. The numerical strength of the assault landing force reached 90,000 men.[2] Sea transport of the forces was entrusted to the 7th American Fleet, which numbered 650 varied war ships /563
and auxiliary vessels.[3] The 3rd American Fleet was to cover the landing of the assault group from the north. To support the assault landing group from the air approximately 1,280 aircraft based on aircraft carriers and bomber aircraft of the 5th and 13th Airborne Armies[4] were drawn upon.

The operation began on October 20 after air preparation and bombardment of the coast by naval artillery. On a front of approximately 18 kilometers units of four infantry divisions landed simultaneously. Even during the first days the Americans seized such a large beachhead that they were able to begin construction of airfields and redeployment there of the 5th Airborne Army from the island of Morotai.

The Japanese command group, having established the direction of the American-English forces' main blow, sent three detachments (formations) of

---

[1] See Walter Kruger. Ot Avstraliyi do Yaponiyi. (From Australia to Japan.) The History of the 6th American Army in the Second World War. M., Voyenizdat, 1958, pp. 536-538.

[2] See F. Ruge. War at Sea 1939-1945, p. 363.

[3] See History of the War in the Pacific Ocean, Vol. IV, p. 145.

[4] See Campaigns of the War in the Pacific Ocean, pp. 401, 403; A. Brophy. The Air Force of the USA, p. 74.

naval forces to the region of the island of Leyte: the northern, central and southern. The composition of these detachments included 9 battleships, 4 aircraft carriers, 19 cruisers and 33 destroyers.[1] The ships were to be covered from the air by 600 airplanes based at the airfields of the Philippine Islands and 116 on aircraft carriers. The blow was to be struck suddenly at dawn on October 25. However, the Japanese fleet was unable to achieve the assigned objective.

The American command group, having guessed the Japanese plan in time, directed the 7th Fleet to the Strait of Surigao and the 3rd Fleet to San Bernardino Strait in order to meet and defeat the enemy. In all 12 battleships, 30 aircraft carriers with 1,280 airplanes, 20 cruisers and 104 destroyers were drawn upon for the operation.[2]

During the day on October 24 aircraft of the 3rd American Fleet attacked the Japanese central detachment while still in the approaches to the goal (in the region of Mindoro Island) and sank one ship. In their reports the pilots so exaggerated enemy losses that the commander of the 3rd Fleet formed the impression that the entire Japanese detachment had been routed. Receiving a report that the northern detachment was approaching the Philippines, the commander of the fleet, Adm. Halsey, without checking the validity of the pilots' reports on the rout of the central detachment, sent his forces to the north. As a result San Bernardino Strait was left open.

The commander of the 7th Fleet, certain that San Bernardino Strait was covered by the forces of the 3rd Fleet,deployed all of his forces in Surigao Strait. On the night of October 25, when the Japanese southern detachment entered Surigao Strait in a line ahead column, the American battleships and heavy cruisers, which were equipped with radar, bombarded them with their main caliber guns. The Japanese opened answering fire. Because their ships did not have radar, it was necessary to conduct fire using illuminating

---

[1] See Campaigns of the War in the Pacific Ocean, p. 401.

2 Ibid

shells and searchlights. This disclosed the position of the Japanese fleet to a great extent and gave the Americans the opportunity to conduct accurate fire. In the heated battle the entire southern detachment was destroyed; only one aircraft carrier was able to save itself. Three more Japanese cruisers and four aircraft carriers, arriving in the area of the battles later, retreated after an unsuccessful torpedo attack.

At that time the central detachment passed freely through San Bernardino Strait, and, setting its course for the south, made a surprise attack on the morning of October 25 in the region south of Samar Island on the escort aircraft carriers of the 7th Fleet. Having a great superiority in forces, the Japanese could have defeated the American group of aircraft carriers and placed the 7th Fleet in a difficult position, attacking it from the rear. However, ignorance of the circumstances, a lack of cooperation between the Japanese naval detachments and also between them and the air force, led to the central detachment's turning back and going out through San Bernardino /564 Strait to the bases of the metropolis. On the same day a naval battle took place between the 3rd American Fleet and the northern detachment of the Japanese 130 miles north of Cape Engano (the northern section of the island of Luzon). In this battle four Japanese aircraft carriers were sunk and many ships received damage.

In all in the naval battles at Leyte Island the Japanese lost 3 battleships, 4 aircraft carriers, 10 cruisers, 9 destroyers and 1 submarine; the Americans' losses were 2 aircraft carriers and 2 destroyers.[1]

The Japanese command group's attempt to reinforce its garrison on Leyte Island was also unsuccessful. The complete dominion of the American air force in the air and the aggressive operations of the Filipino partisans did not allow the Japanese the opportunity to transfer reinforcements to that island from Luzon. By December 22 the resistance of the Japanese garrison on Leyte was broken. By that time the Americans had seized the island

[1] See Campaigns of the War in the Pacific Ocean, pp. 360-361.

of Mindoro without a battle, and they soon created a large naval base there.

As the result of the military operations in the Pacific Ocean basin in 1944 the American-English forces, exploiting the anti-Japanese movement, achieved considerable success. The Japanese naval and air forces bore heavy losses. The Americans established control over almost all of the islands of the central and southwestern sectors of the Pacific Ocean. Approximately ten Japanese divisions, which were occupying the defense on the islands of the Bismarck Archipelago, in New Guinea and the Caroline Islands, were blockaded from the sea and air and cut off from their supply bases. Military operations began in the South China Sea and the South Seas zone. It became ever more difficult to transport strategic raw materials by sea from the countries of Southeast Asia to the metropolis. A real threat was created of Japan's losing the Philippines, as well as of an invasion by American-English forces in the islands of Indonesia, in Indochina and the east coast of China. All of these territories were found to be within the radius of the air operations of the USA, and their heavy bombers began to carry out attacks on the Japanese islands proper from their bases in the Marianas Islands.

However, in 1944 the ground forces of Japan did not suffer heavy losses as a whole. Production of armaments not only did not decrease, it actually increased slightly. The numerical strength of ground forces grew from 3,100,000 men in 1943 to 4,100,000 in 1944. Even American official circles admit that by the end of 1944 the numerically powerful Japanese ground forces did not suffer defeat as a whole. In spite of the lack of success in the Pacific Ocean Japan was capable of conducting a lengthy war against the USA and England in the ground theater.

In the Burma sector of the front, in Arakan, the Japanese began their offensive on February 4, 1944, and on March 12 three of their divisions operating in Central Burma crossed the Burma - Indian border and struck their main blow in the general direction of Imphal - Kohima. Without

particular effort the Japanese forces breached the weak British defense, cut off their garrison in Imphal, and by April 7 had encircled Kohima. A threat was created to the Silchar - Sadiyya railroad, on which material resources were transported for the American and Chinese forces who were continuing the offensive begun in November 1943 along the Ledo - Myitkyina road. In order to help the two Indian divisions operating in the region of Imphal - Kohima, the American-British command group designated two more divisions from the reserves and organized supply to the encircled garrison by air.

The Japanese forces that had invaded India soon began to experience a shortage of ammunition and provisions. In their rear the Burmese partisans as well as diversionary-reconnaissance groups parachuted in from American airplanes intensified their operations. At the same time the American and Chinese forces in the north of Burma broke the resistance of the Japanese divisions occupying the defense there and approached Myitkyina. The position of the Japanese was further made difficult by the fact that in mid-May four divisions of Chiang Kai-Shek concentrated in the province of Yunan went over to the offensive and struck a blow from the east in the direction of /565
Bamo - Mandalay. Under the conditions thus created the Japanese command group began gradually to withdraw its forces from India and Northern Burma after June 7.

To pursue the retreating enemy the American-British command group designated the 14th British Army was reinforced by engineer units and aircraft. The pursuit was carried out in the general direction of Imphal - Mandalay. By August 19 the British forces had cleared the territory of India of Japanese, crossed the Burma - Indian border, and at the end of December reached the inhabited area of Shwebo, located 70 kilometers northwest of Mandalay. The American and Chinese forces operating in Northern Burma occupied Myitkyina on August 3 after an 80-day bombardment, and they took Bamo on December 15.

Thus the Japanese plan to seize Indian territory and disrupt the air communications of the USA with China was not realized. By the end of 1944

the Japanese began to retreat not only in Northern, but also in Central Burma. At the same time the troops of the Southeast Asian command group with the support of Burmese patriots repelled the Japanese advance in the Indian provinces of Manipur and Assam. Going over to pursuit of the enemy, they occupied an extensive territory in Central Burma and Northern Burma, established ground communications with the troops of Chiang Kai-Shek and created conditions for seizure of the entire country and a subsequent incursion into Malaya, Thailand and Indochina.

The successes of the American-British forces in Burma were promoted to a considerable degree by the active struggle waged against the occupiers by the local population.

The Japanese invaders deprived the workers of all political rights. The Communist Party of Burma was forced to go into deep underground. Executions of inhabitants suspected of anti-Japanese activity became an ordinary occurrence. In prisons and concentration camps languished thousands of patriots who had fought for the freedom and independence of their homeland.

But the cruel terror of the Japanese oppressors could not break the will of the people of Burma to resist. Inspired by the victories of the Soviet people and the successes of the 8th and New 4th Chinese Armies, in 1944 they broadened the liberation struggle still more. In July after the defeat of the Japanese forces in the region of Imphal the anti-Japanese partisan detachments of various directions united in the Antifascist League of the People's Liberation. The greatest number of partisan detachments operated in the mountain regions of Central and Northern Burma. Here the partisans attacked Japanese garrisons and the local military administration, disrupted railroad communications, organized mine explosions, prevented the occupiers from taking provisions from the peasants and from driving the peasants into forced labor. For the struggle with the partisans, who enjoyed the support of the popular masses, the Japanese were forced to assign large forces.

With the loss of a large part of Burma, Japan was deprived of the sources of several types of strategic raw materials, specifically rubber and petroleum. This undoubtedly worsened its economic situation. But the operations in Burma did not exert a significant influence on the general course of military operations in the Pacific Ocean basin, as they were conducted at a distance of many thousands of kilometers from the most important military targets of Japan, and only an insignificant part (approximately 3 percent) of the Japanese armed forces took part in them. Roosevelt observed that the efforts of England in India and Burma "did not bring the Allied powers closer to the vitally important regions of Japan."[1]

The military operations in the Burma sector of the front, directed above all toward achieving colonizing goals, also did not create the necessary prerequisites to ease the extremely tense situation in China, where the Japanese had inflicted one defeat after another on the forces of Chiang Kai-Shek and seized extensive new territories in the central regions and the southern part of the country.

[1] G. Erman. The Great Strategy. October 1944-August 1945, p. 247.

2. Military operations in China

The military-political situation in China in 1944 remained extremely /566
complex and tense. The Khuomintang government continued to stubbornly hold to the traitorous line of passive resistance to the Japanese aggressors, the ruthless suppression of democratic forces, and unleashing civil war. At the same time, with exceptional energy the Communist Party of China conducted a policy directed toward mobilization of the broadest popular masses to resolutely repel the invaders. In the conflict of these two directions, said Mao Tse-Tung, "is the key to all of the problems of China."[1]

---

[1] Mao Tse-Tung. Selected Works. Vol. 4. M., Izd-vo inostrannoy literatury, 1953, p. 466.

The course of the war with China showed convincingly that the Khuomintang leaders, who had agreed in 1937 to form a united anti-Japanese front, in fact had no intention of fulfilling the obligations they had assumed. Only the Communist Party steadfastly executed the program of the anti-Japanese front. In the face of the enormous danger hanging over the country, the Communists often compromised with Khuomintang for the sake of uniting all forces for joint operations against the Japanese. However, through the fault of Chiang Kai-Shek's clique the armed struggle with the Japanese was waged separately by the Khuomintang front and the front of people's armies.

The Communist Party of China revealed the social roots of the Khuomintang policy of passive resistance to Japanese aggression. The Khuomintang government represented the interests of the large landholders, bankers and compradors[1] of China. The reactionary forces were in mortal fear of a true people's war, which alone could lead to the rout of the aggressors. In this was the main root of the passive conduct of the war against the Japanese invaders and the reactionary policy within the country.

In 1944 the consequences of the reactionary policy of the Khuomintang which were ruinous for China, were manifested most clearly. In spite of their many promises "to realize democracy," create a "modernized state," the government of Chiang Kai-Shek cruelly suppressed the democratic movement in the country. It also took no measures to fulfill its promises to improve the situation of the Chinese people. The economy in the Khuomintang regions every year fell deeper into ruin. Industry was unable to produce the most essential consumer items in a sufficient quantity. The war economy was also in a state of bankruptcy. In 1943 Chiang Kai-Shek was forced to observe in an address to a production conference in Chongquingthat free capital was used not in production, but in other fields.[2] Chiang Kai-Shek did not specify what "other fields" these were, but it is well known that

---

[1] Compradors - a conciliatory sector of the bourgeoisie of colonial and dependent countries serving as an intermediary between foreign and local markets. In Khuomintang China the comprador bourgeoisie and landowners were the main social support of foreign imperialism.

[2] See "Amerasia," October 1, 1943, p. 298.

capitalists in the Khuomintang regions considered it more profitable to speculate in rice or plots of land than to invest capital in the war industry. The Chiang Kai-Shek government often declared its desire to develop the economy of the country, but in fact all of its measures led only to the enrichment of the large landowners, bankers and compradors.

A particularly difficult situation had developed in agriculture. The area of land available for sowing had decreased, and the productivity of the main agricultural crops had considerably lessened. The harvest of ordinary rice in 1943 in comparison with 1937 had dropped to 84 percent, /567
of gluten rice to 52 percent, kaoliang to 86 percent, and millet to 71 percent. By 1944 the number of livestock had greatly decreased. In comparison with 1937 the quantity of cattle was 86 percent, of horses 78 percent, of mules and donkeys 74 percent, of pigs 82 percent, and of sheep 80 percent.[1] The greater mass of the peasants in the provinces under the control of Gomintang lived in poverty. Rental of land reached 60 percent of the harvest, and in the most fruitful regions, for example in the delta of the Sitszyan (transl. from Russian) River in the province of Guangdong it reached 80 percent.[2] Millions of peasants died of starvation.

The process of disintegration of the Gomintang army intensified. Robbery and speculation built themselves a secure nest there. In many divisions the commanders received clothing, provisions and weapons for "dead souls," that is, for soldiers who had been killed. All of the "surplus" went to the black market, where not only rifles, but artillery guns could be purchased. Service in the army of Chiang Kai-Shek was considered damnation. In the Khuomintang forces, as a rule, there were no more than 4 million persons under arms. Many mobilized soldiers either deserted or died of disease or starvation. Chiang Kai-Shek's generals traitorously surrendered whole formations to the Japanese and forced soldiers to serve in the puppet

---

[1] See V. Maslennikov. Kitay. Politiko-ekonomicheskiy ocherk. (China. A political-economic survey.) M., Gospolitizdat, 1946, pp. 89, 90.

[2] See F. Ienzen. Kitay pobezhdayet. (China Triumphs.) M., Izd-vo inostrannoy literatury, 1950, p. 85.

forces. According to data for 1944, 62 percent of the army of the puppet government in Nanjing consisted of former Khuomintang soldiers and officers. In the situation that had developed the Gomintang army could not offer serious resistance to the Japanese forces, not to mention the conduct of large offensive operations.

Thus the clique of Chiang Kai-Shek led the regions and army it controlled toward catastrophe. In 1944 the Khuomintang regime suffered an acute crisis. Chiang Kai-Shek and his generals, who liked to depict themselves as "heroes" of the anti-Japanese struggle, actually attempted to come to an arrangement with the invaders. The idea of a deal with them was expressed in a traitorous formula which was widespread at the time: "Peace is fraught with unrest, war with defeat, but after defeat comes peace, and after peace comes calm."[1]

As the result of the anti-national policy of the passive conduct of the war, the Khuomintang forces suffered one defeat after another. The Japanese command group, as has been shown, intended to develop a broad offensive in the territory of China in 1944 with the goal of establishing Peking-Hankou, Guangzhou-Hankou and Changsha-Guilin railroad communications and thereby laying a continuous line of communication from Northern China to Southern China. It also calculated on seizing the air bases of the USA in Central and Southern China, from which the American aircraft made attacks on Japan and Taiwan (map 24). In spite of the fact that to realize this plan the Japanese command group designated only 13 divisions, it was nonetheless able to hope for success, because the resistance of the Khuomintang army was very weak.

In March 1944 the Japanese forces, with numerical strength of 50,000-60,000 men, began an offensive into the province of Henan (Central China). The Chiang Kai-Shek forces located here numbered 400,000 men. Although the Khuomintang forces had a many-fold superiority in troops, they suffered defeat.

---

[1] See Novaya i noveyshaya istoriya Kitaya. Kratkiy ocherk. M., Izd-vo inostrannoy literatury, 1950, p. 155.

Without difficulty the occupiers seized the major cities of Zhenzhou and Louyang (on the line of the Xuzhou-Xian railroad).

On May 20 the Japanese went over to the offensive in the northern sector of Hunan. Here the numerical strength of their forces reached 120,000 men. Chian Kai-Shek's armies exceeded the enemy three-fold. In addition, they were supported by the American air forces. Nevertheless, the Khuomintang forces were crushed here as well. On June 18 the Japanese seized Changsha, the administrative center of the province and one of the major cities of Southern China. Soon military operations began in the province of Guangxi. Battles were joined for Guilin, the main city of that province. The terrain in the region of Guilin facilitated the defense. However, on November 10 the 31st Army, which was defending Guilin, capitulated. The commander of the forces in the province of Guangxi, Gen. Bai Tszun-si (transl. from Russian), ran away. The Americans were forced to render the air bases for their B-29 airplanes unserviceable, on the installation of which they had spent 1 million dollars. /568

Several days after the fall of Guilin military operations moved to the province of Guizhou. The Japanese invaders drove a wedge deep into the southwestern sector of China. At the same time they progressed southward, and at the end of 1944 they joined their troops operating in the northern part of Indochina. The main goal of the Japanese aggressors' military operations in China in 1944 was achieved. They succeeded in establishing a continuous front line from Peking to Singapore and extending the continental communication. Simultaneously the Japanese also completed a second task - they liquidated the American air bases in Central and Southern China.

The results of the military operations in 1944 were quite lamentable for the government of Chiang Kai-Shek. In eight months the Khuomintang government lost over 200,000 square kilometers of territory with a population of over 60 million people, 146 large and small cities, including 4 provincial centers - the cities of Changsha, Luoyang, Fuzhou and Guilin - seven

air bases and 36 airfields.[1] Not a single major port was left at the disposition of the Khuomintang. In the military operations of 1944, as throughout the war, the Khuomintang army showed its complete helplessness and complete incapability of resisting. It was not conclusively defeated only because the Japanese halted the further offensive, as they considered it entirely possible to achieve the capitulation of the Khuomintang army on the basis of the success that had been gained in the course of "peaceful" diplomatic maneuvers.

As early as October 30, 1943 the imperialists of Japan had signed a "treaty of alliance" with the puppet government in Nanjing and advanced a so-called "new policy" in connection with China. The essence of this policy was to find ways to compromise with the clique of Chiang Kai-Shek and force them to cease military operations. This enabled the Japanese to maximally exploit the material resources of China to continue the war with its other enemies.

From the moment the government of Koiso came to power (July 1944) the idea of a compromise with Chiang Kai-Shek permeated all of the acts of government figures. The appointment of M. Sigemitsu, the author of the treaty of October 30, 1943, as Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of East Asian Affairs was judged by the diplomatic circles of other countries to be an indication that Koiso's cabinet intended to hold to a new policy in relation to China. In connection with the offensive in the provinces of Henan and Hunan, on July 5, 1944 the government of Japan made an announcement in which the goal of Japanese imperialism in China was formulated as follows: "The goal of the military operations in China that we are now conducting is only to prevent American and British attempts at aggression and domination... Japan sincerely wishes only to establish permanent friendly relations and friendship between Japan and China."[2] In August a special announcement by the Japanese command group in China was published. In this equally false document the Japanese militarists promised the Chinese people

---

[1] Chinese Revolutionary History Reference Map (First Edition). An attachment to Vol. 3 of Chinese People's University History Series, compiled by Chinese Revolutionary History teaching and Research Section. Higher Education Publishing House. p. 7.

[2] ARP USSR, col. 0146, dvi. 6, p. 324.

to maintain "charity and ethics," as well as to give the Chinese the "chance to live in peace."[1] Finally, in November 1944 the Japanese government recalled from China the commander of the expeditionary army, Marshal S. Hata, who was an opponent of compromise with Khuomintang and impeded the execution of the "new policy" toward China. /569

The "peace" maneuvers, however, were unsuccessful. Chian Kai-Shek, fearing the peoples' anger, did not wish to enter into an obvious agreement with the Japanese. Moreover, in the second half of 1944 the Chiang Kai-Shekites could not help but see the inevitability of the fascist bloc's defeat. Another obstacle to a Japanese-Khuomintang agreement was the opposition of the imperialists of the USA, who wished to establish their total sway in China. And that presumed the defeat of the Japanese aggressors - the most evil imperialist rivals of the Americans in the Far East.

Such was the military-political situation in the Chinese regions under the power of the Khuomintang.

An entirely different situation had been created in the liberated regions of China. Here above all the political program of the anti-Japanese front, calling for the execution of democratic reforms and improvement of the Chinese people's life, was being successfully realized. The people's armies served as an example not only of heroism in battle against the Japanese invaders, but also of the realization of democratic measures.

Even at the beginning of the war with the Japanese invaders, in the Special Region of Shensi - Ganzhou - Ningxia a coalition government was formed by election, which included Communists, representatives of other parties, and non-party members. Such governments were also formed subsequently in all liberated regions. The local democratic authorities carried out a great work to organize help to the front. The call of the Communist Party, "All for the front!" was seized by the broad masses of workers. Public

[1] AFP USSR, col. 0146, div. 11, p. 5.

organizations helped the new authorities to provide the army with provisions and ammunition, to arrange the production of consumer goods, and so on.

Great attention was devoted in the liberated republics to increasing the yield of industrial and agricultural production. In Yan'an, for example, the number of workers occupied in industry grew from 300 persons to 12,000.[1] In the region of Shanxi - Qahar - Hebei, in spite of enormous difficulties, production of agricultural implements, paint, soap, glass, and other goods began. The textile industry made considerable progress. All schools, administrative establishments, and hospitals began to sow fields and cultivate vegetables for their own use. The new administration did much to regulate the taxation and currency systems.

The Communist Party of China, fulfilling the obligations that it had assumed even at the beginning of the war, temporarily stopped the confiscation of landholders' property for the sake of strengthening the anti-Japanese front. This did not mean, however, that the party entirely abandoned agrarian reforms. The Communist Party took measures to decrease rents and loan interest. While the maximum interest for a loan to peasants in the Khuomintang regions reached 100 percent at times, in the liberated regions loan interest was decreased to 10 percent annually.[2]

All of this varied activity by the democratic authorities in the liberated regions was the pledge of the success of the 8th and New 4th Armies' military operations. Their huge popularity among the people enabled the Communist Party to assemble new units and formations from volunteers. The numerical strength of the people's armies grew steadily. Relations of /570
true unity and cooperation were established between them and the people.

The Communist Party, conducting a policy of resolute resistance to the invaders, in the course of the war dispelled the myth of the invincibility

---

[1] See F. Ienzen. China Triumphs, p. 152.

[2] Ibid, p. 150.

of the Japanese imperialists. In the popular masses the Communists instilled a feeling of confidence in their strength, in their total victory over the aggressors. In opposition to the Khuomintang, who made it their goal to reestablish the situation existing before July 7, 1937, which meant abandoning Northeastern China, seized by the Japanese in 1931, the Communist Party called on the people to "beat the enemy to the banks of the Yalu River."[1] "No compromise with the invaders!" - all of the activities of the Communists of China took place under this motto.

The heroic struggle of the Chinese people inspired the patriots of Indochina, Burma, Indonesia, in the Philippines, and in other countries of Asia. Chinese people living in those countries fought bravely against the common enemy. Thus the 48th Chinese company operated actively in the composition of the Hukbalahap people's anti-Japanese army in the Philippines (its number was composed of the serial numbers of the New 4th and 8th People's Armies of China).

Japanese prisoners of war also fought along with the soldiers in the liberated regions against the occupiers. One of the leaders of the Communist Party of Japan, Sandzo Nosaka, who was in the city of Yan'an, organized the Japanese Antiwar League in 1942 with the support of the people's forces. In 1944 it was transformed into the Union of the Liberation of the Japanese People. This organization united in its ranks Japanese prisoners of war who had joined the ranks of fighters for the freedom of China. In addition to the Union, the Japanese Worker's and Peasant's School formed in Yan'an, which also had branches in other liberated regions, carried out great political work among the prisoners of war. All of these facts spoke of the international solidarity of the progressive forces of the peoples of Asia in their struggle against imperialist aggressors.

In 1944 the troops of the liberated regions considerably intensified their military operations. The leaders of the Communist Party gave the

---

[1] Novayai noveyshaya istoriya Kitaya, p. 181. The Yala is a river bordering China and Korea.

people's armed forces an objective - to liberate in 1944 new territories in Northern, Central and Southern China. In fulfilling this order the people's forces gained major victories.

The 8th Army under the command of Chu De operated at the fronts of Northern China. Those of its formations commanded by Lo Zhun-Huan achieved great successes. During the offensive in the central sector of the province of Shandong they routed 13 regiments of the army of the Nanjing puppet government, and cleared a territory with an area of 12,000 square kilometers and a population of 300,000 persons.[1] The city of Tszyuysyan' was taken by the forces of the Shandong region. The people's forces in the region adjacent to Bohai Wan Gulf liberated four districts with a population of over 4 million people and destroyed over 12,000 enemy soldiers and officers. During the summer advance the troops of the Shandong region consolidated strongly in the central sector of the province. The people's armies in the coastal and southern sectors of the province of Shandong operated successfully. During the summer and fall offensives 17,000 soldiers and officers of the enemy were destroyed there, and approximately 1,500,000 inhabitants were delivered from the yoke of the occupiers. In all in 1944 the troops of the Shandong liberated region destroyed over 36,000 and captured over 10,000 enemy soldiers and officers, and cleared a huge territory with a population of over 7,400,000 persons of the enemy.[2]

The forces of the liberated region of Shanxi - Qahar - Hebei under /571
the command of Ne Zhun-chzhen achieved considerable success. In 1944 they drove the enemy out of 1,500 strong points and liberated over 5,000 villages.[3] The Japanese were expelled from the central sector of the province of Hebei, which they had seized in 1940. The victories gained by the forces of the region had a great influence on the course of the war in Northeastern China.

---

[1] See Narodnaya-osvoboditel'naya armiya Kitaya v period voyny protiv yaponskikh zakhvatchikov (The People's Liberation Army of China during the war against the Japanese invaders). M., Voyenizdat, 1957, p. 207.

[2] Chinese Revolutionary History Reference Map (First Edition). An attachment to Vol. 3 of Chinese People's University History Series, compiled by Chinese Revolutionary History teaching and Research Section. Higher Education Publishing House. p. 7.

[3] See the People's Liberation Army of China during the war against the Japanese invaders, p. 208.

The forces of the liberated region of Shanxi - Hebei - Shandong - Henan, commanded by Liu Bo-chen, drove the Japanese out of many provincial towns during the spring offensive. In the period from July through September they conducted three major offensive operations in the northern part of the province of Henan north of the Huan He River and smashed 37 enemy strong points. The people's forces advancing south of the Huan He River created a serious threat to the Peking-Hankou and Lunhai railroads. In all, in 1944 the forces of Liu Bo-chen seized over 1,000 enemy strong points and 7 provincial cities, and liberated over 5 million people. The people's forces under the command of Liu Chzhen-Tsao in the Shanxi - Siujang liberated region also achieved great success.

The New 4th Army commanded by Chen I operated in the liberated regions of Central China. At that time there were over 140 districts in those regions, in which 30 million people lived.[1]

In 1944 the partisan detachments of Southern China successfully conducted offensive operations, especially the Duntszyan column of the Guanzhou people's partisan formation. In a year this column grew from one thousand to over ten thousand persons. This partisans conducted diversionary acts in the region of Siangan (Hong Kong), and disrupted the enemy's railroad and highway communications. During the year the partisans of Southern China routed over 20 Japanese punitive expeditions, destroyed over 2,~~000~~ 600 enemy soldiers and officers, and seized 23 strong points. The people's forces conducted military operations on the island of Hainan where a large liberated region arose with a population of over 1,500,000 persons.[2]

In 1944 the people's armies of China conducted a huge number of battles in which the troops of Japan and the Nanjing puppet government had over 260,000 casualties, killed and wounded, and over 600,000 men were taken

---

[1] See Miao Chu-Huan. Short History of the Communist Party of China. M., Gospolitizdat, 1958, p. 198.

[2] See People's Liberation Army of China during the war against the Japanese invaders, p. 214.

prisoner; 30,000 men deserted to the side of the people's armies. In all over 50,000 square kilometers of territory were won from the enemy, and over 12 million people were delivered from the invaders' yoke.[1]

Even the Japanese newspaper "Asahi simbun" was forced to acknowledge the fighting capability of the people's forces, writing, "Our greatest enemy is the Communist Army. Seventy percent of our battles in Northern China are with this enemy; the Chongqing army (the army of Chiang Kai-Shek - Ed.) has lost the will for battle."[2]

During the war with the Japanese aggressors in China the democratic forces led by the Communists grew and gained in strength. Chiang Kai-Shek's clique hoped to deal with them only with outside help, as they clearly lacked the capability themselves. By that time it had become entirely clear on whose help the Chinese reactionaries relied. This was the American imperialists, who planned to consolidate in China with the help of Chiang Kai-Shek's government.

In the plan to establish world domination the monopolies of the USA /572
assigned an important place to China. The military failures of the Allies in the Pacific Ocean theater in the first years of the war had a great influence on the policy of the American government toward China. To ease the position of the American-English forces there, the United States wished to use Chinese armies in the war with Japan. For that very reason the government of the USA at that time somewhat restrained Chiang Kai-Shek in organizing the struggle against the armed forces led by the Communist Party. Unleashing a new civil war on a large scale during that period would only be in the favor of the Japanese, since that war would divert China's attention away from performing the task of primary importance - the struggle against the aggressor.

---

[1] See Istoriya sovremennoy kitayskoy revolyutsiyi. (History of the modern Chinese revolution.) M., Izd-vo inostrannoy literatury, 1959, pp. 470-471.

[2] Quot. from F. Ienzen. China Triumphs, p. 130.

By 1944 the situation had changed. The USA had recovered from the military defeats suffered in the beginning of the war. The center of gravity of the military operations in the Pacific Ocean basin began to shift directly to the shores of Japan. The ruling circles of the United States were concerned by the successes of the Chinese people's armies, although the latter represented a considerable force in the struggle against the Japanese. In spite of the fact that Japan was still far from defeated, the task of suppressing the revolutionary forces in China began to move more and more clearly into the forefront of the policy of the USA. But the American imperialists believed that a civil war must be thoroughly prepared, and the moment to unleash it skillfully chosen.

In order to thoroughly study the situation in China the government of the USA sent a group of specialists on the Far East to Chongquing at the end of 1943. The reports of the American observers were found to be disquieting. "The position of the Khuomintang and the generalissimo at the present," one of them read, "is weaker than at any time in the last 10 years.... Everywhere there is a universal feeling of hopelessness and low morale. The power of the central government within the large cities is weakening. Corruption permeates and is demoralizing the entire government and the military structure on an unprecedented scale from top to bottom..."[1] The Americans were also forced to admit that the Japanese were in no condition to destroy the Communist forces, that "the Communists had survived 10 years of civil war and 7 years of the Japanese offensive. They had survived not only a more persistent enemy onslaught than that which the forces of the central Chinese government had borne, but also the rigorous blockade placed on them by Chiang Kai-Shek."[2]

In connection with the crisis in the Khuomintang egime Roosevelt sent Vice President G. Wallace to Chongqing. During the negotiations with the Khuomintang leaders in June 1944 Wallace advised them more forcefully "to

---

[1] United States Relations with China. Washington, 1949, p. 567.

[2] Ibid, pp. 566-567.

display maximum energy and foresight in order to avoid the fate of Kerensky in Russia."[1] Pursuing its mercenary motives, the USA wished to save and perpetuate the rule of the Khuomintang and therefore was prepared to render it all necessary assistance. Wallace obtained Chiang Kai-Shek's agreement to unlimited American interference in China's internal affairs.

In September 1944 Gen. P. Harley was sent to China, representing the interests of the most aggressive and reactionary circles of the American bourgeoisie. Upon arriving in Chongqing he began to execute an extensive program calculated ultimately to suppress the national liberation movement in the country. The main purpose of his mission was to help the Khuomintang government to prepare thoroughly for a new civil war.

The commander of the American forces in China, Gen. D. Stilwell, who continued to demand maximum effort in the war with Japan from Chiang Kai-Shek, was recalled in September. His replacement, Gen. A. Vedemeyer, occupied himself largely with the preparation of Chiang Kai-Shek's forces for /573
war against the people's armies. Thus in spite of the fact that decisive encounters with the Far Eastern aggressor were still forthcoming and occupation forces were still located in the territory of China, the American government essentially left Khuomintang China out of the reckoning as an active force in the war with Japan.

Gen. Harley attempted to cover up the true purpose of his mission, acting as an "intermediary" in negotiations between the Khuomintang and the Communist Party of China. This political maneuver by the government of the United States was calculated to create for it a reputation as the "savior" of the country from civil war. Furthermore, playing out the role of "intermediary," at the end of 1944 the American representatives intended to obtain the agreement of the Communist Party to subordination of the people's forces to the Khuomintang. For this the Communist Party was promised

[1] United States Relations with China. Washington, 1949, p. 556.

several places in the National Defense Council. Naturally, such a political trick was doomed to failure from the start.

In the course of the further struggle the Chinese people became convinced through their own experience that American imperialism was as bitter an enemy as Japanese imperialism.

1944, the third year of the war in the Pacific Ocean, passed under the emblem of the ever-increasing successes of the Allies. The Japanese naval and air forces bore heavy losses. The Allies established control over all of the islands of the central and southwestern sectors of the Pacific Ocean and Northern Burma. Military operations were carried into the South China Sea and the zone of the South Seas. Shipments of strategic raw materials from the countries of Southeast Asia to Japan were made very difficult. Attacks began by strategic aircraft on the Japanese islands proper. However, the results of the year testified to the fact that Japan still remained a dangerous enemy, since its ground army presented a real threat. Japanese forces located in the metropolis, in Korea and in China were still capable of offering stubborn resistance to the Allies. Furthermore the creation of many new formations and units was planned, and the entire population of Japan was to be drawn into the armed struggle. To oppose the American surface ships mass production was carried out of airplanes, operated by suicide pilots.

In China the Japanese aggressors were able to achieve some of their goals not only because they possessed considerable ground forces, but also as the result of the traitorous policy of the Khuomintang government. Only the people's armies led by the Communist Party offered decisive resistance to the occupiers in China. Unlike the Khuomintang the Chinese Communists consistently executed the political and military program of the anti-Japanese national front. Democratic organs of power were created and consolidated in the liberated regions. The object of their concern was improving the material situation of the people and their mobilization to the selfless struggle with the Japanese invaders.

During military operations the people's armies and partisans of the liberated regions of China demonstrated the great strength of the people, who had risen to the liberation struggle. The Communist Party of China believed that the Japanese could only be defeated in a people's war. Such a war frightened the Khuomintang clique.

The American-British ruling circles realized that the fate of the war in the Pacific Ocean depended to a considerable extent on the defeat of the Japanese armed forces on the mainland, and above all of the Kwantun Army in Northeastern China. They also frequently made such admissions in 1944. They did not consider performing this difficult task without the help of the USSR.

In connection with the worsened military-political situation of Japan in the second half of 1944 its government intensified diplomatic "peace" maneuvers toward the antifascist coalition. Its goal was to split the coalition. For this the Japanese imperialists decided to employ the reactionary forces in England and the USA, which in 1944 called on their governments to make a deal with Japan. In England, for example, in the spring of 1944 a group of financial and parliamentary figures demanded that a compromise peace be concluded with Japan.[1] The leaders of that group openly declared that a defeat of Japanese militarism would lead to a strengthening of the position of Communism, and completing a compromise peace with Japan would make it possible to later turn it into an anti-Communist stronghold in Asia. However, the governments of the USA and England could not ignore the democratic forces, which insistently demanded the rout of the fascist aggressors. Indeed, the unconditional surrender of Japan entirely suited the American and British monopolists, since such an outcome of the war would mean the defeat of their main imperialist rival in the Far East. /574

The antifascist coalition, in spite of the complexity of relations between the USSR and its other participants, capitalist countries, continued

[1] See Andrew Roth. Dilemma in Japan. Boston, 1945, pp. 29-30.

to fulfill the tasks before them successfully. All attempts of German and Japanese diplomacy to split the coalition were unsuccessful.

PART FOUR

THE SUCCESS OF THE DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN POLICY OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY AND THE GOVERNMENT OF THE SOVIET UNION IN 1944

CHAPTER 19

THE FURTHER RISE OF THE MILITARY-ECONOMIC MIGHT OF THE COUNTRY. THE LABOR FEAT OF THE SOVIET PEOPLE

1. The basic tasks and most important features of the development of the national economy in 1944.

In 1944, as in the previous war years, all of the people's strength, all of the economic might of the country were directed toward the fulfillment of the main task - achieving a total and final victory over the enemy. /577

The successful development of the military economy of the USSR in 1944 rested on the achievements of the previous year. In 1943 such leading branches of heavy industry as the metallurgical, coal, electrical energy

and machine tool manufacturing industries stepped firmly onto the upward path. The production of armaments and fighting equipment reached a high level, the development of all other branches of the national economy being subordinated to its interests. In spite of increased demand railroad transportation continually carried out shipments of military and the most important national economic cargos. Socialist agriculture, experiencing an acute need for manpower and technology, nevertheless supplied the army and population with provisions, and industry with raw materials.

The radical change in the military economy that took place in 1943 did not mean, however, that it no longer experienced difficulties. There were difficulties, and many. The petroleum industry, for example, decreased its production of oil, and nonferrous metallurgy decreased the yield of lead, zinc, and other nonferrous metals. The production of building materials and lumber fell back sharply. In light industry the plan was not fulfilled in such types of production as cotton fabric and shoes. Railroad transportation was experiencing a shortage of rolling stock. The situation in agriculture remained strained. Even so, by the beginning of 1944 the necessary prerequisites had been created for the further rise of the national economy.

In 1944 the military economy of the country had to complete new, unique tasks of enormous importance. These tasks, which found expression in the state plan of renewal and development of the national economy for 1944, /578 determined by the necessity not only to hasten the total victory over the Hitlerite invaders, but also to lead the country to the end of the war as an economically powerful country prepared for a rapid transition onto the track of peaceful construction and the further rise of the national economy.

The fulfillment of such a national economic plan demanded strengthened leadership and organizational activity by the Communist Party and the Soviet government, intense work, and new feats of labor by the broad masses of people.

Ever more rapid development of the leading branches of heavy industry had to become the basis for the steady rise of the military economy. The national economic plan called for the rates of growth of the metallurgic, fuel, mechanical engineering, and especially machine tool manufacturing industries, as in previous years, to exceed the rates of growth of other branches of industry. Agriculture was faced with the urgent tasks of expanding the area of land sown, raising the productivity of the fields, and increasing the numbers of livestock. The main means of fighting for a large harvest, the plan indicated, were to restore the stock of automobiles and tractors and the numbers of livestock, and to improve agricultural technology.

Great demands were made on railroad transportation. As before, military shipments remained at the center of attention. In addition, shipments of the most important national economic cargos - coal, oil and others - were required to increase considerably.

Capital investments were also distributed with consideration of the tasks placed before the separate branches of the national economy. "The greatest increase in capital investments," it was emphasized in a report by the Chairman of the USSR Gosplan, N. A. Voznesenskiy, to the Council of People's Commissars, 'On the estimates of the state plan for restoration and development of the national economy for 1944,' "are planned in the coal industry, ferrous metallurgy, power plants, heavy and medium mechanical engineering, the building materials industry and agriculture."[1]

In connection with the forthcoming liberation of the entire territory occupied by the enemy, extensive work was to be conducted to restore the national economy. The most attention in the national economic plan was devoted to the restoration of the Donbass and the metallurgy of the South. With this the restoration of ruined enterprises was planned to be carried

[1] CSAOR, col. 5446, inv. 47, div. 4625, p. 177.

out largely on a new technological basis. Great importance was attached to agricultural production on the Don, in the Kuban, and in the Left Bank Ukraine.

In order to complete all of these tasks it was essential to increase the number of workers and employees in the national economy and raise labor productivity.

The Soviet people, led by the Communist Party, dealt well on the whole with the tasks facing them. They achieved a further considerable increase in the military economic might of the country. The development of the military economy in 1944 was characterized by a number of essential features.

The national income - the index reflecting most completely and precisely the scale and rate of Socialist reproduction as a whole - reached its highest level during the war. In comparison with 1943 the volume of national income in 1944 increased by 19.2 percent, and in comparison with 1942, the year of the greatest drop in national income, by 34.6 percent. In spite of the enormous damage to the economy caused by the war, in 1944 the national income was already 88 percent of the prewar level of 1940.[1] This testified to the rapid development of the national economy both in the rear and in the liberated regions.

Great changes took place in the distribution of the national income. /579 Accumulation of capital in the total volume of the national income increased from 7 percent in 1943 to 15 percent in 1944; consumption (including personal consumption of servicemen) increased from 60 percent in 1943 to 61 percent in 1944; military expenditures (not including personal consumption of servicemen) decreased from 33 percent in 1943 to 24 percent in 1944.[2] Thus, if at the start of the war the growth of military expenditures led to a sharp drop in the share of the national income going to accumulation and

---

[1] According to data of the CSD USSR. IML. Docs. and Mats. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #16099, p. 7; inv. #9605, pp. 16-17.

[2] Ibid, Inv. #9605, p. 55.

personal consumption, in 1944 a new structure of distribution of the national income was clearly defined: the accumulated portion increased significantly, and for the first time during the years of the war the share for personal consumption increased, although only slightly; the specific weight of military expenditures in comparison with the initial period of the war decreased slightly, although in absolute terms military expenditures increased.

In 1944 the national income, while providing all military expenditures, began to be directed in ever greater amounts toward capital investments, above all in heavy industry and transportation. Capital investments of state and cooperative organizations (not including kolkhozes) increased significantly for the first time during the years of the war - from 25.1 billion rubles in 1943 to 34.1 billion rubles in 1944. It is characteristic that over 40 percent of the capital investments (14.2 billion rubles against 4.1 billion rubles in 1943) were directed toward restoring the national economy of the liberated regions.[1]

The growth of the socialist economy, the decrease in costs of production and distribution, made it possible to increase the accumulation of enterprises. In 1944 for the first time in the years of the war the state budget was drawn up without a deficit. Expenditures on the defense of the country in that year were 137.8 billion rubles as opposed to 125 billion rubles in 1943. Nevertheless, their specific weight in the total amount of expenditures of the state budget decreased from 59.5 percent in 1943 to 52.2 percent in 1944. At the same time expenditures on the national economy and social-cultural measures increased considerably.[2] Thus the structural changes that took place in 1944 in the national income were also expressed in the state budget of the USSR.

---

[1] Acc. to data of theCSD USSR. IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #16099, p. 7.

[2] Ibid, Inv. #9605, p. 457.

Heavy industry continued to develop rapidly. If in 1943 the yield of production in heavy as well as military industry was 119 percent of the 1940 level, in 1944 it had increased to 136 percent.[1] It is natural that military production developed particularly rapidly. This provided an opportunity to supply the Red Army with the first-class fighting equipment necessary to carry out broad offensive operations and achieve decisive success in the field of battle.

Thanks to the growth of heavy industry on a large scale construction work for industry and transportation began to be carried out, the production of equipment for the metallurgic and coal industries, power plants and mechanical engineering was expanded, and the output of spare parts for the rolling stock of railroads, tractors, agricultural machines, etc., also increased.

In 1944 the gross yield of the most important agricultural crops increased. This was promoted by favorable weather conditions. The production of animal husbandry products increased slightly. The shifts in agriculture made it possible to better supply the army and population with provisions and industry with raw materials.

The improvement in supply to industry and other branches of the national economy of fuel, raw materials and other materials promoted more normal, constant operation of enterprises. On the basis of socialist /580
competition, further improvements in the technology and organization of production, labor productivity increased in industry, and the cost of production decreased.

1944 was a year of further strengthening of the economic ties and mutual assistance of the Soviet national republics. In that year the industrial base in the East of the country - in the eastern regions of the Russian

[1] According to data of the CSD USSR. IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #9605, pp. 16-17.

Federation and in the republics of Central Asia - expanded still more. Industry in the Urals, Siberia, the Volga, and the Kazakh and Uzbek union republics was not only the main forge of armaments for the front, and the main supplier of equipment, raw materials, fuel and materials for the national economy, but also the most important base for the restoration of the economy of the liberated regions of the Ukraine, Belorussia and the Baltic republics. At the same time the contribution of the Ukrainian, Belorussian, Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian union republics to the cause of increasing the military-economic might of the Motherland became more and more considerable. As a united, friendly family, all of the peoples of the multi-national Soviet Union created the economic conditions to strike crushing blows on the enemy.

However, in spite of the successes achieved, the national economy also experienced great difficulties in 1944. The yield of coal and oil, the production of ferrous metals, metal-cutting lathes and cement, could not not satisfy the needs of the country. Restoration and expansion of basic funds had by no means begun in all branches. Although it increased somewhat in comparison with 1943, agricultural production was still undergoing great difficulties. This was largely due to the enormous damage inflicted on it by the German fascist occupation. Errors and shortcomings in the control of agriculture committed even in the pre-war years as the result of Stalin's cult of personality were also having an effect. The limits on civil consumption, both production and personal, remained very severe. For the sake of victory Soviet people denied themselves much that they needed and accepted great material deprivations. Only thanks to socialist industry and the kolkhoz structure, the moral-political unity and patriotism of our people, guided and directed by the Communist Party, was it possible to find the resources to simultaneously conduct an extremely hard war and to renew and further develop the national economy, under these unbelievably difficult circumstances.

2. The growth of industrial production.

The development of socialist industry in 1944, as throughout the entire war, was above all subordinate to the tasks of increasing the production of arms and fighting equipment. While in 1941-1942 the output of military production grew largely due to the transition of more and more industrial enterprises to the war track, bringing plants that had been evacuated to the East into operation, and increasing the number of working hours, in 1943 and especially in 1944 the main factors in the increase in war production specifically were the construction of new and the expansion

of functioning enterprises, increased labor productivity, and the restoration of heavy industry in the liberated regions.

In 1944 the working class achieved a major new victory. The gross output of industry, exceeding the prewar level, was 104 percent of the 1940 level, and war production output was 312 percent.[1] The increase in specifically war production became possible as the result of the overall growth in industry, largely of its leading branches - metallurgy, fuel, electrical energy, chemical. If in 1944 the gross output of all industry grew by 15 percent against 1943, the production of ferrous metallurgy grew by 25 percent, of nonferrous metallurgy by 35 percent, of the fuel industry by 21 percent, of the chemical and rubber-asbestos industry by 29 percent, and electrical energy production grew by 21 percent.[2] Heavy industry, outstripping other branches of the national economy in its development, formed a firm foundation for growth in production of arms and fighting equipment, as well as of the entire Soviet economy. As in the previous years, in 1944 military production was the greatest part of the entire gross output of industry. Fifty-one percent of the total volume of production fell to its share.[3] /581

In 1944 the role of the liberated regions in industrial production increased considerably. In 1943 the gross output of the industry of these regions was only 6 percent of the 1940 level, but in 1944 it was already 18 percent. Their share in the annual accretion in production of the most important branches of industry grew sharply. Thus, it was 47 percent of the annual accretion of cast iron, approximately 42 percent for steel, 38.4 percent for rolled metal, 70 percent for coal, and 32 percent for electrical energy.[4]

---

[1] According to data from the CSD USSR. IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #9605, pp. 17, 28.

[2] Ibid, Inv. #16099, p. 7.

[3] Ibid, Inv. #9605, p. 28.

[4] Ibid, pp. 8-9, 48; Inv. #16099, p. 8.

As the result of the increase in smelting of metal in the eastern regions of the country, and the partial restoration of the metallurgy of the South, great successes were achieved in ferrous metallurgy; the People's Commissar of ferrous metallurgy was I. F. Tevosyan. Total production of cast iron in 1944 was 7.3 million tons, 1.7 million tons more than in 1943; 10.9 million tons of steel were smelted, or 2.4 million tons more than in the previous year; production of rolled metal reached 7.3 million tons, increasing by 1.6 million tons. It is important to note that the production of high-quality steels increased significantly. In 1944 the production of quality rolled metal increased by almost 28 percent in comparison with 1943. The production of nonferrous metals - aluminum, copper, zinc, nickel, and certain others - increased. Thanks to the progress in metallurgy by the end of 1944 stocks of ferrous and nonferrous metals, which had decreased in 1943, increased at both supplying and consuming enterprises. For example, stocks of rolled ferrous metals increased in comparison with 1943 by 28 percent, of copper by over 24 percent, and of aluminum (including duralumin) by 56 percent.[1] The growth in output of ferrous and nonferrous metals promoted the increase in production of armaments and the development of other branches of industry.

No less serious achievements took place in resolving the problem of fuel. The great difficulties in supplying the national economy with fuel that had arisen at the start of the war were eased even in 1943, when in a year the yield of all forms of fuel was increased by 16.8 million tons (on conversion to ideal[2]). In 1944 the yield of all types of fuel reached 158.5 million tons and grew in comparison with 1943 by 22.5 million tons (on conversion to ideal).[3]

---

[1] According to data of the CSD USSR. IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #9605, pp. 33, 125, 127.

[2] Unit of ideal fuel = 7,000 calories.

[3] According to data of the CSD USSR. IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #9605, p. 165.

In connection with the increased demand for fuel by ferrous metallurgy, power plants, defense and other industrial enterprises, and railroads, especially those of the front and near-front, an increase in coal yield acquired great importance. In 1944 121.5 million tons of coal were recovered against 93.1 million tons in 1943,[1] with the portion of coal intended for coking increasing. In addition to the eastern coal basins, in 1944 the rapidly regenerated Donbass began to play an important role, bringing up 21 million tons in that year, or over 17 percent of the entire annual coal yield in the Soviet Union. /582

The situation in the oil production industry, still one of the most backward branches of the national economy, improved somewhat. Just how alarming the situation in oil production was can be judged from the report of the People's Commissar of the petroleum industry of the USSR, presented in January 1944 to the State Defense Committee. "The situation with the yield of oil," it was stated in the report, "at the present time provokes exceptionally serious fears for the supply of the front and the national economy with petroleum products. The almost total halt in drilling in the southern regions has caused a constant drop in oil production. In May 1941 an average of 98,820 tons of oil were produced per day, in December 1942 50,465 tons, and in January 1944 only 47,300 tons."[2] Thanks to energetic measures taken by the Party and the government and the selfless labor of the oil workers, oil yield in 1944 increased slightly for the first time during the years of the war. While in 1943 approximately 18 million tons of oil were recovered, in 1944 the yield was 18.3 million tons. With this conditions were created for a future considerable increase in oil output. In December 1944 over 50,000 tons of oil were yielded on the average per day.[3] This made it possible to produce more high-quality types of gasoline needed desperately by the front.

---

[1] According to the data of CSD USSR. IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #9605, p. 166.

[2] IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #16507, p. 1.

[3] According to the data of CSD USSR. IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #9605, pp. 171, 172.

One of the decisive conditions for the rapid renewal and development of the national economy was the increasing production of electrical energy. The liquidation of the lag in growth of electrical power equipment behind the growth of industry, and the timely supply of electrical energy to the restored enterprises and mines, were the subject of particular attention by the Party and government throughout 1944. In April the State Defense Committee issued a decree "On the introduction of new equipment at power plants in 1944." This was a developed program for restoration and new construction of power plants. An important place in it was occupied by assignments for the growth in new electrical equipment in the Kuzbass and in the Northern Urals, in the regions of the Center and the industrial regions of the Ukraine.[1] In 1944 power plants produced 39.2 billion kilowatt-hours against 32.3 billion in 1943. The greatest accretion of electrical energy was given by the regions of the Center and the Urals, approximately 1.5 billion kilowatt-hours each. It is noteworthy that in the liberated regions of the Ukraine in 1943 only 28.1 million kilowatt-hours were produced, and in 1944 1,281 million kilowatt-hours.[2] The greater part of the electrical energy went to satisfy the needs of industry. In addition, a demand for energy by other branches of the national economy, specifically communal farms, also grew, particularly in the regions subjected to occupation. Nevertheless, the situation with electrical energy in 1944 still remained strained due to the further growth of industry, transportation and agriculture.

---

[1] IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv.#17234, pp. 1-3.

[2] According to data of the CSD.USSR. IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #9605, p. 187.

Major changes took place in mechanical engineering during the years /582
of the war. In 1944 gross production in mechanical engineering and metal processing (including the production of armaments and ammunition) was 158 percent of the pre-war level, which greatly exceeded the growth in production output by all other branches of industry.[1] The most difficult tasks in mechanical engineering were performed in the field of production of armaments and ammunition. The broad scope of military actions and the rapid rate of offensive operations in 1944 created new and greater demands /583
for technical equipment of the Red Army.

The output of tanks and assault guns increased from 24,000 in 1943 to 29,000 in 1944, and the output of airplanes from 34,000 to 40,300.[2] Significant changes took place in artillery production. In 1943 130,300 guns of all types and calibers were produced, and in 1944 122,500. This decrease was due to the fact that obsolete cannon were removed from production. For example, the output of 45-mm cannon decreased by over 16,500, and of 76-mm caliber tank guns, by over 14,000. In 1944 23,800 field guns were produced as opposed to 21,800 in the previous year.[3] The production of advanced artillery systems increased considerably. At the same time it was found that it would be sufficient to fulfill only 71-95 percent of the plan for output of rifles, carbines and submachine guns as well as light and medium machine guns. This was due to the fact that the Red Army did not have a shortage of infantry weapons. Moreover, even decreasing their output, at the end of the year a surplus of 260,000 carbines, 826,000 Shpagin submachine guns, and 74,000 medium "Maxim" and Goryunov machine guns had accumulated, as well as 105,000 machine guns[4].

The production of ammunition also increased. In 1943 approximately 175 million shells, mines and aerial bombs were produced, in 1944 184 million; approximately 6 billion cartridges for infantry weapons were produced in 1943, and over 7.4 billion in 1944.[5]

---

[1] According to data of the CSD USSR. IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #9605, p. 71.

[2] IML. Ibid, Inv. #7882, pp. 15-16; Inv. #7883, p. 34.

[3] Ibid, Inv. #7882, pp. 10-13.

[4] CSAOR, Col. 5446, inv. 47, div. 6991, p. 42.

[5] IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #7882, pp. 4-5, 17-18.

In 1944 workers in the military industry continued to improve the Red Army's armaments. In close cooperation with remarkable Soviet designers, war plant collectives modernized old and created new models of tanks, aircraft and guns, which reinforced the military might of the Armed Forces of the USSR still more.

In the tank industry, which was headed by the eminent organizer of Soviet industry, V. A. Malyshev, workers and engineers, together with armored technology designers Zh. Ya. Kotin, S. N. Makhonin, A. A. Morozov, and L. S. Troyanov, and artillery designers V. G. Grabin and A. I. Savin, established mass production of the IS-2 heavy tank with a 122-mm gun. While in 1943 our factories put out only 102 such tanks, in 1944 they produced 2,250. In its tactical and technical characteristics the IS-2 tank surpassed not only German, but all foreign machines of a similar class. Production of the light T-70 and T-80 tanks ceased. Even in 1943 the modernized T-34 tanks, which had greater speed and stronger armor protection than before and was armed with an 85-mm instead of a 76-mm caliber gun, went into production. At that time only 283 such tank guns were produced, but by 1944 the output was 11,778.[1]

Plant No. 112 - director Ye. E. Rubinchik, CC AUCP(b) Party organizer A. N. Somov - achieved splendid success with production of T-34 tanks. Under the direction of the chief designer V. V. Krylov, in January-March 1944 the collective of the enterprise was the first in the tank construction industry to set up serial production of the modernized war machines equipped with the latest model 85-mm gun. The time required to manufacture each tank was decreased considerably in comparison with 1941. Production per worker per month increased from 5,212 rubles in 1943 to 6,200 rubles in 1944. The annual plan for war production output was fulfilled early.[2] The selfless /584
labor of the tank manufacturers was highly regarded by military specialists.

---

[1] IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #7882, pp. 12-13, 15.

[2] CSAOR, col. 8798, inv. 1, div. 95, p. 206.

At the beginning of the new year, 1945, Marshal of Tank Forces Ya. N. Fyedorenko sent a telegram to the workers of the factory, which read, "In the war machines built by the heroic labor of the entire factory collective the tank crews of the Red Army are smashing the enemy in his own lair."[1]

In 1944 war plants produced 500 CU-100 assault guns (on the base of the T-34 tank) for the first time;production of the ISU-122 and ISU-152(on the base of the IS-2) increased to 2,510 as opposed to 35 in 1943. Overall, output of assault guns in 1944 increased threefold in comparison with the previous year.[2] The tactical and technical features of all systems and their fighting capability improved sharply.

In aviation industry, headed by People's Commissar A. I. Shakhurin, factory collectives in creative collaboration with designers S. V. Il'yushin, V. Ya. Klimov, S. A. Lavochkin, A. I. Mikoyan, A. A. Mikulin, A. A. Tupolev, A. D. Shvetsov, A. S. Yakovlyev and others added several new types of airplanes to the armaments of the Air Force. The La-7 fighter, and the Yak-3, which had been modernized on the basis of the experience of the first years of the war and was essentially a new airplane , were distinguished by great combat qualities. The latter's maximum speed was increased to 650 kilometers per hour, and its maneuverability ensured superiority over enemy fighters. The new Il-10 ground-attack aircraft possessed great speed, high maneuverability and load capacity, and, most importantly, great fire power. The Tu-2 high-speed front bomber, which was first put into production as early as 1942, was switched over to large-scale production in 1944. With a weight of 13 tons, this aircraft had speed up to 550 kilometers per hour.[3]

In the artillery and weapons plants of the People's Commissariat of Armaments, headed by D. F. Ustinov, workers and technical engineers, together with designers M. M. Goryunov, V. A. Degtyarev, F. F. Petrov, G. S. Shpagin,

---

[1] CSAOR, col. 8798, inv. 1, div. 95, p. 206.

[2] IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #7882, p. 16.

[3] Ibid, Inv. #7883, pp. 32-34.

and many others, continued in 1944 to improve artillery and infantry weaponry. As a result modernized and new artillery systems comprised 75 percent, and modernized rifle and machine gun weaponry 40 percent in relation to the total quantity of arms produced in 1944.[1] Artillery plants put a powerful 100-mm antitank cannon into production and supplied the first several hundred specimens to the Red Army. As has been observed, the production of 85-mm and 122-mm guns for tanks and assault guns increased particularly greatly.

Mass production of improved and new types of tanks, aircraft, assault guns, artillery systems and infantry weaponry considerably increased the military might of the Red Army and thereby promoted the defeat of the enemy.

The successes of the main branches of heavy industry in 1944 made it possible to set about restoration and development of civilian mechanical engineering, specifically machine tool construction, and the production of mining, smelting and energy equipment more energetically.

The Party and government attached great importance to the development of machine engineering. At the beginning of 1944 the State Defense Committee issued a decree "On the development of production of metal cutting /585
lathes at enterprises of the People's Commissariat of Mechanical Engineering," defining the main directions of the growth of the mechanical engineering industry. In it the need for machinery to expand production of ammunition, artillery and infantry armaments, aircraft, and tanks was taken into consideration, as well as for the most rapid possible restoration of the national economy.[2] In 1944 production of metal cutting lathes increased by one and a half times in comparison with 1943.[3] Output of high-capacity special and standard-unit machinery increased.

---

[1] CSAOR, col. 4372, inv. 3, div. 1774, p. 358.

[2] IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #17210, p. 1.

[3] According to data of the CSD USSR. IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #9605, p. 203.

Other branches of mechanical engineering also received considerable development. Production of rolling mills, equipment for blast and open-hearth furnaces and coke oven batteries increased. In 1944 the production of metallurgical equipment exceeded the pre-war level.[1] The output of turbines, boilers, electric motors, and equipment for the coal and petroleum-extracting industry expanded. The Leningrad metal plant manufactured a hydro-turbine with 55,000 kilowatt capacity for the Rybinsk State Power Plant, a new Ural turbine plant produced the first steam turbines with 25,000 kilowatt capacity, and a restored Kharkov turbine plant produced the first steam turbine with 50,000 kilowatt capacity. Turboblowers and coke exhausters were produced by the V. I. Lenin Nevskiy plant. In 1944 a Podol'skiy boiler plant produced, for the first time in the USSR, a powerful concurrent high-pressure boiler with productive capacity of 220 tons of steam per hour. To restore the Donbas and Krivoy Rog, the plants of the People's Commissariat of Heavy Machine Engineering manufactured 50 large mine lifts that could bring up 35 million tons of coal or ore annually. In 1944 3.5 times more of these machines were produced than in 1940.[2] The production of tractors still remained insignificant in 1944 in comparison with the pre-war level; however, their output still increased in that year to 3,154 as opposed to 1,063 in 1943.[3] Production of agricultural machines and, even more importantly, of spare parts for them and for tractors, increased.

Imports played a well-known role in the overall balance of the material resources of the country in 1944, including shipments on lend-lease of rolled ferrous metals, certain types of equipment, metal and cable items, chemicals and other products. In 1944 591,900 tons of rolled ferrous metals (including 267,500 tons of railroad rails), 18,600 metal cutting lathes, 1,100 main-line locomotives, and 129,100 trucks[4] were received on lend-lease. Certain types of armaments and communication equipment were also imported. However, it is characteristic that in 1944 imports of armaments and munitions decreased not only relatively (its share in the total

---

[1] According to data of the CSD USSR. IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #9605, p. 207.

[2] IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #16470, pp. 1-2.

[3] Ibid, Inv. #9605, p. 211.

[4] Ibid, Inv. #1868, pp. 1-4.

volume of imports in 1943 was 54.1 percent and in 1944 45 percent), but also in absolute terms in the most important forms of armaments. Thus in 1944 5,749 airplanes were imported as opposed to 6,371 in 1943; 2,613 tanks as opposed to 3,123; artillery and ammunition with the total value of 1,576,300 rubles as opposed to 1,630,800 in 1943.[1] The military economy of the USSR, reaching a high level of production in spite of the huge scale of the military operations being developed, was able through its own efforts to supply the front with the necessary types of armaments, ammunition and equipment.

The increase in industrial production in 1944 was predetermined, above /586
all, by the large capital investments made by the Party and government in the construction of new and restored, previously destroyed enterprises. In the planning of capital investments, their concentration in the most important sectors of war production, and in the rapid rate of construction and assembly work the great advantages of the Soviet war economy, based on the public ownership of the means of production, were displayed.

The total volume of capital investments in industry in 1944 was 18.9 billion rubles against 13 billion rubles in 1943, and reached the volume of capital investments of 1940. Four-fifths of this sum were directed toward ferrous and non-ferrous metallurgy, energy, oil, gas coal, mechanical engineering and chemical industry, that is toward the key branches of industry, on the rapid development of which depended the supply of the front and the expanded production of the national economy as a whole.[2] The rapid rate of the expanded socialist production was reflected in the fact that in 1944 the basic production funds of industry were 92 percent of the 1940 volume, exceeding the volume of basic funds in 1943 by 9 percent.[3]

In many very important branches of industry the greatest accretions in production capacities were seen during the war period. They increased particularly sharply in ferrous metallurgy and the coal industry as the result

---

[1] IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #1647, pp. 5, 8-9.

[2] According to data of the CSD USSR. IML. Docs..and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #16099, p. 10; inv. #9605, p. 375.

[3] Ibid, Inv. #16099, p. 10.

of restoration of the Donbas coal industry and the metallurgical plants of the South. In all in 1944 15 blast furnaces with a total capacity of 3,170,000 tons of iron, 59 open-hearth furnaces designed for production of 2,362,000 tons of steel, 4 Bessemer converters, 11 electric furnaces, 32 rolling mills with capacity 1,611,000 tons of finished rolled metal, 48 coke batteries with capacity 5,890,000 tons of coke, mines for extraction of railroad ore designed to obtain 6,205,000 tons of ore, new power capacities for aluminum production, and coal mines providing a yield of 35,582,000 tons of coal per year were put into operation. New power plants, cement plants and enterprises of the light and food industries were brought into service.[1]

The growth of industrial production was determined by the implementation of new industrial plants, as well as by a further increase in labor productivity. Overall in industry it increased by 2 percent in 1944 per worker, in comparison with 1943.[2] Labor productivity particularly increased at war industry enterprises.

The cost of industrial production decreased considerably in 1944. In comparison with 1943, production cost decreased by 2.5 percent.[3] The decrease was, again, the greatest in scale in the war industry.

The growth in labor productivity and the decrease in the cost of industrial production were the result of introducing advanced technology in production, increasing the skill level of workers arriving at enterprises during the war, and the further development of socialist competition.

In 1944 new designs of machines and equipment, improved technological processes, new types of raw materials and substitutes for deficit materials were introduced into production. Further mechanization of labor-intensive and heavy work was effected.

---

[1] According to data of the CSD USSR, Inv. #9605, pp. 376-377.

[2] Ibid, Inv. #16099, p. 10.

[3] Ibid, Inv. #9605, p. 90.

Plants that had been evacuated to the East and enterprises that were being restored in the liberated regions were equipped with more advanced technology than they had had at their disposal before the war. This meant that in the course of the Great Patriotic War not only the restoration /587 of old, pre-war plants, mines and power plants took place, as had been the during the period of restoration of the national economy after the First World War and foreign military intervention, but their technical reconstruction was also carried out.

Line and conveyor methods of production and new, progressive methods of processing articles became widespread in military industry. A finished line method was implemented with strict observation of the schedule in all sectors of production. Thanks to the use of this method the workers of the aviation industry achieved major successes. They increased the gross production output calculated to 1,000 units by 12 percent. The use of the line method also sharply increased productivity of tank industry plants. In the first six months of 1944 the Kirov plant produced 3.5 times more tanks than in 1943.[1]

Casting of large parts in metal molds (chill casting) came into wider use in the production of ammunition, motors and tanks. At the Ural machine plant this method made it possible to save 950-1000 kilograms of liquid steel on each T-34 tank turret. Chill casting was also introduced in other plants that produced tanks. An automatic welding method developed under the direction of Academician Ye. O. Paton was found to be highly effective. While at the beginning of the war there were only three automatic welding installations in the country, by December 1944 there were already 133, operating at more than 50 enterprises.[2] Automatic welding accelerated the output of tanks and increased the strength of the welded seams in their chassis. It lessened the labor intensity of manufacturing separate units

---

[1] CPA IML, col. 17, inv. 3, div. 2513, pp. 49, 50.

[2] See Ye. O. Paton. Vospominaniya. ("Recollections") M., "Molodaya gvardiya," 1958, p. 303.

and parts, increased labor productivity, decreased the amount of equipment to a unit of production and freed a considerable number of skilled workers.

The use of new highly productive processing systems at mining enterprises played an important role. Thus, in the Kuznetsk coal basin one of the leading places was occupied by extraction with the use of panelboard reinforcement on high-duty steep seams (23 percent of the entire coal yield in the concern's mines). In addition to the increased output of coal, this system made it possible to decrease the use of props by 15 percent. In the oil industry an effective method of secondary exploitation of oil deposits by the method of pumping gas and water into the bed became widespread. In the metallurgical industry welded instead of riveted sheaths were designed for blast furnaces, which made it possible to decrease the time needed for construction of blast furnaces and considerably conserve metal and manpower. The introduction of concurrent boilers on L. K. Ramzin's system at thermal power installations and power plants had a great technical and economic effect. In ferrous metallurgy much attention was devoted to replacing deficit alloyed types of steel. At machine tool manufacturing plants a great savings of metal was achieved by employing machine construction for production of middle and small parts, switching the manufacture of roller and lever gears from forging to swaging, and so forth.

The Communist Party and the Soviet government supported and encouraged the creative activity of students, engineers, technicians and workers in every way. Thus from March 15, 1944 with a decree of the State Defense Committee a bonus system for technical engineering workers occupied in the designing and manufacture of new highly productive machinery was introduced. The People's Commissar of machine tool manufacturing was given the right to assign the name of the author-designer to new, production-tested highly productive and accurate metal-cutting lathes, simultaneously awarding the inventor a sum of up to 25,000 rubles. The People's Commissar of machine tool construction was delegated to organize experimental workshops during 1944 at the leading machine tool construction plants, and machine laboratories at others for multi-faceted scientific research work.[1] /588

[1] IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #17210, p. 3.

Party organizations and Soviet organs displayed constant concern for the reinforcement of the ranks of the working class. The expansion of war production, the renewal of civil production output, and the great scope of restoration work greatly increased the demand for manpower. However, in connection with the broad development of offensive operations at the front, it was necessary to conscript some of the skilled cadres. Therefore, enlisting more of the non-working population in production, training and systematically distributing skilled workers acquired greater significance. In 1944 the Committee for registration and distribution of manpower of the USSR Council of People's Commissars (CPC) and its provincial organs alone enlisted 1,113,300 persons for work in industry and construction through their labor mobilization. This was the greatest mobilization of workers of the war years.[1] The total number of workers and employees in the national economy rose in 1944 to 23,600,000 persons against 19,400,000 in 1943, including an increase in industry and construction to 9,800,000 as opposed to 8,400,000 persons. Many workers entered production for the first time in 1944. The greater part of these were women and girls, as well as boys and youths of pre-draft age. The history of our Motherland will preserve for ever the grateful memory of the womens' heroic labor. In 1944 they comprised 53 percent of the total number of workers and employees in industry. In construction their proportion was 36 percent of all workers and employees.[2] Replacing their husbands, sons and brothers who were fighting at the front, women immediately took their stand in the heaviest areas, seemingly beyond their strength, and honorably fulfilled their patriotic duty.

On the basis of the experience of the first war years, in 1944 enormous organizational work was carried out to redistribute skilled labor forces among the most important branches of industry as well as among the economic regions of the country, especially the eastern and western regions. Workers, engineers and other technical workers and their families returned with

---

[1] Archives of the State Committee for Professional and Technical Education of the Council of Ministers of the USSR, col. 37, inv. 4, it. 1, div. 2, pp. 85-86.

[2] According to Data of the CSD USSR. IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #9605, pp. 413, 414, 421.

reevacuated enterprises to their homes. Ever more new detachments of youths and girls were sent to work on the restoration of ruined plants, factories, mines and cities.

Hundreds of thousands of people, entering production in the previous years of the war, had already become seasoned, grown and become superb masters of their crafts. However, a considerable number of workers had 2nd to 4th class qualifications. Moreover, the country was experiencing an acute need for skilled cadres - machine operators, tool makers, cutters, cutter operators, molders, pattern makers and others.

In 1944 further improvement was achieved in training cadres for industry, construction and other branches of the national economy. Secondary and technical schools of labor reserves graduated 416,000 young workers with various specialties in that year, the greater part of whom were sent to heavy and war industrial enterprises.[1] New cadres were also trained through brigade and individual instruction under the direction of experienced masters and in special classes formed at enterprises. For example, at the Kirov plant 7,148 workers were trained in 1944.[2] Particular attention was devoted /589 to training skilled workers at enterprises undergoing restoration in the liberated regions.

Simultaneously with the training of new workers much was done to raise the skill level of experienced workers. At enterprises of such major branches of industry as heavy mechanical engineering, the coal industry, and production of armaments and ammunition alone in 1944 over 1 million persons raised their skill level.[3] The growth of a network of general educational evening schools for working youth, which was formed in 1943, was of enormous significance in broadening the cultural and technical horizons of the workers.

---

[1] According to data of the CSD USSR. IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #9605, p. 423.

[2] Party Archives of the Chelyabinsk obkom of the CPSU, col. 288, inv. 3, div. 571, p. 30.

[3] CA AUCCLU, col. 87, div. 1, p. 21.

Thus, thanks to the concern of the Communist Party and Soviet government and the daily attention of local Party and professional organizations, a constant reinforcement of the ranks of the working class and a further improvement in the workers' level of technical production knowledge took place.

The Soviet working class held their fighting revolutionary traditions as sacred, and multiplied them. The fervent patriotism of the workers found its expression in the constant growth of their political and labor activity and in the development of socialist competition for the successful fulfillment of orders for the front.

Even at the end of 1943 the collectives of the Magnitogorsk and Kuznetsk combines, the tank factories of the Urals, and 13 advanced aviation plants called on the working class to overfulfill state plans on the basis of increased labor productivity, and to send the workers thus freed to enterprises undergoing restoration. The collectives of these enterprises looked after restored metallurgical, coal-tar chemical and mechanical engineering plants of the liberated regions.

The initiative of the major collectives was a new achievement in the All-Union Socialist Competition to give assistance to the front. It began a movement to utilize the reserves of production in every possible way, to increase labor productivity, and to restore the economy of the liberated regions. The collective of the "Krasnyy proletariy" plant in Moscow wrote, "The war has entered a new phase. Let us redouble our efforts in the name of its rapid end, in the name of rapid victory. Let our victories relentlessly accompany the victories of the Red Army, let our valiant fighters know no shortages or interruptions, let ever more new trainloads of tanks and airplanes, provisions and equipment go to the front as the result of competition."[1]

The workers of the Sormov plant, the oldest enterprise in the country, renowned for its revolutionary traditions, also made a weighty achievement

[1] "Pravda," April 2, 1944.

during those days. In 1920-1922 on the order of V. I. Lenin the first Soviet tanks were built at the Sormov shipbuilding plant. Only 15 machines in all were produced at that time. By the wish ot the workers the lead tank was called "Freedom Fighter V. I. Lenin." The war with the German fascist invaders once again presented the collective with the task of switching over to war production in a short time. The Sormov workers proved in deed their ability to fulfill the orders of the front without interruption. In February 1944 at an all-plant meeting of the front-rank workers it was decided to increase the output of war production, fulfill the plan for the first quarter ahead of schedule, and thereby support the offensive of the Red Army.[1] Among those who passed this resolution were the creators of the first tanks, veterans of the plant: M. I. Telogreyev, S. I. Ryzhov, P. A. Krasavin and others. In April 1944 the plant reached its record production output for the entire war and fulfilled the plan according to all indices.[2] /590 The Red Banner of the State Defense Committee, won in All-Union Socialist Competition, was firmly in the hands of the Somov workers. On August 5, 1944 a large group of workers and engineers and other technical workers of the plant were decorated with orders and medals for their outstanding production successes.

In 1944 competition by profession was widely developed. Unlike previous years, when primarily workersof the leading professions had competed, it embraced workers of all professions. The competition of workers of combined branches of industry, on the joint labor of which fulfillment of military-economic tasks depended, took on very great significance. Workers of both main and auxiliary departments competed for the title of best production worker.

In the coal basins of the country a stubborn struggle to increase the yield of coal was in process. The miners of the Kuzbas labored heroically in 1944. They honorably fulfilled their obligations, increasing the yield of coal by 2.3 million tons in comparison with 1943. This entire accretion

---

[1] Party Archives of the Gor'kiy obkom of the CPSU, col. 1244, inv. 6, div. 15, p. 20.

[2] Ibid, div. 11, p. 11.

was in coking coal, for which the metallurgical plants had a great need. The prewar level of coal yield in the Kuzbas mines was surpassed by 25 percent, and the average monthly yield per worker increased by 7 percent in the course of the year.[1] Many workers, following the example of the basin's notable miners, Ye. Ye. Devyatkin and V. R. Semykin, each fulfilled three yearly norms. The mining youth, led by the Komsomol, extracted 700 trainloads of coal on their off-duty time. In the mines of the Kizel basin a movement grew for high-speed extraction of coal by the method of P.K. Podzharov. Many improvements in the method were introduced by the cutter G. F. Nyrovtsev and other miners. Podzharov himself fulfilled five yearly norms in 1944. In the Chelyabinsk basin the cutter operator P. A. Tomilov, perfecting a method of two-stage longwall cutting, achieved a high level of labor productivity. Tomilov's method became the basis for designing a new type of cutter with two blades . The fame of the new successes of A. I. Soldatova, a miner of Kopeysk, was widespread. The miners of the Moscow region did not lag behind the workers of Siberia and the Urals. In 1944 they extracted 17.9 million tons of coal, or 22 percent more than in 1943.[2] The cutter operators I. A. Filimonov and N. N. Trofimov, loaders P. A. Prokhorov and D. G. Morozov, mine tunnelers K. A. Kopachev and L. I. Boriskin and others were outstanding masters of the coal of the Mosbas. Important success was achieved by the miners of the Donetsk basin and the coal basins of the Urals, Karaganda and others.

Remarkable production indices were achieved by metallurgy. As before, the high-speed steel workers were led by A. Ya. Chalkov, M. M. Privalov, M. V. Burkatskiy (Kuznetsk metallurgical combine), V. M. Amosov (Zlatoustovskiy metallurgical plant), N. Kh. Bazetov (Verkhne-Isetskiy metallurgical plant), D. D. Sidorovskiy (Uralomashzavod). But the ranks of renowned masters of labor grew. At the Magnitogorsk combine the number of front-rank workers increased to 11,500, of whom 288 received the honorary

[1] According to data of the CSD USSR. IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #9605, pp. 167, 170.

[2] Ibid, p. 167.

title of best workers and masters. These were the master of the open-hearth shop P. S. Doroshenko, steel workers P. N. Brevshkin, M. F. Pugachev and M. Zinurov, blast furnace master A. L. Shatilin, excavator operator N. A. Sadchikov, electric locomotive operator S. F. Rylov, and others. Throughout 1944 the shops of the plant won first place and SDC challenge red banners 32 times in All-Union competition, and took second and third places approximately 20 times.[1]

The workers of the Kuznetsk metallurgical concern worked with equal success. In 1944 the concern achieved its highest level of production since its founding. Without adding new power capacities, by improving the use of equipment and increasing labor productivity, the collective put out 15.4 percent more production in that year than in 1943. The steel workers N. M. Prudnikov, M. Ya. Fedotov, and R. N. Nekhoroshev, blooming mill operators I. A. Somov, P. V. Zavarykin and others achieved high indices. Since August 1943 the blast furnace shop of the Kuznetsk concern had held first place in socialist competition and the Banner of the State Defense Committee.[2] /591

There were still more followers of A. I. Semivolos, I. P. Yankin and S. N. Yeremenko in the iron and copper mines of the country in 1944. Many young drillers worked using high speed methods. In the bauxite mines of the Urals the tunneling brigades of S. L. Samigulin and N. Minzaripov, completing preparatory and explosive work, efficiently plotting their schedule, fought for every extra meter of tunnel. Competition between the masters of oil extraction of the Azerbaijan, Bashkir, Sakhalin and other republics and regions acquired broad scope.

Mechanical engineers achieved great successes. Thousands of workers of mechanical engineering plants, recognized as the finest masters of their professions, were listed in the books of honor of their plants and cities. In Sverdlovsk - one of the largest machine engineering centers of the country -

---

[1] Party Archives of the Chelyabinsk obkom of the CPSU, col. 234, inv. 18, div. 46, pp. 4-5, 8-11; col. 779, inv. 6, div. 11, p. 12; div. 27, p. 1.

[2] CSAOR, col. 8875, inv. 2, div. 437, pp. 1, 40.

the pattern makers A. M. Chugunov, I. G. Kozulya, turners P. K. Spekhov, A. P. Ivanov, the blacksmith G. M. Kovalenko and many others held high the banner of the best workers of the city. The workers of the Kirov plant fought stubbornly for a smooth pace of work and production of war machines on schedule. Their motto was "All services of the plant must be equal on the production line!" Through increased labor productivity the collective achieved a 13.3 percent decrease in the production cost of tanks. The collective of the Uralmashzavod achieved great results, producing new and modernized assault guns in 1944. In comparison with 1943 output of armored hulls at the plant increased by over 44 percent, and of assault guns and tanks by over 18 percent.

Many talented innovators stood out among the mechanical engineers of Siberia. At one plant A. N. Komyakov was the first to switch over to the servicing of two different types of machines, and systematically fulfilled his assignment by 150-200 percent. I. I. Monakov worked on several units, all the while improving the production process.[1]

At the Gor'kiy automobile plant there were approximately 24,000 workers, who systematically and significantly overfulfilled production standards. A gas welder in the machine shop of that plant, P. A. Sharov, won the title of best gas welder of the plant eight times, and taught his mastery to dozens of students.

Young workers labored with enormous enthusiasm. The number of Komsomol youth brigades increased. Their activity testified to the growing production maturity, experience and mastery of the young people. The Party solicitously helped these forces to become stronger. The CC AULCUY, together with the People's Commissariats of the branches of industry, on instructions from the Central Committee of the Party, conducted All-Union conferences of brigade leaders from Komsomol youth brigades at which the work experience of the brigades was generalized and ways to further increase labor productivity were outlined. Approximately 2,000 people took part in the conferences.

---

[1] Party Archives of the Novosibirsk obkom of the CPSU, col. 44, inv.29, div. 4, pp. 4-5.

On the initiative of the delegates of these conferences the All-Union Competition of Komsomol-youth brigades began. The participants in the competition, assuming the obligation to fulfill and overfulfill shift and monthly assignments, increase output of above-plan production and improve the qualifications of every member of the brigade, teach new workers and form new Komsomol-youth brigades, also made it their task to broaden the /592 general educational and political outlook of the young workers and strengthen friendship and comradeship between the members of the brigade. Entering the competition, the Komsomol-youth brigades undertook to help enterprises being restored in liberated regions. Thus, young machine tool manufacturers took on the obligation to equip the Lubny "Kommunar" plant with tools and equipment produced over and above the plan. The Komsomol-youth brigades of sewing enterprises committed themselves to provide 20,000 sets of clothing above plan for the children of soldiers at the front, and textile workers undertook to restore a Kiev textile factory.

In January 1944 there were over 46,000 Komsomol-youth brigades in industry and transportation, numbering 400,000 persons, and in December there were approximately 150,000 such brigades, uniting up to 1 million persons.

Young workers of war and mechanical engineering plants made an enormous contribution to the cause of conclusively defeating the enemy. The Komsomol-youth brigade of V. F. Shubin at the Gor'kiy automobile plant continued in 1944 to firmly hold first place in the brigade competition. At the Kirov plant the Komsomol-youth brigade of V. V. Gusev was particularly renowned. In 1944 it won first place and the challenge Red Banner of the CC AULCUY and the People's Commissariat of the tank industry. The collective of one of the first front brigades of the Northern Urals, the brigade named for N. Gastello, led by G. F. Semyonov, worked tirelessly. The journal kept by Semyonov from day to day gives a clear impression of the mood of the young workers, their noble patriotic feelings.

Here are two short excerpts from this remarkable document of the war years.

"10/IV. Odessa has been liberated. Hoorah!!!..

"For two days we have not left the shop. We are ahead of all sections of the shop.

"In honor of the taking of Odessa our whole shift has given its word to work still better. An interesting thing is happening: we were once a front-line brigade, then we organized into a detachment, but that wasn't enough either, we were still too few, 18 people; but now the whole shift is working as one. Even more - the entire section under the direction of Nikolay Yakovlyevich Kolchanov is confidently gathering speed. I will say again that it is simply amazing what strength there is in us, Soviet people: the longer the war goes on, the stronger we become; the more adversity, the more stubborn we are. Like a spring!...

"26/X-44...Every day brings us closer to final victory. I am glad that I was able to be in the ranks of the modern people who are making a stand for the independence of the Motherland in the Great Patriotic War.

"We have worked and are working without sparing our strength, supplying the front with weapons, and if the Motherland someday says thank-you to us for this, that gratitude will be to you above all, dear Komsomol, our teacher."[1]

The young workers, competing with one another, persistently sought and found new ways to mobilize production reserves and increase labor productivity. The competition, started at the beginning of 1943 on their initiative under the slogan "Greater production for the front with a smaller number of workers!" embraced many enterprises of the country, and helped to reveal great inner reserves.

---

[1] V trudye kak v boyu. Iz istoriyi komsomol'sko-molodyozhnykh brigad v gody Velikoy Otechestvennoy Voyny. (In work as in battle. From the history of Komsomol-youth brigades during the years of the Great Patriotic War.) M., Izd-vo Akadeniyi nauk SSSR, 1961, str. 211, 215.

The brigade leader of the front line youth brigade of welders of the Kirov plant, Ye. P. Agarkov, stepped forward as the initiator of the important undertaking. At the end of 1943 he proposed that the technology of the production process in the shop be changed and that the brigades and sections be reorganized. The realization of Agarkov's proposals made it possible to create a single production line for welding and assembly of tank turrets, and to consolidate the shops, sections and brigades. And this made it possible to free a considerable number of workers and also to increase labor productivity. Other plants seized on Agarkov's innovation. /593
By the beginning of 1945, according to the data of 23 regions, districts and republics, as the result of the consolidation of brigades, shops and sections over 18,000 skilled workers and engineering staff were freed and more efficiently distributed.[1] Thanks to the constant attention of Party organizations new forms of labor organization became the property of the collectives of many enterprises.

In 1944 the name of the miner L. T. Golokolosov, who fundamentally improved methods of extracting coal, became widely known. Combining several mining occupations, he fulfilled five yearly norms as a cutter and taught dozens of new workers mining occupations. The "Vengerovka" mine where Golokolosov and his students worked surpassed its prewar coal output over twofold in 1944. And this when conditions in the mines, which had been destroyed by the enemy during the years of occupation and were still not fully restored, were immeasurably harder than before the war. Such front rank, innovative workers as Agarkov in mechanical engineering and Golokolosov in the coal industry were also to be found in other branches of industry.

The All-Union Socialist competition reached an especially great upsurge in the summer and fall of 1944, when the Armed Forces of the USSR, having completed the liberation of Soviet land, began the battles to free the peoples of Central and Southeastern Europe from fascist captivity.

---

[1] Archives of the CC AULCUY. Materials for a report by the CC AULCUY XI Session, p. 118.

Magnitogorsk and Kuznetsk metallurgists called upon the workers, engineering and other technical workers serving the industry and transportation of the Soviet Union to help the Red Army to defeat the enemy quickly in his own territory. "Now," wrote the metallurgists, "when the Red Army is preparing for a decisive advance on the lair of the fascist beast and for the striking of new, annihilating blows on the enemy, the whole Soviet people should assist the rapid onslaught of our troops in order to bring down Hitlerite Germany in the shortest possible time.

"The Red Army is faced, together with the armies of our allies, with tracking the fascist beast to his own lair and raising the Banner of Victory over Berlin. For this we must exert our strength still more, overcome all difficulties, and give the front everything necessary for a total and final victory."[1]

By the end of 1944 in all branches of industry over 85 percent of the workers were competing. The results for over 50 People's Commissariats and main directorates were totaled monthly. In the course of the year 828 challenge red banners were awarded - 223 more than in 1943 - and 2,000 prizes were given, more than in the previous year.[2]

As in the previous years, in 1944 dozens of industrial enterprises were given high government awards for model fulfillment of orders for the front, for plants undergoing restoration and construction, and coal and ore mines. The Moscow automobile plant, which had earlier received the Order of Lenin, was decorated with the Order of the Labor Red Banner; its director was I. A. Likhachev, and CC AUCP(b) Party organizer V. V. Levykin. The renowned Kirov plant - director I. M. Zal'tsman, CC AUCP(b) Party organizer M. D. Kozin - received the Order of the Red Star. Before that the remarkable collective of Kirov workers had been awarded the Orders of Lenin, the Fighting Red Banner and the Labor Red Banner.

---

[1] "Pravda," November 15, 1944.

[2] CA AUCCLU. Materials for report of AUCCLU to the X All-Union Conference of Labor Unions. M., Profizdat, 1949, p. 13.

Challenge red banners were won several times by the tank and diesel production collectives of the Kirov plant, the Uralmashzavod - director Hero of Socialist Labor B. G. Mazrukov, CC AUCP(b) Party organizer M. L. Medvedyev - the Gorky automobile plant - director I. K. Loskutov, CC AUCP(b) Party organizer A. D. Proskurin - the Mariupol' plant named for Il'yich - /594 director A. F. Garmashev, CC AUCP(b) Party organizer A. A. Pyatunin. The "Boryets" plant - director S. M. Rotenshteyn, CC AUCP(b) Party organizer A. S. Klimov - was awarded the challenge Red Banner of the All-Union Central Council of Labor Unions (AUCCLU) and the People's Commissariat of the petroleum industry for the 25th time. Participating in the All-Union Socialist Competition, the plant collective fulfilled the production program for 1944 ahead of schedule, considerably increased production output, put several production lines into operation, and sharply increased labor productivity.

Such facts as these testified to the great labor activity of the masses, to their growing creative initiative. In 1944 347,000 applications for inventions, technical improvements and rationalizing proposals were submitted and 155,000 of them were adopted in production.[1] And this under circumstances when the majority of the workers were people who had entered the plants for the first time during the war years.

The Communist Party mobilized the collectives of workers to fulfill the orders of the front, to make better use of internal resources, to decrease the cost of production and increase labor productivity. In 1944, as before, the CC AUCP(b) systematically and deeply studied the experience of local Party organizations in directing the war economy. In its resolutions the Central Committee showed the necessity to enhance the leading role of the Party organizations, to further intensify the political and labor activity of the masses and help to the front.

In the aims of broad mobilization of Party forces to resolve the main problems of the national economic plan, at the end of 1943 and the beginning of 1944 plenums of the Communist Parties of the union republics, Party

[1] According to data of the CSD USSR. IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, inv. #9605, p. 90.

obkoms and gorkoms and meetings of the most active Party members were held almost everywhere. In the decrees of Party organs and the most active members of the Moscow, Leningrad, Sverdlovsk, Perm', Chelyabinsk, Kemerovo, and Kuybyshev regions, the Kazakh SSR and other regions and republics, the Communists' attention was devoted above all to sucessful fulfillment of production plans. Thus, for instance, in the resolution of the meeting of the Perm' region most active Party members it was emphasized that the main task of Party and economic organizations was the achievement of high labor productivity, and the output by enterprises of a greater quantity of production to a smaller number of people. The resolution of the active Party members obliged all Communists-production workers to achieve the widespread implementation of line production methods, mechanization of labor intensive processes, efficient use of equipment and utilization of highly productive modifications.[1]

In April 1944, F. R. Kozlov, the Secretary of the gorkom of the capital of the Udmurt ASSR, Kzhevsk, the plants of which played a large part in supplying the front with weapons and ammunition, spoke before the most active Party members. "An enormous contribution is being made to the approach of the bright hour of victory over the cruel enemy," he said, "by the workers of Socialist industry."[2] F. R. Kozlov mostly rebuked certain economic and Party workers for somewhat weakening the struggle for the further growth of production in recent months, which was totally inadmissible, as industry was faced with new tasks in connection with the Red Army's gigantic offensive.

In the resolutions of the most active members and plenums of the Party organizations economic directors who erroneously assumed that the war situation freed them of the obligation to expend financial resources, raw materials, and other materials economically, and to use equipment efficiently, were subjected to sharp censure. Plenums of leading Party organizations and /595 assemblies of the most active Party members obliged Party, economic and labor union workers to improve the organization of labor, increase discipline at enterprises, and display the maximum of concern for improving the workers'

---

[1] CPA IML, col. 17, inv. 2, div. 916, p. 136.

[2] "Udmurtskaya pravda," 15 April, 1944.

living conditions. In the conduct of all of this work an important role belonged to the central and local press, which was not only the agitator and propagandist, but also the collective organizer of million-strong masses of workers for the struggle to put into practice the instructions of the Party and government.

Party technical conferences had a great influence on the fulfillment of important production tasks. In Chelyabinsk at the beginning of 1944 a regional conference was held of Party, engineering and other technical workers from defense enterprises, which outlined organizational and technical measures for the implementation of line production systems and mechanization of labor intensive work. The Sverdlovsk Party gorkom conducted a meeting of the chief engineers of enterprises, at which the greatest attention was devoted to questions of the organization of the line production method, implementation of highly productive machinery, automatic and semi-automatic equipment, as well as of new methods of welding, casting and forging.

Party technical conferences were also held at certain of the largest individual enterprises. For example, approximately 600 people took part in a Party technical conference at the Uralmashzavod held on February 19-20, 1944. They contributed many practical suggestions and offered valuable advice on improving the organization of labor, efficient use of equipment, and regulating wages. In January at plant No. 183 Party technical conferences were held by shops: assembly, assembly-checking, energetics, and others. In addition, branch Party technical conferences were held on the question of training cadres, in which over 1,500 people took part, including 907 Communists. The conferences introduced much that was new to the work of the plant's Party organization and collective. The fulfillment of the measures they outlined helped to mobilize large reserves to increase labor productivity and decrease the cost of production.

The Party organizations of scientific research institutes intensified their activity. On their initiative in several industrial centers evening universities were opened to improve the level of skill of the management of

industrial enterprises. Scientific and technical associations began to work more fruitfully. In 1944 they conducted 314 conférences and meetings, 1,140 scientific reports, issued approximately 200 collections of articles, brochures and bulletins. With the assistance of Party organizations the creative thought of Soviet scientists, engineers and technologists was realized in actual deeds: improvement of production technology, creation of highly productive equipment and mechanisms, production lines, improved models of armaments, and so forth.

The labor unions, which were led by N. M. Shvernik during the years of the war, did considerable work under the guidance of the Communist Party. Closely linked to all aspects of the labor and life of workers and employees, the labor unions played a large part in the development of industry, in its fulfillment of the needs of the front and the national economy. The XIIth Plenum of the AUCCLU, which was held in March 1944, proposed that central, regional and factor or plant committees use every means to develop the creative initiative of the workers and intelligentsia and to direct it above all toward achieving high labor productivity and decreasing the cost of production. The Plenum turned the particular attention of all professional organizations to the development of Socialist competition to fulfill and overfulfill production plans.

Carrying out the resolution of the XIIth Plenum of the AUCCLU, labor organizations in the provinces arranged public reviews of production, intensified the struggle to implement and improve line production and assembly lines at enterprises. Stricter supervision was established over putting /596
the inventions and rationalizing proposals of innovators and front rank workers into practice. Leading organizations of the Party and labor unions began to devote greater attention to preparing and conducting production conferences. At these converences workers, engineers and technicians exposed shortcomings that impeded the normal course of work, revealed unutilized internal reserves, and made valuable rationalizing proposals.

The Komsomol made a great contribution to the fulfillment of production plans in 1944. By this time the proportion of working youth at enterprises

in the most important branches of industry had reached 40-55 percent. This meant that the field of the Komsomol's organizational and educational activity had widened considerably. During this period particular attention was devoted to the movement of the Komsomol-youth brigades.

Mobilizing the forces of the people to fulfill urgent tasks in the field of the war economy, the Communist Party simultaneously began to develop plans for the rise of the national economy under postwar conditions. In the heat of cruel battles with the enemy, the Party, guided by Marxist-Leninist teachings, showed that the key to resolving the problems of postwar economic construction, as in the prewar years, was the accelerated development of heavy industry. In October 1944 in the resolution of the State Defense Committee, "On increasing attention to the matter of restoring and developing the coal and oil industries, ferrous and nonferrous metallurgy and power plants," it was acknowledged essential "in the next 2-3 years to devote particular attention to the most rapid possible restoration and development of the coal and oil industries, ferrous and nonferrous metallurgy and power plants, which are the basis for the restoration and rise of the entire national economy."[1] The resolution of the State Defense Committee of December 1, 1944, "On measures to assist Dneprostroy in the restoration of the Dnepr hydroelectric power plant named for V. I. Lenin," was remarkable. It set a vast task - to restore that hydroelectric plant, which was at that time the largest in the country, to full capacity by the end of 1947, with all of its transfer lines, substations and navigation locks. Moreover, measures were outlined with the goal of increasing the capacity of the hydroelectric power plant and raising the output of electrical energy in comparison with the prewar level.[2]

The achievements of industry in 1944 showed again and again the superiority of the socialist over the capitalist economy. Public ownership of the means of production, planned management of the national economy, the

---

[1] IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #17286, p. 1.

[2] Ibid, Inv. #17306, pp. 1-2.

leading role of the Communist Party, and the selfless labor of the Soviet people enabled our Motherland, in spite of the errors and shortcomings connected with the cult of personality, not only to achieve a radical change in the development of the war economy but also to direct socialist industry, under the conditions of a gigantic armed struggle, along the path of further rapid ascent, and thereby to create conditions for the restoration and growth of the entire national economy of the Soviet Union.

3. Agriculture in 1944

The main task of agricultural workers in 1944 was to raise crop capacity and increase the total harvest of grain and other agricultural products. It was necessary to provide the Red Army with food products constantly, to improve the supply of provisions in the rear areas and to /597
normalize it in the liberated areas. More and more cotton, flax, wool and other agricultural raw materials were required by industrial enterprises that manufactured ammunition, personal equipment and clothing for the Armed Forces, and clothes and shoes for the population.

The performance of the tasks facing agriculture was complicated by great difficulties: the kolkhozes, sovkhozes and MTS (machine and tractor stations) were still experiencing an acute shortage of workers, especially skilled workers: tractor operators, drivers, combine operators, metal workers and blacksmiths. A considerable number of tractors, automobiles and horses had been transferred to the service of the front. The remaining tractors and automobiles were badly worn out and frequently broke down. There was a shortage of spare parts for repairs. Field work and shipments were done in the kolkhozes primarily by draft animals. The stock of basic agricultural machines and implements - plows, cultivators, seeding machines, mowers and threshers - had grown much smaller. The supply of fuel and mineral fertilizers to the kolkhozes had been curtailed. In 1943 the land under cultivation had been 63 percent of the amount of the land under cultivation in 1940. During the war years care for seedlings had worsened, crop capacity had dropped and gross harvests of agricultural crops decreased. Agriculture in the liberated regions, which had been ravaged by the fascist occupation, suffered especially great difficulties. The situation in the extensive agricultural regions of the Volga and the East was also very serious, where in comparison with the prewar period tractor cultivation of the fields had sharply decreased.

"The timely conduct of the spring sowing and the obtainment of a good harvest in 1944," the USSR CPC and the CC AUCP(b) stated in a resolution on the state plan for the development of agriculture in 1944, "is the most important military-economic task of Soviet and Party organizations... in the matter of supplying the Red Army and the population with provisions and industry with raw materials."[1]

The plan of the development of agriculture in 1944 established tasks to improve crop capacity, expand the area of land under cultivation, increase the gross harvest of the main agricultural crops and the number of livestock, and to improve the productivity of the latter. The workers of the villages

[1] "Pravda," March 15, 1944.

were assigned to improve the use of the automobile and tractor stock, increase the quality of field work, expand the area of autumn plowing and the plowing of fallow fields, broaden the use of local fertilizers, and strictly observe rules of care for seedlings. The fulfillment of these tasks required that agricultural workers gather all their strength, that available resources be fully utilized, and that the Party and Soviet organizations conduct a great deal of organizational work.

The Party and government carried out great work on the organizational and economic reinforcement of the kolkhozes, MTS, and sovkhozes, and the improvement of agriculture by local Party, Soviet and land organizations. Resolutions of the CC AUCP(b), passed in 1943-1944 on reports of the Saratov, Penzensk, Tambov, Ul'yanov, Smolensk, Altay, Primorskoye, Bashkir, Udmurt and Tatar obkoms and kraykoms of the AUCP(b), as well as of the Central Committees of the Communist Parties of the Kazakh, Tadzhik, and Kirgiz SSR, promoted the elimination of shortcomings in agriculture. The Party and government devoted particular attention to reinforcing the material-technical bases of agriculture. Tractor plants destroyed by the occupiers were quickly restored. A new tractor plant, the Altay plant, was put into operation. Certain enterprises were transferred to the system of the USSR People's Commissariat of of Agricultre to organize the production of spare parts for tractors and agricultural machines. Motor-repair plants were built both in regions liberated from the enemy and in the eastern regions of the country.

In 1944 more new technology and mineral fertilizers began to come into /598
use in agriculture. During the year 5,100 tractors (in conversion to 15-horsepower) were received, as opposed to 1,000 in 1943, and 181,000 tons of mineral fertilizers as opposed to 79,000 tons in the previous year. The delivery of trucks and grain combines to agriculture was renewed. Output of cultivators, seeding machines, mowers, threshers, harrows and rakes increased. The supply of tractors and draft animals to kolkhozes improved. In 1944 on the kolkhozes there averaged 12 horsepower to 100 hectares of sowings of all agricultural crops, as opposed to 11.5 in 1943.[1] The level of mechanization

[1] According to data of the CSD USSR. IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #9605, pp. 339, 369.

of the most important agricultural tasks rose for the first time in the years of the war.[1] Production increased of spare parts for tractors and agricultural machines, fuel, chemical weed and pest killers and building materials. The greater part of them went to the regions liberated from fascist occupation in the Ukraine, Belorussia, the Don, the Kuban, and the central black earth regions of the RSFSR, where tens of thousands of kolkhozes, MTS and sovkhozes were restored. Even in 1944 the agriculture of these regions, which were closer to the front, played an important part in increasing the food and raw material resources of the country and in supplying the advancing Red Army.

However, expanding the stock of tractors and automobiles could not by itself decide the success of the matter. Much depended on the training of machine operators, and on improving the utilization of technology and the quality of repairs. In 1944 in classes of the MTS and in schools for agricultural mechanization 282,000 tractor operators, 53,000 combine operators and combine operator-mechanics were trained.[2] The number of tractor operators and combine operators in the MTS grew from 391,000 people July 1,1943 to 600,000 on July 1, 1944.[3] Tens of thousands of kolkhoz chairmen, brigade leaders and field team leaders underwent retraining in special courses. Work on the selection and education of cadres was the basis of the activity of Party and Soviet organizations in the villages.

As in the previous war years, in 1944 an enormous role in agriculture was played by women. They accounted for 55.5 percent of all work-days completed in the kolkhozes. Over 250,000 village women were in management work. Twelve percent of kolkhoz chairmen were women, 41 percent of field brigade leaders, and 50 percent of managers of animal husbandry farms. They also occupied a prominent place in the ranks of the army of machine operators. Women comprised approximately half of the MTS tractor and combine operators and a quarter of the drivers.[4] "We now see for ourselves," M. I. Kalinin

---

[1] Acc. to data of the CSD USSR. IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #9605, p. 368.

[2] Ibid, p. 348.

[3] Ibid, Inv. #16099, p. 11.

[4] Ibid, Inv. #9605, pp. 346, 348.

wrote during those years, "how the organizational and managerial skills of Soviet kolkhoz women have unfolded, how richly, moreover, their spiritual and moral qualities have been displayed."[1]

The role of youth in agriculture also increased during the years of the war. In 1944 adolescents from 12 to 16 years of age comprised 17 percent of the overall mass of kolkhoz workers.[2] The XIIth Plenum of the CC AULCUY passed a special resolution "On the immediate tasks of the Komsomol's work in the village." It indicated the great significance of the participation of rural Komsomol members in the struggle to conduct the spring sowing, improve the work of MTS, and increase crop capacity. The main task of rural Komsomol members was to mobilize all youth to fulfill the state plan for agricultural work.

The Party organizations directed the work of Komsomol organizations in /599
the villages and supported their initiative. At Plenums of AUCP(b) obkoms questions of increasing political-education work among the younger generation were considered. Party organizations began to examine the needs and questions of youth deeply, and to display greater concern for the life and learning of youths and girls.

Industrial enterprises of cities, taking it upon themselves to help kolkhozes, MTS and sovkhozes, offered considerable assistance to rural workers in fulfilling the tasks facing agriculture in 1944.

Such sponsorship was developed especially widely in the Moscow region. One hundred and sixty enterprises of the capital undertook to help MTS and sovkhozes, assisting them with tractor repair and the production of spare parts. The workers and kolkhoz workers of Noginsk district of the Moscow region displayed valuable initiative. Using local resources, in three months

---

[1] M. I. Kalinin. O kolkhoznom stroye i kolkhoznitsakh (On the kolkhoz system and kolkhoz women), M., Voyenizdat, 1950, str. 7-8.

[2] Acc. to data of the CSD USSR. IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #9605, pp. 346-348.

in the MTS they built repair workshops, a bulk oil plant, a garage, sheds and barns to store tractors and agricultural machines, a drying plant, as well as a new club and a bathhouse. The experience of the Noginsk district was widely popularized in other regions of the country as well. Sponsorship was well provided in the Sverdlovsk region. One of its first initiators was the collective of the Uralmashzavod. It supplied the patronized machine and tractor station with spare parts and tools, and delegated skilled workers to help the MTS machine operators in the repair of tractors. To make the experience of the sponsorship of the Uralmashzavod common property, the AUCP(b) obkom held a conference of directors, CC AUCP(b) Party organizers and secretaries of Party organizations of enterprises patronizing the MTS. The utilization of this experience by the enterprises of the region had great practical value. With their help the machine and tractor stations fulfilled the plan of repair work. The Party organization of Uzbekistan devoted much attention to this support work. It sent 5,200 Communists and Komsomol members to kolkhozes and MTS. Many of them were sent as mechanics, repair workers and tractor operators. Patronage acquired broad scope in the regions that had been liberated from occupation. Industrial enterprises of Kiev, Rostov-na-Dony, Voronezh, Minsk and other cities helped kolkhozes, MTS and sovkhozes to prepare for the spring sowing.

Organizing patronage, broadening the output of agricultural technology, the working class helped the workers of the village to overcome the difficulties of wartime and increase the production of food products and raw materials. During the years of the Great Patriotic War the brotherly fighting union of the working class and kolkhoz peasantry was a mighty source of power and invincibility to the Soviet state.

The spring of 1944 passed under the banner of the struggle for a good harvest, for the improvement of the quality of all agricultural work. The state's check of preparedness for field work, which became a national review, had great importance. On the eve of the sowing the kolkhoz, MTS and sovkhoz workers, together with representatives of the Soviet organs, checked to see that everything had been done to carry out the sowing successfully. In many regions test runs by tractor operators into the field were organized.

Local Party, Soviet and land organs improved the management of the organization of the sowing. The Communists and Komsomol members went to the most crucial sectors: to repair workshops where repairs of tractors and other technology were carried out; to sorting machines, where seeds were sorted; to the fields, where the sowing was conducted. With their personal example and Bolshevik word they led the workers of the rural kolkhozes with them. Mass political work in the villages was subordinated to the fundamental tasks of the sowing, widely attracting the most active district Party, Soviet and Komsomol members, agricultural specialists, and front rank kolkhoz workers.

In the course of preparations for spring field work, All-Union Socialist competition developed widely among kolkhozes, MTS and sovkhozes for an excellently conducted sowing and a good harvest. /600 The kolkhoz workers of the front rank agricultural artel "Krasnyy putilovets," Krasnokhomsk district, Kalinin region, stepped forward as the initiators of the competition. Summoning all village workers to gather a good harvest, the Kalinin workers wrote, "Dear comrades! Splendid reports are coming from the front... And we have no other wish, no other care, than with our labor to support the victorious advance at the front, to help the Red Army to defeat and destroy the hated enemy conclusively."[1]

The kolkhozes of the country reponded fervently to the call of the "Krasnyy putilovets" kolkhoz workers. By October 1944 20,000 youth tractor brigades numbering over 200,000 tractor operators were participating in the competition. The youth teams for high crop capacity united approximately 400,000 people.[2] Many of them achieved excellent indices. The brigade of the renowned Ryazan tractor operator D. M. Garmash - the initiator of the competition of female tractor brigades - in 1944 cultivated 1,866 hectares to each 15-horsepower tractor. The women's tractor brigade of A. P. Retsova of the Bronnitsa MTS of the Moscow region cultivated 1,512 hectares per tractor, while the average cultivation for the region was 372 hectares

---

[1] "Pravda," 20 April, 1944.

[2] See M. I. Kalinin. O kommunisticheskom vospitaniyi. Izbrannyye rechi i stat'yi. (On Communist education. Selected speeches and articles.) M., "Molodaya gvardiya," 1958, str. 416.

per tractor.[1] The tractor brigade of S. A. Shelkovnikov of the Kuznetsk MTS of Kemerovsk region achieved remarkable success. It considerably overfulfilled the plan of spring tractor work and conserved 4,208 kilograms of fuel. By mid-June the brigade had already overfulfilled the yearly work plan by 30 percent. During the spring sowing alone 518 hectares were cultivated to each 15-horsepower tractor.

To raise the material incentive of the workers of machine and tractor stations, monetary prizes were established for high-quality repairs of combines, complex threshers and other machinery. In February 1944 badges were instituted for "Best tractor operator," "Best combine operator of the sovkhoz," "Outstanding MTS mechanic," "Outstanding sovkhoz mechanic." Front rank tractor and combine operators, brigade leaders of tractor brigades, and mechanics were rewarded with badges for overfulfilling seasonal and yearly norms, for good maintenance of machines, fuel conservation, and so on.

Led by the Communist Party, the workers of the kolkhoz village not only raised a greater harvest than in the previous year, but better organized its gathering. Carrying out the decree of the USSR CPC and the CC AUCP(b) "On the gathering of the harvest and purveyance of agricultural products in 1944," with the help of sponsoring enterprises they repaired tractors, combines and other agricultural machines in time. Experienced people were distributed in crucial sectors. During the harvest in addition to complex technology simple harvesting machinery drawn by draft animals was widely used - harvesters, reapers, and also scythes and sickles. Where there was a shortage of tractors and horses, less productive cows were used for field work. The kolkhoz men and women worked selflessly. Along with them worked city dwellers who had been enlisted to bring in the harvest. The joyful reports from the front increased tenfold the strength of the Soviet people, inspiring them to remarkable deeds in the name of victory.

The gross yield (granary harvest) of grain crops increased in 1944 by 67 percent in comparison with 1943 and comprised over 49 million tons (3

[1] See Razvitiye sovyetskoy ekonomiki (Development of Soviet economy) (Statistical materials), M., Izdaniye VPSh, 1946, str. 104.

billion poods). The production of the most important industrial crops increased considerably. Over 1.1 million tons of raw cotton was gathered, 56 percent more than in 1943. The gross yield of sugar beets (industrial) increased in 1944 in comparison with the previous year over three-fold and was 4.1 million tons, and of sunflowers by 29 percent, reaching 1 million /601
tons. Production of flax fiber increased. Almost 55 million tons of potatoes were gathered, or 57 percent more than in 1943.[1]

Such an increase in gross yields became possible thanks above all to the increased crop capacity of many agricultural crops both in the rear and in the liberated regions. The crop capacity on all categories of farms was 6 centners per hectare in 1944 as opposed to 4.2 centners in 1943, of sugar beets (industrial) 61 centners as opposed to 28, of raw cotton 9.8 against 6.1, of sunflowers 3.5 against 2.9, of potatoes 71 against 64. The expansion of land under cultivation as the result of the liberation of occupied regions was also of great significance. Overall the areas of land under cultivation increased from 94.1 million hectares in 1943 to 109.9 million hectares in 1944. Sowings of sugar beets increased correspondingly in that period from 0.45 million to 0.68 million hectares, and of potatoes from 5.4 million to 7.7 million hectares.[2] Sowings of grain increased from 70.6 million hectares to 82 million hectares.

In the struggle for a good harvest many kolkhoz men and women achieved outstanding success. Thus, for example, a kolkhoz worker near Moscow, D. Z. Burmistrov, gathered 53 centners of winter wheat per hectare. Field team leader R. Umurov from the Surkhan-Dar'yinsk region, Uzbek SSR, obtained 112 centners of raw cotton from one hectare. The field team leader of a kolkhoz in the Moscow region, Y. N. Levedeva, set a record for crop capacity of cabbage, gathering 1,813 centners of cabbage from a hectare. A 60-year-old Ukrainian kolkhoz worker, Y. S. Khobta, brought in a record harvest of onions - 705 centners from one hectare. The youth field team of Komsomol

---

[1] According to data of the CSD USSR. IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #9605, p. 291.

[2] Ibid, pp. 291, 300.

member T. F. Krutova from the "Pyatiletka v chetyre goda" (Five-Year Plan in four years) kolkhoz, Kolomensk district, Moscow region, obtained 83.3 tons of potatoes per hectare. The field team of the Kiev kolkhoz member A. D. Koshevaya of the "Chervonyy gigant" artel, reviving the fame of the champion beet growers-kolkhoz women, brought in 512 centners of sugar beets per hectare. The master of good potato harvests, the Siberian peasant woman A. K. Yutkina, spoke well of the mighty upsurge in production that had seized the workers of the kolkhoz village: "We, Russian people, are not ones to submit to the enemy; we will do everything, we will begrudge nothing, and we will hold out and beat the enemy."[1]

Good indices were achieved in 1944 not only by the renowned masters of good harvests, but by many thousands of kolkhozes, MTS and sovkhozes, whole districts and regions. For example, the kolkhoz workers of the agricultural artel "Sovyetskaya derevnya," Bogorodskoy district, Gorkiy region, gathered, thanks to the adoption of advanced agriculture technology, 23 centners of cereal grains per hectare, and 25 centners each of barley and oats. They fulfilled their obligations to the government ahead of schedule and contributed an extra 3,600 poods of grain to the Red Army stocks. The "Gorshikha" kolkhoz, Yaroslav region, the chairman of which was I. I. Abrosimov, increased the area of cultivated land by 191 hectares during the years of the war. The harvest of cereal grains there increased from 13.5 centners in 1942 to 16 centners in 1944. The kolkhoz gave the state hundreds of tons of grain and other products above plan. Great progress was achieved in the development of agriculture in the districts of the moscow region and the other central regions of the RSFSR.

The Moscow, Kiev, Poltava, Kalinin and Leningrad regions were the winners in the All-Union Socialist Competition for a good harvest in 1944. They were awarded the challenge red banner of the SDC.

The numbers of cattle in all categories of farms, including cattle in the liberated regions, increased in 1944 from 33.9 million head to 44.2

---

[1] Quot. from N. Popova. Zhenshchiny strany sotsializma (Women of the country of socialism). M., Profizdat, 1948, str. 97.

million head; of these the number of cows increased from 16.5 million to 21.6 million head. The number of pigs, which was 5.6 million head at the /602
end of 1943, increased to 8.8 million head in 1944, and the numbers of sheep and goats from 63.3 million to 70.2 million head. Thanks to the growth in the numbers of livestock, the increase in fodder resources and improved care of the animals, in 1944 it was possible to somewhat increase animal husbandry production for the first time during the years of the war. Overall in all categories of farms 1,953,000 tons of meat and fat were produced (dressed weight) as opposed to 1,767,000 tons in 1943, and of milk 22,044,000 tons as opposed to 16,391,000 tons.[1] More wool and eggs were obtained.

Much success was achieved by front-rank stock-raisers. The notable milkmaid of the Moscow region, Ye. D. Nartova, obtained an average of 4,722 kilograms of milk to one feed cow. Competition among stock-raisers broadened from one day to the next. By 1944 1,134 milkmaids of the Moscow region had milked 2,000 or more kilograms of milk to one feed cow. The Vologda kolkhoz worker A. Ye. Lyuskova, expressing the thoughts and feelings of village workers, said, "We do not forget our obligation in competition even for a minute. It is sometimes hard for us, but we know that it is incomparably harder for the soldiers at the front. They are protecting Soviet land from the enemy with their guns in hand, and we in the rear are trying to work so that we are not ashamed before those who do not grudge their lives for the Motherland."[2]

The winners in the All-Union Socialist Competition of stock-raisers in 1944 were the Moscow region, the Gur'yev and Karaganda regions of the Kazakh SSR, the Dagestan SSR and the Azerbaidjan SSR, which were awarded challenge red banners of the SDC. For progress in the development of animal husbandry the CC AUCP(b) and the USSR CPC also noted the Tadzhik, Armenian, and Turkmen SSR and the liberated areas of the Ukraine - the Kiev, Poltava and other

---

[1] Acc. to data of the CSD USSR, IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #9605, pp. 275, 276.

[2] "Pravda," 4 August, 1944.

regions. No small role in achieving this progress belonged to the Komsomol, which in 1944 sent over 100,000 youths and girls to work in animal husbandry.[1]

The increased labor activity of the kolkhoz workers is shown by the greater number of work-days they completed. In 1944 on the average one able-bodied kolkhoz member completed 248 work-days as opposed to 232 in 1943. The work of machine and tractor stations also improved. Output to one standard 15-horsepower tractor increased by 28 percent in comparison with 1943. The volume of work completed by MTS (in conversion to tillage) increased by 39 percent.[2] The 50 best MTS were awarded challenge Red Banners by the People's Commissar of agriculture.

The kolkhoz men and women of the liberated Ukraine stepped forward with valuable initiative, calling on all workers in agriculture to begin a competition to fulfill the plan of grain purveyance ahead of schedule and to provide grain to the Red Army stocks over plan. In a statement to kolkhoz men and women of the USSR the Ukrainian grain growers wrote, "We fervently, with all our hearts, thank our valiant, heroic Red Army, our dear Soviet power and Communist Party for our liberation... In our labor on the kolkhoz we will not fall behind the feats of arms of the Soviet soldiers at the front."[3] The kolkhoz workers of the Don, the Kuzbas, the Volga and other regions seized upon the initiative of the Ukrainians, thanks to which the state received tens of millions of surplus tons of grain.

State purchases of grain, which in 1944 were also conducted in the liberated regions, increased in comparison with the previous year by 76 percent, and comprised 21.6 million tons. Considerably more industrial crops were purchased, especially sugar beets, raw cotton, flax fiber and sunflower. Thus, for instance, purchases of sugar beets reached 3.4 million tons, that is, they increased by 3.3 times, and purchases of raw cotton reached 1.1 million tons, increasing by 56 percent. The state was supplied with 2.6 million tons of milk and milk products (in conversion to milk), 8 percent more than in 1943.[4] /603

---

[1] See AULCUY in figures and facts. M., "Molodaya gvardiya," 1949, p. 57.

[2] Acc. to data of the CSD USSR. IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #9605, pp. 359, 364.

[3] "Pravda," 11 October, 1944.

[4] Op cit, Inv. #9605, p. 286.

For successful fulfillment of the plan of grain purchases the Party and Soviet workers of over 50 regions, krays, autonomous and union republics were awarded the Order of the Patriotic War I and II Degree. In decrees of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet it was emphasized that "under the conditions of wartime, work on grain production is of particularly great importance for the achievement of victory over the enemy and is equal in significance to work at the front..." At the same time certain regions, krays and republics did not fulfill the plan for field work, did not ensure it the proper quality, and were unable to deal with their tasks for increasing crop capacity and supplying agricultural products to the state. In regions of Siberia, the Urals, the Southeast and Kazakhstan the area of land cultivated in spring wheat decreased. The backwardness of animal husbandry was acutely felt in the country. On the whole gross agricultural production was considerably less than in 1940, before the war. Nevertheless, in comparison with the previous years of the war the situation in agriculture changed for the better in 1944.

4. The work of transportation in serving the front and the rear

Transportation was faced with great demands in 1944. It was to increase shipments of national economic cargos, above all coal, coke, ore, metal, and oil, ensure shipments for the front, which continually increased in connection with the huge scope of the offensive operations, and organize the delivery of cargos to the liberated regions. In order to fulfill these critical tasks, transportation workers, above all railroad workers, had to improve their work and restore and develop railroads and the management of automobile, river and sea transportation in the regions liberated from the German fascist occupiers.

On the whole transportation was able to deal with the tasks set before it by the Communist Party and the Soviet government. Overall freight turnover of all types of transportation - railroad, sea, river, automobile, and oil pipeline - increased in 1944 in comparison with 1943 by 15.3 percent.[1] Such an increase in freight turnover was achieved at the cost of great efforts. It was necessary to overcome enormous difficulties both in the organization of shipments and in the utilization of material-technical bases of transportation. This particularly involved railroad transportation, to the share of which fell four fifths of the total volume of freight turnover.

Railroad transportation in the USSR in 1944 had considerably less rolling stock than before the war. The arrival of new locomotives and cars during the war years did not compensate for the war-related depreciation and losses. At the same time due to the construction of new lines in the East and the liberation of the entire territory of the country the length of railroads increased. As a result their saturation with rolling stock calculated to 100 kilometers of operational length was below the prewar level. If before the war there were 25 locomotives on the average to 100 kilometers of operational length, at the end of 1944 there were 23 locomotives.[2] There were /604
great difficulties tied to the organization of shipments in the liberated regions, where it was first necessary to restore lines destroyed by the enemy. Taking the state of railroad transportation into consideration, in a resolution of December 2, 1943 the State Defense Committee committed industrial People's Commissariats to improve the material-technical supply of transportation and, specifically, to increase shipments of metal to the People's Commissariat of Means of Transportation (PCMT). Stating that complete and timely supply to the PCMT of materials, provisions and industrial goods was of primary state significance, the State Defense Committee required the corresponding People's Commissariats to make deliveries to the PCMT on an equal level with the People's Commissariat of Defense.

---

[1] According to data of the CSD USSR. IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #9605, p. 385.

[2] Ibid, Inv. #16099, p. 2.

In 1944 railroad freight turnover increased considerably. It was over 281 billion ton-kilometers as opposed to 239 billion in 1943. The main lines of the far rear somewhat decreased their share in the total freight turnover. This was due to the growth in shipping on lines in the southern and western directions. However, the railroads in the Urals and Siberia retained their leading role; their freight turnover was 33 percent of the entire freight turnover on the railroads.[1]

Service to the main branches of heavy industry occupied an important place in the work of transportation, as before. While in 1940 fuel and metallurgical cargos comprised 44.8 percent of all cargos shipped by railroad, in 1944 their share rose to 51.2 percent.[2]

The State Defense Committee devoted particular attention to the organization of shipments of critical cargos, above all coal, without which it was impossible to conduct continuous repairs of military industry, power plants and the railroads themselves. Thus on March 5, 1944 the State Defense Committee obliged the PCMT to ship only war cargos, coal, coke, fusing agents, refractory materials, ores, supports, oil and petroleum products, and metal for defense plants for four days, from March 9 through 12, on the Tomsk, Omsk, Sverdlovsk, South Ural and Perm' railroads.

The concentration of the efforts of railroad transportation on shipping crucial cargos is evident in the example of the Ural, Siberian, Kazakhstan and Volga railroads. In 1944 the Perm', Sverdlovsk, South Ural, Karaganda, Omsk and Tomsk railroads, serving the main centers of the war economy, surpassed the prewar level of shipping by only 2 percent in all, but shipping of coal and metal far surpassed the 1940 level. On the Sverdlovsk railroad - "the transportation unit of the industrial Urals" - shipping of coal increased in 1944 in comparison with the prewar period threefold, and of metal by 60 percent; the South Ural railroad increased shipment of coal almost twofold

---

[1] Acc. to data of the CSD USSR. IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #16099, p. 3; Inv. #9605, p. 385.

[2] Ibid, Inv. #16099, p. 3.

and of metallurgical cargos by 70 percent.[1] Shipping of coal, coke, and machines on the Perm' and Tomsk railroads also increased. The Karaganda railroad became one of the main lines for coal shipment. Great changes took place in freight turnover on the Kuybyshev railroad, which had become an important trunk line, along which moved cargos for the defense industry, and oil and petrolum products were shipped out from "the second Baku." Freight turnover on the Gorkiy and Kazan' railroads, which served the largest centers of mechanical engineering and metal working, increased in some defense cargos over twofold in comparison with the prewar period.

Railroad shipments of the most important cargos in 1944 were facilitated by more rational organization of material-technical supply in connection with the introduction of new production capacities in the eastern regions and the /605 restoration of the coal and metallurgical industry of the Donbas. This led to a considerable decrease in the average distance of shipments of such important cargos as coal, ore, oil and ferrous metals.[2]

Before the beginning of the war the directions of freight flow were largely stable. During the years of the war, nonuniformity of freight flow turnover between the eastern and western sections of the railroad network increased. Thus, for example, from Western Siberia to the Urals and from the Urals to the central regions considerably more freight cars set out every day than arrived on the railroads of the Urals and Seberia. This made it necessary to form empty trains in the western part of the country and send them to the Urals and Western Siberia. In addition, the railroads had to ensure shipments of imported cargos moving between the ports of Vladivostok, Arkhangel'sk and Murmansk, which also required the movement of empty railroad cars over great distances. The flow of cargo to the front zone increased sharply. All of this made the management of railroad shipments extremely difficult. At the beginning of 1944 on the front line railroads of the Northwest, West and South a huge number of loaded and empty cars

---

[1] CSAOR, col. 4372, inv. 4, div. 580, pp. 282, 284.

[2] Acc. to data of the CSD USSR. IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #9605, p. 391.

accumulated. At the same time the railroads of the Ural-Siberian, Caucasian, Central Asian, and Far Eastern directions were experiencing an acute shortage of empty cars. In connection with this, in accordance with a resolution by the State Defense Committee throughout January from the front-line railroads 25,000 cars were transferred to the railroads of the Urals and Siberia, 10,000 to the Far East, 8,000 to Central Asia, and 7,000 to the Caucasus. This was one of the largest transportation operations of the war years.

The maneuvering of empty rolling stock, its accurate and timely transfer from one railroad line to another, were the most important indices of discipline and coordination in the operation of transportation, an essential condition for systematic and smooth shipping of national economic and defense cargos. Railroad workers, above all traffic controllers, put a great deal of labor and effort into successfully resolving this important military-economic problem.

The Party and government concentrated the railroad workers' attention on maximally accelerating the turnover of locomotives and cars. The resolution of the State Defense Committee of January 10, 1944 on accelerating handling at large industrial enterprises and the establishment of strict daily unloading norms was of exceptional significance.

Socialist competition began among workers in railroad transportation to achieve the best indices in rolling stock turnover. The collective of the Stalinsk (now Pridneprovskaya) railroad stood out as the initiator of the competition. High speed processing of trains was widely applied there, and improvements were made in running the shipments in blocks, i.e. moving trains over great distances without reforming at transit sorting and technical stations. As a result in June-August the turnover of one car on the railroad was accelerated by over three days.

Many examples can be cited of the selfless struggle of the railroad workers to speed up the turnover of cars and locomotives. An engineer of the Nizhnedneprovsk-Uzel depot, A. A. Alekseyev, and an engineer of the

Lozovaya depot, V. I. Danilenko, developed effective techniques for shortening the gap between running and commercial speeds. Dispatchers N. P. Bayrachnaya of the Osnovyanskiy division and V. A. Filippov of the Kursk division, in cooperation with steam engine mechanics, applied new means of rapidly moving trains along the restored lines. Train compiler of the Kirov station, M. F. Katayev, rationalized methods of forming trains under winter conditions.[1]

Party organizations energetically supported the initiative of the /606
front-rank railroad workers and widely popularized their experience. The Central Committees of the CP(b) of the Ukraine and Belorussia, the Moscow, Sverdlovsk, Perm', Novosibirsk, and Chelyabinsk obkoms of the AUCP(b) passed special resolutions on assistance to the railroads in the organization of shipments and railroad management, and on intensifying mass political work among the railroad workers.

On the initiative of the Party organizations of industrial enterprises and railroad transportation, socialist competition developed among the workers of the access routes of plants and factories and the railroad workers to shorten the downtime of cars in loading and unloading. Thus, for example, the miners of the Zolotovsk mine directorate of the Donbas committeed themselves to overfulfill the plan of coal extraction, and the railroad workers of the coal-loading station of Mar'yevka on the Donetsk line assumed the obligation to have cars ready for loading early. When there was a shortage of people in the mines to conduct high-speed loading of the coal, off duty railroad workers came to the miners' assistance. The miners, in turn, helped the transport workers to prepare the station installation for winter and to form coal blocks.

The workers of other stations and mines of the Donbas, as well as railroad and coal mine workers of the Kuzbas, Karaganda, Chelyabinsk and other districts and cities, seized on the patriotic initiative of the railroad

[1] See "Pravda," 2 August, 1944.

workers and miners. The competition was conducted under the slogan, "The more coal, the closer victory!" A poster devoted to accelerating car turnover urged, "Railroad worker, remember! If car turnover is speeded up by one hour in the whole railroad network, this will give an additional 250 cars per day for loading, in which 250 airplanes, or 500 cannons, or 375 automobiles, or 250 heavy tanks can be shipped."[1]

In 1944 block train shipment of cargos expanded, which increased the speed of their delivery. Shipment of cargos in block trains now comprised 46 percent of all shipments as opposed to 25 percent in 1943.[2] Furthermore, the volume of shipments of mass cargos in block trains increased, plying between strictly defined points. This type of shipment was used even before the war to deliver ore, as well as for shipping forging coal to the Urals and Ural ore in the opposite direction. In 1944 the number of these so-called "ring" block trains increased fourfold in comparison with the prewar period. To ensure shipments of grain from the 1944 harvest, grain block trains were organized. In October 375 such trains ran. On the main grain-loading lines of the Ukraine (Odessa, the Southwest, South and others) over three-quarters of all grain shipments were made in block trains.

Shipments for military industry occupied a significant place in freight turnover. The acute shortage of certain types of strategic raw materials required rapid delivery of raw materials to war plants, which caused a need to establish constant monitoring of the movement of such cargos. While in 1942 the PCMT effected dispatcher control of loading and movement of 42 types of cargos for the defense industry, at the end of 1944 260 types of cargo were under observation. Thanks to this the average daily speed of defense trains increased sharply. Such major stations as Sverdlovsk, Chelyabinsk, Gorkiy, Novokuznetsk and others formed defense trains daily consisting of several dozen cars. In some cases especially urgent military cargos were shipped in passenger trains.

---

[1] Pamyatka agitatoru o provedeniyi chetvertoy voyennoy zimy na zheleznodorozhnom transportye (Instructions to an agitator on the fourth winter of the war in railroad transportation). M., izdaniye gazety "Gudok," 1945, p. 39.

[2] See V. T. Osipov. Organizatsiya marshrutov s mest pogruzki (Organizing block trains from the loading site). M., Transzheldorizdat, 1948, p. 27.

As the result of the broadly developed struggle for better qualitative indices of the work of railroad transportation the average turnover time for a freight car, which was 12.64 days in 1943, decreased in 1944 to 11.31 days, /607 and the average daily run of a freight car increased from 107.8 kilometers to 115.6 kilometers.[1] However, the indices of use of rolling stock were considerably lower than the prewar level. There were large reserves in railroad transportation.

Trying to achieve an increase in the volume of shipping, the transportation workers exerted themselves to maintain the complex railroad system - locomotives, cars, lines - in working order. The innovative methods of N. A. Lunin, A. P. Papavin and their followers were widely popularized, making it possible to extend the serviceability of locomotives, cars and trains, conserve fuel, metal, and manpower, and decrease financial expenditures.

The needs of the military economy demanded economical consumption of fuel, especially coking coals necessary for ferrous metallurgy and the chemical industry. Therefore transportation received low-calorie ashy and damp brown coal of the Moscow, Chelyabinsk, Bogoslovskiy and other basins. Many engineers successfully learned during the war years to drive trains when the locomotives were fueled with low-quality coal, but their speeds were comparatively low. When in 1944 the railroad workers were faced with the task of increasing speed, some managers of locomotive depots and engineers began to assert that it was impossible on brown coal to reach high speeds of motion. This opinion was disproved by front rank steam engine mechanics. Thus, for example, an engineer of the Tula depot, D. A. Korobkov, began to operate trains at high speed and still conserved fuel. The dissemination of Korobkov's experience throughout the railroads had great defense value.

Better utilization of the load capacity and volume of cars was an important internal reserve of transportation. It should be borne in min that almost one-third of cars were not loaded up to their established capacity.

---

[1] Acc. to data of the CSD USSR. IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #9605, p. 391.

Liquidating underloading of cars became one of the railroad workers' urgent tasks. Innovative weighers solved this problem successfully. A weigher of the Antratsit station on the Severo-Donetskaya railroad, Z. F. Vyalova, not only ensured loading of cars in accordance with the established norm, but was also able to find ways to utilize the load capacity of the cars more fully. The application of the methods of Vyalova and other front rank workers made it possible to put large internal reserves into operation.

In 1944 the railroads, especially in the liberated regions, were experiencing an acute shortage of production capacities for repair of rolling stock.

Before the war the overwhelming majority of the PCMT repair plants were located in the west of the country. However, they were destroyed by the occupiers and time was needed to restore them. Therefore, the repair of rolling stock was often done not in plants, but at locomotive and car depots, which created additional difficulties.

The industrial enterprises of Moscow stepped forward as the initiators of sponsorship of the locomotive stock. The Moscow Committee (MC) of the AUCP(b) approved that patriotic movement of the capital's workers and in December 1944 passed a special resolution obliging the enterprises of the region to help the railroad workers to repair locomotives. The industrial enterprises of Moscow and the Moscow area sponsored the locomotives of all major depots of the Moscow region.

As the Red Army drove the occupiers from Soviet soil, shipments of cargos for the restoration of the economy in the liberated areas increased. Trains ran to them from distant rear regions with equipment, metal, and construction materials. A certain part of the industrial production of the regenerated enterprises was also transported, which increased the total flow of cargos. The railroads of the South and West took on ever greater importance. While in 1943 5,739 cars were shipped daily on the railroads in the southern direction, in 1944 shipping on those railroads increased /608

almost twofold, comprising 10,272 cars; on the railroads of the western direction 1,304 and 4,487 cars respectively were shipped.[1]

The rate of railroad renovation in the liberated regions increased. In 1943 the average rate of restoration of railroad lines was 8 kilometers per day, and in 1944 it had already reached 10 kilometers,[2] and even more in especially important directions.

Accelerating the restoration of bridges was of primary importance. In 1944 the average speed of bridge restoration was 9.7 running meters per day as opposed to 5.5 in the previous year.[3] Some large bridges were restored at a rate of 30-40 meters per day. In 1943 35 percent of the bridges were restored at a rate of over 15 meters per day, and in 1944 57 percent.[4] Railroad units followed the rapidly advancing Red Army and restored railroads both within the USSR and outside its borders: in Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia. On the liberated sectors of the Soviet Union's railroads and in adjacent countries in 1944 35,867 kilometers of track were restored and constructed, as well as 11,441 kilometers of station track, 6,924 small bridges and pipelines, and 1,214 large and medium bridges.[5]

In spite of the fact that in 1944, in helpless rage, the enemy began to destroy railroads even more than in 1942-1943 - using track-wrecking machines, blowing up bridges and high decking, mining tracks - railroad troops dealt successfully with the restoration of railroads in the front zone in the interests of ensuring offensive operations.

---

[1] CSAOR, col. 4372, inv. 4, div. 580, pp. 220, 222, 224, 249, 250, 252.

[2] IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #13951, pp. 1, 3.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid, p. 4.

[5] Ibid, Inv. No. 13948, p 2.

By the start of the operation railroad lines were run in both sectors almost to the front line, and each combined arms army, as a rule, received its railroad sector with supply stations and freight handling. This provided an opportunity to concentrate forces and equipment for the advance beforehand. The restored railroads at first had limited capacity. An average of 12 pairs of trains per day traveled over them at slow speed. Therefore, after the initial restoration work secondary restoration work was carried out, which increased capacity to 18-24 pairs of trains per day in one-way and 30-36 pairs of trains in two-way sectors. Work on the Southwestern, Western and Northwestern lines was designated as especially important.

In railroad restoration the formations and units of the railroad forces commanded by Heroes of the Soviet Union Lt. Gen. of Technical Forces P. A. Kabanov, Maj. Gen. of Technical Forces N. V. Borisov and V. V. Bezvesil'nyy, Hero of Socialist Labor I. G. Zubkov and Heroes of Socialist Labor Cols. P. I. Bakarev and A. S. Dugin particularly distinguished themselves. The military railroad restoration workers gained renown with their feats of labor and arms, and were awarded the high title of Hero of Socialist Labor: railroad battalion commanders Cols. A. M. Avdokhin and P. I. Korshunov, Col. Sh. N. Zhizhilashvili, head repair train chief G. Ya. Avramenko, bridge train chief I. I. Tsyurupa and others. Orders were conferred on several railroad brigades.

The CC of the Communist Parties of the union republics and the Party kraykoms and obkomsof the liberated regions took active part in the restoration of rear railroads: they helped to search out local construction materials, mobilized the population, and conducted mass political work. The restoration of the railroads became a national matter. The railroad workers assumed the obligation not to leave work until the task was completed. /609 The workers of other branches of the national economy voluntarily worked a certain number of off-duty hours in transportation.

Militarized PCMT formations, among them columns of special rescue locomotives, played a large part in effecting shipments on front-line

railroads. Each of these columns consisted of 24-27 locomotives, mobile repair workshops and heated cars for the railroad brigades and repair workers. In 1944 there were 82 special reserve PCMT columns in all, with 1982 locomotives at their disposal.[1] Eminent engineers of the steam engine columns, Heroes of Socialist Labor N. N. Atamanov, Ye. M. Chukhyuk, A. Kh. Delov, V. M. Yeliseyev, and M. I. Kushner, working under front-line conditions, displayed models of labor valor and heroism. Many brigades of locomotive columns followed their example.

In the operation of railroad transportation in 1944, as in the previous years, an extremely important place was occupied by shipments of military cargos. Their volume was the greatest in that year. They comprised 26.4 percent of all railroad shipments.[2] The strategic offensive operations of the Red Army demanded particular effort from railroad transportation. Over 33,000 trains were needed just to ensure the regrouping of forces according to the plans of the Supreme High Command. Moreover, strategic movements were also effected according to the plans of the command group of the fronts. The volume of supply shipments planned by the Central Directorate of Military Communications, the chief of which was Lt. Gen. I. V. Kovalyev, reached 1,721,098 cars, comprising 43,027 trains.[3] Every major operation in 1944 required large troop movements, which were frequently conducted under very difficult conditions.

During the advance of the Soviet forces at Leningrad and Novgorod essential cargos (arms, ammunition, provisions) were delivered to the area of the Leningrad junction stations and the Malaya Vishera station. It was particularly difficult to ship cargos over the poor one-way Volkhovstroy - Polyany - Shlissel'burg line, which was often fired upon by enemy artillery in the approaches to Leningrad. However, in January and the first part of February approximately 40,000 cars of military cargo arrived in those regions

---

[1] Ministry of Means of Transportation (MMS) USSR. Dept. of archives, col. 49, inv. 384, div. 38, p. 128.

[2] IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #9527, p. 1.

[3] Ibid, Inv. #14399, p. 109.

from the rear.[1] In addition to railroads, military cargos for the Leningrad front were also conveyed over Lake Ladoga.

To supply the operation to liberate the Right Bank Ukraine it was necessary in January and February to dispatch 78,000 cars to the Pridneprovskaya railroad and approximately 100,000 cars to the Southwestern railroad. In addition, in March and April over 200,000 military freight cars were shipped to the Vinnitsa, Southwestern and Kovel' railroads. During the period of preparation and conduct of the military operations in the Crimea 33,000 cars with military cargo arrived at the stations of the Pridneprovskaya railroad.[2]

During the offensive in Karelia the flow of military trains moved along the Oktyabr'skaya, Yaroslav and Northern railroads to Volkhovstroy and from there along the one-way sector to the station of Pasha. Due to the low capacity of the line in the Volkhovstroy - Pasha sector there was only one-way movement there. Nevertheless, in eight days of June over 150,000 military trains arrived at the Karelian front.[3]

During the period of preparation and conduct of the operation to liberate Belorussia, 110,000 cars with military cargos arrived in the regions /610
of Gomel' and Smolensk alone. In June-August over 140,000 cars arrived in the freight handling areas of the Kovel' and L'vov railroads for the conduct of operations in the western regions of the Ukraine. By the start of the Iasi-Kishinyev operation 100,000 cars of military cargo were delivered to the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts by railroad workers. Before the advance in the Baltic area the Leningrad and Baltic fronts received approximately 70,000 cars of cargo. Over 26,000 cars of cargo arrived on the Kirov railroad in October to strike the blow on the German fascist forces in the North.[4]

---

[1] IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #9535, p. 3.

[2] Ibid, pp. 8, 13, 20.

[3] Ibid, p. 22.

[4] Ibid, Inv. #9527, pp. 23, 35, 45, 51, 61.

In addition to shipments directly supporting the military operations of the Red Army in 1944, railroad transportation also carried out shipments connected with preparations for the advance of the Soviet troops in the winter of 1945.

Shipments of all cargos increased by 20 percent in comparison with 1943 in all, including hard coal and coke by 30 percent, petroleum products by 21 percent, ferrous metals (including scrap) by 20 percent, lumber cargos by 19 percent and grain cargos by 20 percent.[1] The volume of operative shipments directly connected with support of the offensive operations of the Red Army in the winter and particularly the spring-summer campaigns increased the most.

Improvement in the operation of railroads in 1944 was promoted by the further strengthening of discipline, above all by fulfillment of the indisputable law of transportation, the schedule of train movements. Socialist competition developed on the railroads played a large part. The number of railroads and enterprises laying claim to the first place in the All-Union Socialist Competition grew from month to month. The number of enterprises awarded challenge red banners of the SDC and PCMT also increased. Socialist competition by profession also increased - for best dispatcher, compiler, or engineer, best steam engine brigade, best depot, and so on.

For successful movement of cargos for the front and for the restoration of Leningrad, in 1944 the AUCCLU and PCMT awarded the challenge Red Banner to the collective of the Oktyabr'skiy railroad - railroad chief B. K. Salambekov. The Western trunk line was of great importance in supporting the offensive operations. In 1944, as the winner of the All-Union Socialist Competition, the collective of the Western railroad - chief V. P. Yegorov - was awarded the challenge Red Banner five times and the PCMT Banner once. The collective of the Kirov railroad, the chief of which was P. N. Gartsuyev,

---

[1] Acc. to data of the CSD USSR. IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #16099, p. 3.

joined the number of winners in the competition four times. The collective of the Pridneprovskaya railroad, chief N. T. Zakorko, which had stepped forward as the initiator of competition to speed up freight car turnover, improved its indices of utilization of rolling stock from one month to the next and considerably overfulfilled its assignment for shipment of military cargos to support the offensive operations in the Ukraine. In 1944 the collective of the railroad was awarded the challenge Red Banner six times. The Southern railroad - chief S. V. Kutalin - was an important main line for supplying the front. In 1944 its collective won in All-Union competition five times. Working under the conditions of the front line, the collective of the Belorussian railroad, whose chief was N. I. Krasnobayev, occupied first place three times.

The railroad collectives worked intensely: the Kuybyshev - chief B. P. Beshchev; South Ural, chief L. P. Mal'kevich; the Moscow-Ryazan', chief G. I. Kadagidze; Moscow-Donbas, chief Ye. F. Rudoy; Moscow Okrug, chief A. M. Vasil'yev. These railroads served as extremely important arteries connecting the deep rear of the country with the front. Their significance for /611
uninterrupted supply of the army, and for the normal functioning of the whole military economy, was exceptionally great.

River, sea and automobile transportation also performed important tasks in 1944. Their work, especially that of river and sea transportation, involved serious difficulties, which arose as the result of the fascist occupation. In all river steam navigation in the liberated territory, ship repairs and ship-building enterprises were found to have been put out of operation. In seven river basins 96 percent of the production space of the shops of ship repair plants had been destroyed. The Hitlerites sank or seized 4,280 passenger, cargo and towing steamships and auxiliary vessels of river transportation, and 4,029 towed vessels, destroyed 479 port and docking installations, installations of the White Sea - Baltic Canal and the Moscow - Volga Canal.

Restoration work and work to raise sunken vessels was conducted in river transportation in the liberated regions. River transportation workers of

the rear basins rendered considerable assistance in this, making parts and tools in their off-duty time.

River navigations were experiencing an acute shortage of ships. The production capacities of the ship repair plants were not great. There was a shortage of metal and workers, especially skilled workers. The creative initiative of the river transport workers played an important role in overcoming the difficulties that arose.

In 1944 front-line runs of tow convoys were widely used in navigation. The businesslike collaboration of ships' crews and dispatchers ensured ceaseless, rapid movement of the convoys. In August 1944 the oil vessel "Akademik Gubkin," completing the first through trip from Astrakhan' to Moscow, delivered fuel to the capital, the shipment of which would have taken ten railroad trains. Captains I. D. Yerofeyev, M. Ya. Knyazyev and P. V. Vorob'yev, the Leningrad crane operator N. K. Pimenov, brigade leader of the loaders of Kotlas port I. V. Dudko and many others became determined helpers of our army during the terrible days of the war.

In 1944 the river transportation workers fulfilled the plan of military shipments by 107.7 percent. However, not all available reserves were utilized in river transportation. In all in 1944 cargo shipments by river transportation somewhat decreased in comparison with 1943.

Maritime workers worked with great intensity. Far Eastern steamship navigation, the head of which was G. A. Mezentsev, worked most intensely. The ships of that navigation delivered cargos from abroad to the ports of the Far East along ocean communications. The Caspian merchant fleet - chief of navigation M. D. Ragimov - also played an important part. Oil and petroleum products were shipped over the Caspian from Baku and Makhachkaly to the Volga, and a transport link between the republics of the Trans-Caucasus and Central Asia was provided as well. The ships of the Northern sea navigation, the head of which was N. V. Novikov, delivered cargos under difficult conditions to the ports of Murmansk and Arkhangel'sk. Vessels were unloaded by high-speed methods in Vladivostok, Arkhangel'sk, Baku, and Krasnovodsk.

In spite of the fact that in 1944 work was carried out to raise sunken vessels, build the fleet, and also to restore the port installations and ship repair bases, the share of the Baltic, Black Sea and Azov merchant fleets in the total volume of shipments by sea in the country still remained negligible.

Automobile transportation also met great difficulties. The number of automobiles in the national economy (not including the army) was its smallest by the start of 1944 for the whole period of the war. But during that year the fleet of trucks considerably increased. Thanks to its improved utilization the freight turnover of automobile transportation increased sharply for the first time during the years of the war.

During the period of the rapid advance of the Soviet forces, when the /612
restoration of railroads lagged behind the rate of the advance, automobile transportation subordinated to the front or from the Reserve of Headquarters of the Supreme High Command was widely used.

In 1944 the total volume of shipments by the Civilian Air Force increased twofold in comparison with 1943.

Thus the growing military economy, the vast scale of the operations of the Armed Forces and the expansion of the front of restoration work made new demands on transportation in 1944, especially railroad transportation. The Communist Party and the Soviet government concentrated the efforts of the many-thousands-strong army of transportation workers on resolving three main problems: providing military shipments, serving enterprises of heavy industry and carrying out restoration work in the entire liberated territory. The successful realization of these tasks played an important role in the Soviet peoples' achievement of new victories at the front and in the rear in 1944.

5. Living conditions of the Soviet people.

The war sharply lowered the standard of living of the population. Tens of thousands of villages, thousands of workmen's settlements and cities were destroyed by the German fascists, and millions of people were left without shelter, especially in regions subjected to occupation. Those workers who were forced by circumstances to evacuate from their homes also had difficult lives. The supply of provisions and consumer goods to the population was strictly regulated by a ration system. Insufficient food products were brought to the kolkhoz markets, and their prices were high.

Under the rigorous conditions of a grim war, when all forces and resources had to be directed above all toward completing military tasks, satisfying the most urgent needs of the people involved enormous difficulties. The Communist Party did everything possible to improve the peoples' life. Questions of supplying the population with provisions and essential consumer goods, and maximal expansion of production in the light and food industries were constantly in the center of the Party's attention. Direct

control of those extremely important sectors of the military economy was effected by A. N. Kosygin and A. I. Mikoyan. The Party showed that, as when resolving other basic problems of wartime, it was essential to guide the enthusiasm and initiative of the working class, the kolkhoz peasantry and the intelligentsia toward the struggle to satisfy the material needs of the people.

Thanks to the constant concern of the Party and Soviet authority, in 1944 a certain, although small, improvement was achieved in the living conditions of the workers.

Centralized market stocks of food products arose: cereals, cooked meats, canned meat and fish, fish, sugar, eggs, as well as non-food wares such as cotton fabric, leather, felt and rubber footwear, and soap. However, at the same time demand considerably increased. It was necessary to send the greater part of the goods to the regions liberated from the occupiers, where as the result of the Hitlerites' sway industry had been destroyed and agriculture ruined, and where the inhabitants lacked the most essential items. It is indicative that the total number of people being supplied by the government with bread increased by 9 percent from December 1943 to December 1944, and the number of people supplied with food products according /613
to city norms by 36 percent.[1]

Subsidiary farms at enterprises were an essential supplement to centralized stocks of provisions. In 1944 in the system of worker's supply of enterprises there were 30,000 subsidiary farms with a cultivated area of up to 2 million hectares and a considerable quantity of livestock. According to the data of only 30 people's commissariats, in the subsidiary plots in 1944 approximately 4.4 million tons of potatoes and almost 10,000 tons of meat, milk and other products were obtained.[2] The enterprises of the People's

---

[1] Acc. to data of the CSD USSR. IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #9605, pp. 441, 442.

[2] CA AUCCLU. Steographic report of XIII Plenum of AUCCLU, col. 1, div. 2, p. 74.

Commissariat of Ammunition, for example, satisfied the demand of workers and employees for potatoes by 40 percent and for vegetables by 60 percent through its own source of provisions.[1]

Local Party, labor union and economic organizations devoted their particular attention to improving the public's diet. In 1944 the turnover of public eating establishments comprised 25 percent of all retail commodity circulation, while in 1940 it was only 13 percent. At the majority of industrial enterprises up to 75-90 percent of the workers' and employees' food coupons were "torn off" through cafeterias and large mechanized canteens. Special cafeterias served approximately 900,000 children who needed a nourishing diet.

With the help of the consumers themselves Party and Soviet organizations established control over the consumption of food products and industrial goods. The State Defense Committee instructed the labor unions to watch the operators of shops and public eating establishments assiduously. The activity of the labor unions in that direction was particularly widely developed after the XIIth Plenum of the AUCCLU, which was held March 10-15, 1944. The Plenum passed a resolution to intensify public supervision by the labor unions of the operation of cafeterias, stores and subsidiary farms. More and more workers were enlisted for that supervision. For example, over 2,000 public controllers took part in the check organized by the CC of the Union of Ammunition Industry Workers.[2]

Individual and collective plots were a great help in improving the diet of workers and employees. The Communist Party and Soviet government attached enormous importance to developing truck farming. In February 1944 the CPC USSR passed a resolution "On measures for the further development and improvement of individual and collective vegetable gardening by workers and employees," which required local organizations to increase the area of

---

[1] CA AUCCLU. Stenographic report of XIII Plenum AUCCLU, col. 99, inv. 15, div. 1 for 1945, p. 42.

[2] Ibid, p. 52.

land cultivated as vegetable gardens by no less than 20 percent in comparison with 1943. The XII Plenum of the AUCCLU indicated to factory and plant local committees the necessity of further developing vegetable gardening. Party, Komsomol and labor union organizations intensified their organizational work. Workers, employees, the families of soldiers at the front, and invalids of the Patriotic War were helped to obtain potato and vegetable seeds and garden tools. Thanks to all of this, approximately 16,500,000 workers and employees took part in the cultivation of individual and collective vegetable gardens in 1944 as opposed to 11,900,000 in the previous year. Vegetable and melon crops and potatoes occupied 1,088,800 hectares, as opposed to 719,500 in 1943.[1]

In 1944 as the result of increasing the gross harvest of the most important agricultural crops and a certain improvement in the state of animal husbandry more food products appeared at city kolkhoz markets. This promoted a drop in market prices. On the average prices on all foodstuffs at city kolkhoz markets decreased by 18 percent in comparison with 1943. Prices/614 especially decreased on potatoes, vegetables, meat and fat, milk and dairy products.[2]

The Party and government devoted particular attention to improving the living conditions of workers and employees of heavy and war industry. With this purpose, in some leading branches of industry wages were increased and new incentive forms of payment for work were introduced. By the end of 1944 wages had increased by over one-and-one-half times at enterprises of the People's Commissariats of Armaments, Ammunition and Heavy Machine Engineering in comparison with 1940, and by 1.7 times in the coal industry. The workers began to be better supplied with protective garments and shoes. The measures of the Party and government in production training and improving the workers' skill level also promoted the increase of their wages.

---

[1] Acc. to data of CSD USSR. IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #9605, p. 310.

[2] Ibid, p. 435.

The Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on July 8, 1944 was permeated with the exceptional concern of the Communist Party for families with many children and for the protection of motherhood and childhood. The Soviet government increased allowances to mothers with many children, expanded the system of kindergartens and nursery schools, doubled the ration of provisions for nursing mothers, decreased by one-half the cost of using nursery schools and kindergartens, and increased the production of childrens' clothing and shoes. Allowances to mothers upon the birth of their third and every subsequent child were established by the decree, while previously allowances had begun upon the birth of the seventh child.

The peoples' living conditions improved due to the growth not only of funds for personal consumption, but of public funds as well. Of the state budget in 1944, 51.3 billion rubles were spent on social and cultural needs (37.7 billion rubles in 1943), which included 20.7 billion rubles on education (13.2 billion in 1943), and 10.2 billion rubles on public health and physical culture (8.5 billion rubles in 1943).[1]

Noticeable shifts occurred in the construction of housing. While in 1943 primarily barracks with a system of rooms were put in operation, by 1944 capital housing construction was characteristic. In that year state and cooperative organizations (not including kolkhozes) as well as the urban population constructed housing with a total area of 15.7 square meters as opposed to 10.5 million square meters in 1943.[2] Yet the housing situation remained very serious. Some workers and employees were housed in uncomfortable dormitories or even in mud huts.

Much was done to ease working conditions for Soviet people. In 1944 approximately 300 million rubles were spent to introduce safety methods. At plants ventilation was renovated or newly established, harmful and labor-intensive tasks were mechanized, and safety methods and production sanitation

---

[1] Acc. to data of the CSD USSR. IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #9605, p. 457.

[2] Ibid, p. 382.

were improved. The improvement of sanitation of working conditions and a decrease in occupational injuries were promoted to a considerable degree by the activity of hundreds of thousands of workers - active participants in public reviews to protect labor and safety methods. In all the number of incidents of occupational injuries in industry decreased by 13.8 percent in 1944 in comparison with the previous year.

The number of rest homes and sanatoria for workers and employees who especially needed to restore their strength or treat an illness, which had been essentially closed during the first years of the war, was increased. While in 1943 the labor unions had 61 therapeutic institutions, they had 242 in 1944. During the years of the war, largely at defense enterprises, /615 over 340 night sanatoria were created. There workers and employees were able to receive treatment without interrupting work.[1]

The Communist Party and Soviet government rendered great assistance to the families of soldiers at the front and to war invalids. In 1944 almost 13 billion rubles in all were paidout only as monthly allowances and pensions.[2] In that year the activity of directorates and divisions for state support and living arrangements of the families of servicemen, which were formed as part of local executive committees and republic Soviet People's Commissariats, was already giving good results. The Party organizations took great care to see that every family with a right to an allowance or pension received it. The colleagues of executive committee divisions on state support of servicemens' families and the numerous active members conducted continual rounds of homes. Many families who for some reason had not received the allowances to which they were entitled had them assigned and issued for the entire period, from the day of the breadwinner's conscription into the army. In the regions that had been subjected to occupation payment of allowances and pensions was renewed from the moment of their liberation. For example, in the Ukrainian SSR in 1944 the families of members of the armed forces of the rank of private,

---

[1] CA AUCCLU. Stenographic report of XIII Plenum of the AUCCLU, col. 1, div. 2, p. 77.

[2] IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #3107, p. 1.

sergeant, or sergeant-major were paid 1,419,000 rubles in allowances alone, not counting pensions to families of soldiers who had been killed.[1]

The numerous privileges established by the government also promoted the improvement in the material situation of the families of soldiers, officers, partisans and invalids of the Patriotic War. Reduced tax rates and decreased mandatory delivery of agricultural products to the government, housing and other privileges amounted to many millions of rubles. In 1944 the privileges were expanded. In regions liberated from occupation after October 1, 1942 local executive committees were given the right to free the members of servicemen's families from taxes fully or partially in 1944. In the same regions lumber was supplied free for restoration of housing and farm buildings. Reduced tax rates alone allowed to the families of soldiers comprised 11,716,000 rubles.[2]

An extremely important condition in improving the standard of living of the members of soldiers' families was their finding work. This in turn promoted the reinforcement of the labor force of industry and agriculture. As the result of the organizational work of Party and Soviet organs in 1944 in the RSFSR over 1,400,000 able-bodied members of the families of soldiers at the front received training and permanent work at plants and factories, in kolkhozes and sovkhozes.

The organization of specialized employment of invalids of the Patriotic War was improved. The number of invalids returning to active work by the end of 1944 rose to 906,973 people, as opposed to 562,391 at the beginning of the year.[3] The government established light-duty labor conditions for them, offering a number of advantages. Those who were unable to work in production were provided with work at home. In this way the Soviet people surrounded with attention former soldiers who were continuing to serve the Motherland by their labor. In many cases the invalids' wages plus their pensions exceeded their prewar wages.

---

[1] IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #648, p. 2.

[2] Ibid, Inv. #3107, p. 2.

[3] Archive of the Ministry of Social Maintenance RSFSR, 1944, inv. 10, div. 9, p. 4.

The Soviet government displayed the greatest concern for children. By the beginning of the 1943-1944 school year the number of pupils in primary, seven-year and secondary schools, including schools in the liberated regions, was 17,966,000 persons as opposed to 14,036,000 at the beginning of the 1942-43 school year. There were considerably more kindergartens and children's homes. While in 1943 398,000 children were being raised in children's homes, /616 in 1944 the number of pupils grew to 534,000.[1] The government found resources to improve children's diet, and to supply them with clothing and shoes, in every way. The Soviet public also did much for children. Workers of enterprises producing items of national consumption frequently stayed after the working day to manufacture children's shoes and clothing above plan. To supplement the state children's institutions a network of children's homes was created, supported by the resources of the collectives of enterprises, kolkhozes, labor unions and the Komsomol. The kolkhozes of the Russian Federation had organized 231 children's homes by the middle of 1944. In the Armenian SSR the kolkhoz women of the settlement of Leyva in the Kafan district displayed remarkable initiative. They sowed five hectares of land over plan with food crops in order to use their harvest for free breakfasts for the children of soldiers at the front. The youth of other districts followed their example.

The collectives of many enterprises opened special cafeterias for the children of soldiers at the front. In cafeterias and kitchens organized by the kolkhozes 124,000 children were fed free twice a day. In the summer of 1944 children's playgrounds served 2,500,000 children. On the resources of the Komsomol - the initiator of many valuable undertakings - health resorts were created at which the children of soldiers rested. Tens of thousands of Soviet families took in children who had been left without parents, surrounding them with kindness and concern.

The workers of our Motherland fervently supported the measures directed toward helping the families of soldiers at the front. Thus, for instance, all cities of the country took up the initiative, approved by the Soviet

[1] Acc. to data of the CSD USSR. IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #9605, pp. 447, 448.

People's Commissar of the RSFSR, of the residents of Sverdlov, who in the summer of 1944 organized a "working Sunday of help to the families of soldiers at the front." Millions of Soviet people took part in such Sundays. They conveyed and delivered to the families of front-line soldiers and invalids 1,161,000 cubic meters of firewood, repaired 164,679 apartments and 10,484 outbuildings, and produced children's clothing and shoes and household goods above plan. Several tens of millions of rubles received for the performance of the work were given by the participants to the fund to help the families of soldiers.

From the second half of 1943 and before the beginning of 1945 in the RSFSR the families of servicemen were supplied from stocks created by men and women of the kolkhozes with over 19 million additional poods of food products; 564,000 families received cows, heifers, and goats; and over 49 million poods of various types of fodder for livestock were issued to the farms of soldiers' families.[1]

No less than material help, the families of front-line soldiers and invalids sometimes needed a friendly word, good advice or simple, sincere concern at a difficult time, support in the grief that had befallen them. The constant everyday services rendered to them by Komsomol-youth and Timurov detachments, brigades and posts were invaluable. The Komsomol members, young people, schoolchildren, full of love for their Homeland and its defenders, surrounded the families of soldiers with the most touching attention and concern - they chopped wood, cleaned rooms, did shopping, cared for infants and the sick, and worked in vegetable gardens. People of all ages, of all professions and occupations, helped them constantly. This patriotic movement can rightly be regarded as a clear testimony to the unbreakable link between the army and the people, to the unity of the rear and the front.

---

[1] See "Krasnoarmeyets," 1945, No. 9, p. 3.

The concern of the Motherland for the families of front-line soldiers inspired the Soviet fighters to new feats of arms. Here are two characteristic excerpts from the letters of soldiers at the front to the Directorate of State Maintenance and living conditions of the families of servicement, attached to the Soviet People's Commissariat of the RSFSR, "... I cannot restrain myself," one of them read, "from writing a response to the concern /617
for my family... That concern inspires me to new deeds in the defeat of the German fascist invaders. I will be easy in my mind that my family are provided with everything they need..."[1] Here is an excerpt from another letter in response to the notice from the same Directorate of the support given to the families of the soldiers at the front: "...When I read that letter I said to my comrades, this is how concerned the Party and government are about us - and I read your letter to the whole detachment... From this comes our victory over the enemy, because you know that the Party and government will not wrong your family and will always help them."[2]

In tens of thousands of such letters was found a clear confirmation of V. I. Lenin's idea that any step taken by the rear to help the front improves the mood of the Red Army's soldiers, increases the battleworthiness of the Red Army, and enhances its offensive might.

---

[1] IML. Docs. and Maters. of the Dept. of Hist. of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #6099, p. 1.

[2] Ibid, Inv. #6098, p. 1.

6. The restoration of organs of Soviet authority and the national economy in the liberated territory.

The resolution passed in August 1943 by the CC AUCP(b) and the CPC USSR on the restoration of the national economy in the liberated regions was, for the most part, successfully fulfilled.

The total expulsion of the fascist invaders from the bounds of the Soviet Union made it possible in 1944 to begin restoration work in the entire territory that had been subjected to occupation. Plants and factories that rose from the ruins, and millions of new hectares of cultivated land, became an important source for increasing the economic and defensive might of the country. For the Soviet people who had been delivered from the fascist yoke the rebirth of the economy meant a long-awaited return to working life.

An extremely important condition of the successful restoration of the Soviet order and the national economy in the territory liberated from the enemy was the formation of Party and Soviet authorities and public worker's organizations. In this the main problem was the selection, training and correct distribution of cadres. In resolving it it was necessary to encounter great difficulties, above all the shortage of management workers.

Many Party and Soviet workers had gone to the front. In the Ukrainian and Belorussian SSR, in the Baltic republics and a number of regions of the RSFSR a large number of Party and Soviet activists had been left for underground work in the enemy's rear and to organize Party detachments. Many of them had been tortured in the Gestapo's cells, had perished heroically in battle, or were missing in action. New cadres were forged in the heat of battle with the fascist invaders. However, that reinforcement did not make up the losses that had been borne. By the time of liberation of the Soviet regions and republics their Party organizations were very scanty. For example, in the largest industrial region of the Ukraine, the Stalin (now Donetsk) region, before the war there had been 83,000 Communists, but in April 1944 there were only 15,000. This difference was felt particularly acutely at industrial enterprises. In the prewar period at the Makeyev metallurgical plant 1,500 Communists had worked, including approximately one thousand people who worked directly on the machines. But in the first six months of 1944 there were only 70 Communists at the plant. The same was also observed in other union republics that had been subjected to enemy occupation. In the Belorussian SSR on January 1, 1945 there were over 29,500 Communists, which comprised only 39.3 percent of their prewar number. In the Lithuanian republic at the end of November 1944 there were 2,869 Communists, or 60.5 percent in comparison with the prewar period.[1] /618

The Party organizations had also undergone considerable qualitative changes. Thus, for example, of the Communists of the Belorussian republic

[1] CPA IML, col. 17, inv. 2, div. 152, p. 20; inv. 3, div. 155, p. 79.

35.8 percent of the Party members and 85 percent of the candidates were accepted into the ranksof the AUCP(b) during the years of the Great Patriotic War. In the Lithuanian republic in 1944 approximately 20 percent young Communists were listed on the rolls in the Party organizations.[1]

Communists entering the Party during the years of the war, undergoing harsh experiences in the enemy's rear, proved their devotion to the Party and people with deeds. However, they needed to expand their political and cultural outlook and to acquire practical experience of party work. Foreseeing the need for this, as early as 1943 the AUCP(b) instructed the CC of the union republic Communist Parties to begin the selection and training of cadres for republic, regional and district sections of the Party and state apparatus of liberated Soviet territory.

Behind the Red Army, previously trained leading workers of regional and district organizations arrived in the liberated territory of the Soviet republics. In the new places it was essential above all to form organs of state administration. The most active Party members and non-members were enlisted to perform this extremely important political task. The initial results of the selection of cadres can be judged at least by the fact that in June 1944 in six regions of the Ukrainian SSR - the Donetsk, Voroshilovgrad (now Luganskl), Zaporzh'ye, Kirovograd, Vinnitsa and Volynsk regions - 8,500 people had already been nominated for leading Party, Soviet and economic work, which comprised approximately 70 percent of the needs for that type of cadre.[2] At the same time a network of Party organizations was developed.

For the most part, participants in the Party underground and the partisan movement, people who had been seasoned in battles with the enemy, were nominated for leading posts. In the Belorussian republic Party and Soviet organs were staffed by 65 percent with individuals who had been in the

---

[1] CPA IML, pp. 84-86; inv. 2, div. 888a, p. 51.

[2] Ibid, inv. 8, div. 1635, p. 75.

underground and in partisan detachments during the years of the war. The CC AUCP(b) rendered significant help to the Ukrainian, Belorussian and other republics, sending Communists there who had worked in those republics previously and evacuated in connection with the war in the eastern regions. By the end of 1943 approximately 9,000 persons had already been sent to the Ukraine.[1] One thousand six hundred and forty Communists had arrived in Belorussia in 1944.[2]

The restoration of labor unions and Komsomol organizations was successfully carried out under the guidance of the Party. In 1944 in the Ukraine 22 republic and 325 regional committees of labor unions were re-formed or newly organized, as well as 11,000 professional organizations at factories, plants, and construction sites, in coal and ore mines, at MTS and sovkhozes, in transportation, in institutions, schools, colleges and universities. Approximately 100,000 public-spirited people were selected for the labor union organs. In just one labor union of ferrous metallurgical workers of the South 8,000 people became members of plant and shop committees and group organizers. In the liberated territory of Belorussia 23 republic and 10 regional labor union committees, and 900 factory-workshop and district labor union committees, began operation in 1944.[3] The labor organizations began vigorous activity to mobilize the workers, to restore the ruined cities and villages as rapidly as possible. /619

The Komsomol organizations that were being restored rendered considerable assistance to the Party, conducting work among young people. In the Ukraine in the first months after liberation there were only 9,900 primary Komsomol organizations uniting 36,200 members of the AULCUY. However, even by April 1944 there were 17,500 primary Komsomol organizations, the composition of which included 197,000 Komsomol members, and 287,900 members by the end of the year. In the Belorussian SSR by the end of the year there were 6,700 AULCUY organizations.[4]

---

[1] Outline of the History of the Communist Party of the Ukraine. Kiev, Gospolitizdat UkrSSR, 1961, p. 523.

[2] Party Archives of the Institute of Party History of the CC CP of Belorussia, col. 4, inv. 29, it. 93, div. 518, p. 29; it. 11, div. 84, p. 39.

[3] CA AUCCLU, col. 1, div. 7, p. 6; div. 6, p. 28.

[4] Archives of the CC AULCUY. Materials for the report of the CC AULCUY to the XI Session of the Komsomol, p. 109.

The greatest difficulties in the restoration of Party, Soviet and economic organs were found in the western regions of the Ukraine and Belorussia, and also in the Baltic republics. Soviet authority there had been declared only one to one and a half years before the war. In such a short time it was found to be impossible to prepare and educate a sufficient number of experienced Party and Soviet cadres from the local population. During the years of the war many people with progressive views were exterminated by the occupiers. Agents of German fascism - Ukrainian, Belorussian, Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian bourgeois nationalists - also caused no little evil after the expulsion of the Hitlerite invaders from the bounds of our country. These base traitors to our Motherland made it their goal to frustrate the restoration of theSoviet government and social order. They organized armed bandit groups, which frightened the local residents and killed Soviet and Party workers.[1]

Thus from the first days of the liberation of these regions it was necessary for the Party and Soviet organs to work under conditions of an intensified class struggle, and of the active resistance of the kulaks and reactionary bourgeois-nationalist elements to all of the Soviet authorities' measures. Under the complex political circumstances it was especially essential to rally a broad segment of the most active non-Party members around the Party organizations. Above all, it was necessary to provide Party and Soviet organs with skilled cadres.

With this purpose, on August 29, 1944 the CC CP(b) of the Ukraine obliged the obkoms of the eastern regions of the republic to select and send to the western regions 500 Party and Soviet workers. It was proposed that the republic people's commissariats send 2,177 people there. Furthermore, in October the CC CP(b) Ukr. sent over 4,000 leading workers to those regions.[2] Thus approximately 7,000 people were sent to the western regions of the republic.

---

[1] The struggle with bourgeois-nationalist bands is briefly elucidated in Chapters 3, 7 and 12.

[2] CPA UML, col. 17, inv. 2, div. 1640, pp. 45, 56.

Much was done to reinforce the organs of the Soviet authorities in the Latvian SSR. There 127 primary Party and 328 Komsomol organizations were formed. Attached to the local Soviets, 760 constantly active commissions arose, numbering approximately 3,500 active members. 815 former partisans arrived in provinces and volosts for crucial Party and Soviet work.[1] For the same work 650 workers and peasants who had previously studied in Party-Soviet classes arrived. On CC AUCP(b) passes 6,116 Party, Soviet, economic, Komsomol, labor union and other workers arrived in Lithuania. Furthermore, 2,365 people returned from evacuation. As a result, in November 1944 People's Commissariats and other central institutions in the Lithuanian SSR were staffed to 55 percent, city and provincial Party committees to 50-60 percent, and city and provincial executive committees of Soviets to 75 percent.[2] Similar measures were conducted in the Estonian, Moldavian and Karelo-Finnish republics. /620

The Central Committee of the Party recommended that the Party organs of the union republics enlist for leadership tested local people who were well acquainted with the economy and culture of the given republic and the national characteristics of the population's life. To render constant assistance to the Lithuanian, Latvian, Estonian and Moldavian republics in training local national cadres, in reinforcing Party and Soviet organizations and increasing their political activity, in a resolution of November 11, 1944 the Central Committee of the Party formed Bureaus of the CC AUCP(b) in those republics.[3] Major Party workers were set at their head. Thus, for instance, the Bureau of the CC AUCP(b) for Lithuania was led by M. A. Suslov. Under his leadership extremely important measures were conducted for the restoration of industry and agriculture and for the ideological-political education of Communists and all workers of the republic. The Bureau of the CC AUCP(b) in the Baltic republics played a large part in strengthening the links between the Lithuanian, Latvian, and Estonian peoples and all of the peoples of the Soviet Union.

---

[1] CPA IML, col. 17, inv.2, div. 856, p. 47.

[2] Ibid, div. 985, pp. 29, 50.

[3] Ibid, div. 886, p. 195.

Sending workers from other republics, krays, and regions to the liberated areas and boldly promoting local cadres, the Party ensured the leadership of the main sectors of Party, Soviet and economic construction. Provincial Party organizations mobilized Communists and all workers for the successful resolution of urgent economic tasks. Questions of the restoration of the national economy in the liberated regions were constantly discussed at Plenums of the CC of the Communist Parties of the union republics and at kraykoms, obkoms, gorkoms and raykoms of the Party. At the end of May 1944 a Plenum of the CC CO(b) of the Ukraine was held. It met at the time when over three-quarters of the territory of the Ukraine had been liberated from the German fascist invaders. The Plenum passed an important resolution on the questions of restoring the republic's economy and expressed deep certainty that the Communists of the Ukraine would do everything to "win total victory over the enemy, and for the restoration and further growth of the Soviet Ukraine's national economy."[1] In June a meeting of the most active Party, Soviet and economic workers of the Donetsk region was held. At the meeting the First Secretary of the CC CP(b) Ukr, N. S. Khrushchev, gave a speech calling upon miners, engineers and other technical workers, and Party organizations to utilize all reserves to increase coal output and the most rapid possible restoration of the coal industry. "... Our country," he said, "our Red Army, must have more and more metal, and in order to supply more metal, as much as coal as possible must be supplied."[2]

At the end of 1944 and the beginning of 1945 the tasks of Party organizations in liquidating the consequences of the fascist occupation were also considered at the Plenums of the Central Committees of the Communist Parties of Belorussia, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. The Plenum of the CC CP(b) of Belorussia called upon Party, Soviet and economic organizations to accelerate the restoration of the industrial enterprises that were essential to serve the front and the national economy of the republic.

---

[1] "Pravda Ukrainy," 28 May 1944.

[2] "Pravda Ukrainy," 18 June 1944.

Thus, questions of restoring the national economy in regions liberated from occupation were in the center of the Party organizations' attention throughout 1944.

The State Defense Committee concentrated efforts and material resources on performing the most important tasks, established priorities for restoration, scheduled times for plants, factories, coal and ore mines, and power plants to be put into operation, and rendered essential assistance to the local Party, Soviet and economic organizations. /621

On the resolution of the State Defense Committee restoration was also undertaken of such major plants of the South as the Taganrog metal and Mariupol' pipe rolling plants. The SDC marked the exceptional significance of the organization there of production of pipes for the oil industry.[1] At the beginning of 1944 resolutions were passed to restore several mechanical engineering enterprises, specifically the Novo-Kramatorskiy heavy machine engineering plant, the Kharkov group of machine tool manufacturing plants and the Gomel' machine tool manufacturing plant. In May the State Defense Committee developed measures to put into operation mechanical engineering plants and repair shops of the People's Commissariat of Ferrous Metallurgy enterprises in the South as bases to supply spare parts and backup equipment for ferrous metallurgical enterprises. An extensive program was outlined in the region of restoration of ruined plants and the erection of new ones for production of construction materials in the Ukrainian and Belorussian SSR and the Voronezh and Orlov regions.

The restoration of the Donbass, which was begun a year before, was an extremely important national economic task in 1944. Retreating under the blows of the Red Army, the occupiers destroyed coal mines, plants, and power plants, and left piles of ash and stone on the sites of once flourishing mining settlements. Hundreds of millions of cubic meters of water accumulated in the mines. In some of them pools formed with a volume of up to 25

[1] IML. Documents and Materials of the Department of History of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #17221, p. 2.

million cubic feet of water. Underground mine shafts that were long submerged collapsed in places. The majority of shafts and underground passages had been altered by the Hitlerites to German railroad gauge, and the rolling stock had been stolen or blown up.

At the beginning of the restoration work the main difficulty was the lack of electrical energy. The power plants that had previously supplied the Donbass with energy had either been evacuated or destroyed. Only the "Artemgres" power plant remained in operation. Therefore coal was extracted only in shallow mines and brought up by hand. As small power plants were constructed and steam boilers, locomobiles, and winches were repaired, often assembled from parts of mutilated machines and mechanisms, the mines switched to raising the coal by mechanical hauling. The shortage of construction materials was felt acutely. The labor force was inadequate. The population, robbed by the fascist invaders, lacked the most essential items. Yet even under these incredibly difficult conditions, extraction of coal in the Donbass increased sevenfold from May 1943 to May 1944.[1]

In June 1944 the State Defense Committee passed a resolution "On further measures to restore the coal industry of the Donbass to supply ferrous metallurgy, railroad transportation, power plants and the war industry of the South with coal." In it the SDC presented the results of the first months of the Donbass' restoration and outlined an extensive program for further work to increase the coal yield. "The State Defense Committee," read the resolution, "directs the attention of Party, Soviet and economic organizations to the fact that the restoration of the coal industry of the Donbass, especially of mines producing coking coal, is a primary state task, without the completion of which the restoration of ferrous metallurgy, all industry, railroad transportation and power plants in the South is unthinkable. Therefore the restoration of the coal industry of the Donbass should be /622
conducted first of all, before other branches of industry..."[2]

---

[1] See N. Voznesenskiy. The War Economy of the USSR during the Patriotic War. M., Gospolitizdat, 1947, p. 60.

[2] IML. Documents and Materials of the Department of History of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #17269, pp. 1-2.

The State Defense Committee set itself the task of accelerating the putting into operation of main and middle mines in the Donbass, and especially of those in which coal for coking was extracted. According to an SDC resolution the control of restoration work was entrusted to the People's Commissar of the Coal Industry, V. V. Vakhrushev, the Chairman of the Soviet People's Commissariat N. S. Khrushchev, the Secretaries of the Party obkoms and regional executive committee chairmen: L. G. Mel'nikov and A. I. Struyev of the Donetsk region, A. I. Gayevov and I. S. Oreshko of the Lugansk region, and B. A. Dvinskiy and I. P. Kiparenko of the Rostov region. Concrete tasks to organize the restoration work and put mines into operation were set before the managers of concerns - A. F. Zasyad'ko, K. I. Pochenkov, K. K. Kartashev, the manager of "Donbassshakhtostroy" A. T. Kartoziy - and the managers of trusts and the heads of mines.[1] In overcoming difficulties connected with the regeneration of the Donbass the Party rested on the creative initiative of the masses, of front-rank workers.

One of the most acute problems was the inadquate material and technical supply of the coal industry. To restore the mines, various equipment was required, from shovels and picks to complex mining mechanisms. There was a great shortage of supports, the supply of which from distant areas of the country took up considerable time and raised the cost of restoration work. Front-rank Donetsk miners proposed that the timbers shipped in be replaced with local material. This initiative, supported by the most active Party and economic workers, was widely popularized in the Donbass. In the mines of the "Dzerzhinsk-ugol'" trust brick, concrete and reinforced concrete blocks began to be used instead of timber supports. A local base was created to produce the substitutes - brick plants were built and quarries were developed. Special brigades manufactured concrete and reinforced concrete blocks. The use of substitutes made it possible to accelerate the opening of mines, decrease the expenditure of timber and free railroad transportation from long-distance shipments. In the mines of the "Buddenov-ugol'" trust and certain others metal supports came into use for mining, the metal for which was gathered with the help of the local population.

---

[1] IML. Documents and Materials of the Department of History of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #17269, pp. 1-2.

On the initiative of the Makeyev miners in February 1944 a collection of rationalizing proposals was made among the coal miners of the Donbass. By the end of the year 1,420 such proposals had been submitted. The savings from their implementation in production was 5,800,000 rubles that year.[1] For example, the engineer V. R. Mogila contributed a valuable proposal on reconstruction of a bilge pump. Pumping the water from mines destroyed by the enemy was no easy matter. Engineer Mogila perfected a pump that made it possible to lower 300-cubic instead of 150-cubic pumps into the mines. This accelerated the evacuation of the water and made it possible to save over a million rubles.

A bold, innovative proposal, which considerably increased the speed of restoration work, was applied at mine No. 4-5, the "Nikitovka," in the Gorlovskiy district. Previously when assembling a 40-meter metal headframe all work in the mine shaft had stopped for one and a half months. To avoid this, at the "Nikitovka" it was decided to assemble the headframe in a separate area. When the headframe had been assembled it was raised with supports and winches, then set up in previously prepared reinforced concrete housings. Raising the headframe took only 18 hours. The collective speeded up restoration work by one and a half months.

The Socialist competition of the miners, which involved three-quarters /623
of all workers, was a powerful factor in the regeneration of the Donbass. The competitors included 40,600 front line production workers, including 5,745 "Masters of coal during the Patriotic War," who had overfulfilled production norms by over one and a half times.[2] In the course of the competition the front-rank coal workers achieved record results.

Women played a major part in the restoration of the Donbass. In March 1944 in Lugansk a regional assembly of front-rank women miners was held, at which their experience was generalized. The participants in the assembly

---

[1] According to data of the CSD USSR. IML. Documents and Materials of the Department of History of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #16099, p. 9.

[2] CA AUCCLU, col. 177, div. 4, p. 11.

called on the women of the region to come to the mines, master mining occupations and help in the restoration of the coal industry. Soviet working women widely responded to this call. Many women, having mastered mining occupations, considerably overfulfilled their norms. Thus, for example, the wives of soldiers at the front, A. A. Andrienko and A. D. Stadnikova (at the "Krasnyak" mine of the Uspensk mining directorate), having acquired skills as cutters, won by their highly productive work the honorary title "Master of coal during the Patriotic War."

The Party and Komsomol organizations of the Ukraine and the entire country developed great political and organizational activity to enlist youth, especially rural youth, to work in the mines. By May 1, 1944, 43,500 young patriots had arrived in the Donbass, including 11,600 Komsomol members. The young people achieved remarkable success. They completely restored 18 coal mines, which were given the name of "Komsomol mines." During their spare time the Komsomol members and young people restored 130 dormitories, 150 clubs, 180 recreation and reading rooms, and many other buildings.

Workers from many republics and regions actively participated in the restoration of the Donbass. The miners of the Podmoskovskoye and Kuznetsk coal basins, workers of Moscow and other industrial centers of the Russian Federation worked in their spare time, and with the means that they earned sent essential materials to the Donetsk miners for the restoration of enterprises, housing and cultural and educational institutions. The workers of the Chelyabinsk region, having undertaken to sponsor the ferrous metallurgical plants of the Donbass that were undergoing restoration, sent approximately 300 freight cars there with various materials, equipment and tools. The Belorussian people sent 12,000 carloads of support timbers to the Donbass.

As early as 1943 the All-Union Lenin Communist Union of Youth undertook the sponsorship of the coal industry of the Donbass on the initiation of Moscow and Tula Komsomol members. Twenty-six regional, kray and republic

Komsomol organizations helped the Donetsk workers with manpower, equipment, tools and building materials. Many Komsomol members prepared equipment and materials for the sponsored mines in their spare time. The organizations of the AULCUY of the industrial regions took unremitting care to see that the SDC resolution on sending equipment unusued by the People's Commissariats to the Donbass was carried out. By April 1944 over 500 carloads of equipment, tools and various materials had been sent there.

The restoration of the Donetsk basin became a national cause. Thanks to that the rate of restoration work exceeded the rate of restoration of the Donbass after the Civil War by 7-8 times. This was a major victory on the economic front.

In addition to the coal industry, work was also developed on a wide front in other leading branches of industry in the Ukraine. Great efforts and resources were devoted to the restoration of the ferrous metallurgical plants of the Krivoy Rog iron mining basin. That was the second most important task for the Ukraine in 1944 after the restoration of the Donbass. On a resolution of the State Defense Committee, engineers who had worked there previously returned to the mines of Krivoy Rog. Party, Soviet and military organs were /624 forbidden to conduct any mobilization of personnel, automobile transportation or materials used in the Krivoy Rog basin. The workers of the basin were supplied with industrial goods and foodstuffs according to the higher norms established for workers and specialists of the Donbass.

As in the coal industry, in the iron-ore mines and ferrous metallurgical enterprises the creative initiative of workers, engineers and employees developed rapidly. At assemblies of front-rank production workers unanimous resolutions were passed on the total fulfillment of the state plan for restoration work. The workers and specialists assumed the obligation to put the country's most important industrial targets into operation ahead of schedule.

On the initiative of the collective of the Yenakiyevo plant All-Union Socialist competition was begun to restore ferrous metallurgical enterprises.

The workers, engineers and other technical workers displayed steadfastness and persistence in restoring their native plants. Machines were assembled from parts of damaged equipment. Large scale constructions that had been deformed in explosions and fires were frequently corrected on the spot without disassembly.

At the plant named for Petrovskiy, for example, the workers and engineers set up a metal structure weighing 400 tons without disassembly. Three open hearth furnaces of the plant named for Il'yich produced steel 20-30 days earlier than called for by the plan.

Workers and mechanical engineers made an important contribution to the restoration of mines, metallurgical enterprises and power plants. Mechanical engineering plants still in the regeneration stage began to supply production from the beginning of 1944. Thus, the plants of coal mechanical engineering of the Donbass developed production of lifts, drag conveyors, ventilators, centrifugal pumps and spare parts for mining equipment.

Workers, engineering and other technical workers of mechanical engineering enterprises, decreasing the time needed to produce equipment, fought to increase labor productivity. At the Kharkov turbo-generator plant a housing for a 50,000 kilowatt capacity turbine was processed over two times faster than before the war. At coal mechanical engineering plants the main shaft for mine lifts was manufactured in 8-10 days instead of 15 according to pre-war norms. At the Zuyevskaya power plant turbines with capacity 50,000 kilowatts were assembled and put into operation in 12 days, while before the war one and a half months were required.

Thanks to the close connections between Party and Soviet organizations and the working masses, seemingly insoluble problems were successfully resolved in the short periods of time dictated by the requirements of wartime. For example, one extremely difficult task was the restoration of dams demolished by the fascists in the Donetsk basin. Many metallurgical plants were left without water. On the call of the Party organization of the Donetsk

region the workers actively set about work, equipped 19 dams and dammed over 60 million cubic meters of water. The plants and power plants of the region began to be supplied with water without interruption. Nor did the population experience any lack of water.

In 1944 in the liberated territory coal mines with an annual capacity of 29.2 million tons of extracted coal, 11 blast furnaces with a capacity of 2.1 million tons of cast iron, 43 open hearth furnaces with a capacity of 1.3 million tons of steel, 2 Bessemer converters with a capacity of 240,000 tons of steel, 22 rolling mills with a capacity of 1.4 million tons of rolled metal, and 43 coke batteries with a capacity of 3.8 million tons of coke were put into operation.[1] Ferrous metallurgical enterprises were also supplied with a source of raw materials. During 1944 ore mines with a capacity of 5.4 million tonsof iron ore were put into service. Operation /625
began at cement plants with a capacity of 1 million tons of cement per year, textile factories with 47,000 spindles, sugar plants designed to process 633,000 centners of beets per day, and many other enterprises.[2]

Simultaneously with the successful restoration of industry in the liberated regions agriculture was also regenerated. However, the difficulties in this matter were exceptionally great. In many cases there were only half, or even less, of the prewar number of able-bodied workers on kolkhozes. The shortage of draft animals and tractors was acutely felt. The fields were overgrown with weeds, and many crop pests had bred. In many kolkhozes work discipline was very shaky at first, and production brigades did not have permanent personnel. Work standardization and records had been neglected. Nonetheless, the workers of the villages made significant progress in the restoration of socialist agriculture. By the end of 1944 in the Ukrainian territory cleared of the enemy, 27,340 kolkhozes, 1,270 MTS, and 788 sovkhozes

---

[1] According to data of the CSD USSR. IML. Documents and Materials of the Department of History of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #9605, p. 379.

[2] Ibid, p. 379.

had already been restored, and in the territory of the Belorussian SSR 9,608 kolkhozes, 316 MTS, and 87 sovkhozes.[1] Hundreds of thousands of head of livestock, thousands of tractors, combines and other agricultural machines were delivered from the rear regions to areas that had been subjected to occupation. "Approximately 175,000 animals," the newspaper "Pravda Ukrainy" wrote in October, "have already arrived in their designated areas. Almost all of this livestock was acquired on favorable terms at kolkhozes and sovkhozes of the RSFSR, Kazakhstan, Azerbajdjan, Georgia and other brother republics. Much livestock is being returned in the reevacuation."[2]

It is especially essential to note the value of the help rendered by the government to the peasants of the western regions of the Ukraine and Belorussia, as well as to the peasants of Moldavia and the Baltic republics. During the period of occupation the working peasantry of those regions was deprived of a considerable part of its working livestock, agricultural implements and land that had been received from the Soviet authorities in 1939-1940. With the liberation of these regions and republics the Soviet government restored the right of the peasants to land and provided the majority of them with farm implements and working livestock. Thus, for example, in the western regions of the USSR the government returned to the peasants over 428,000 hectares of land that had been taken away from them by the fascists. Machine and tractor stations helped to till and cultivate the land of 42,000 poor and middle peasant farms and repaired the agricultural implements of 11,000 farms. In Latvia in only 13 provinces liberated in 1944 farm laborers, landless and land-poor peasants received 500,000 hectares of land, 74 percent of the farms were supplied with horses, 95 percent with cows, 80 percent with agricultural implements, and 60 percent with outbuildings. In Lithuania farm laborers and landless peasants received approximately one-half million hectares of land for use free of charge and without term. In Estonia by the end of 1944 land had been returned to almost 15,000 poor and land-poor farms. Simultaneously measures were taken to accelerate the transfer of land to the remaining peasants who had been deprived of it during the German occupation.[3]

---

[1] According to data of the CSD USSR. IML. Documents and Materials of the Department of History of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #9605, pp. 355, 363, 367.

[2] "Pravda Ukrainy," 8 October 1944.

[3] CPA IML, col. 17, inv. 3, div. 1970, pp. 227-228; div. 1117, p. 11; div. 1165, p. 112; inv. 2, div. 2026, p. 10.

Kolkhoz members, MTS and sovkhoz workers set about restoring the farms with great enthusiasm. It is characteristic that in 1944 on the average one able-bodied kolkhoz worker in the regions subjected to occupation worked 218 work-days, as opposed to 180 in 1943.[1] The share of those regions in the total volume of state purchases of grain crops was 55 percent, of sugar beets 78 percent, of flax fiber 52 percent, of livestock and fowl 25 percent, and of milk and dairy products 29 percent.[2] /626

In spite of the difficult conditions of wartime, the Party and government did everything possible to improve the living conditions of the population, which had borne the horrors of fascist occupation. Large funds were invested in the restoration and new construction of housing, schools, hospitals, children's homes and kindergartens. In 1944 in the liberated territory housing with a total area of 10.5 square meters, or 67 percent of the entire area introduced that year in the country, was restored, built and put into use.[3]

In the Ukraine even by the beginning of the 1944-45 school year 27,551 schools were in operation, and in Belorussia 10,102, i.e. not many fewer than in 1940-41, when in the Ukraine there were 30,881 schools and in Belorussia 11,884. The school system had been almost completely restored in the Moldavian, Estonian and Lithuanian SSR. By the end of 1944 there were over 350,000 children in permanent kindergartens and children's homes in the liberated regions.[4]

The political organs, Party organizations and soldiers of the Red Army played an important part in the restoration of local Party and Soviet organs, as well as in the regeneration of the ruined economy. Army Communists, soldiers, officers, and generals, entering the land liberated from the enemy, told the population the truth about the situation in the country and

---

[1] According to data of the CSD USSR. IML. Documents and Materials of the Department of the History of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #9605, p. 361.

[2] Ibid, Inv. #9605, pp. 286, 287; Inv. #16099, p. 13.

[3] Ibid, Inv. #9605, p. 382.

[4] Ibid, pp. 446, 448.

about the outstanding victories of the Armed Forces of the USSR. The political directorates of all fronts assigned agitators and propagandists for long-term help to local organizations. Thus the political directorate of the 3rd Belorussian front sent 108 political workers to areas of Belorussia and Lithuania, who helped the local organizations to restore the organs of Soviet power.[1] Party and Komsomol organizations of the military units of the 1st Ukrainian front designated 3,445 agitators in the spring of 1944. They conducted over 10,000 lectures and talks.[2] At the same time the command group and political organs of the Red Army helped the local Party and Soviet organs to restore the national economy. On March 27, 1944 the Military Council of the 1st Ukrainian front passed a special resolution "On rendering assistance to the population in conducting the spring sowing," in which it defined the actual forms of participation of servicemen in the spring field work. Military units tilled and sowed 52,850 hectares of arable land and repaired 80 tractors and approximately 1,300 agricultural machines.[3] Mass-political work among the population, help in restoring local Soviet organs and the damaged economy - all of this strengthened the ties between the Red Army and the workers of the rear still more.

The restoration of the national economy in the territory that had been cleared of the enemy was one of the most important sources of the Soviet Union's economic might in 1944. The vast restoration work was a common, national cause. Tens of millions of Soviet people participated in the restoration of mines, open-hearth furnaces, power plants, plants, railroads, kolkhozes and sovkhozes. The material resources of the liberated regions, especially coal, cast iron, and steel, took on even greater importance in the Soviet war economy.

The outstanding victories of the Red Army in 1944 were possible thanks to the increased economic might of the socialist state. To fully supply the

---

[1] Archive of the MD USSR, col. 32, inv. 22153, div. 13, p. 25.

[2] Ibid, div. 17, p. 205.

[3] Ibid.

front with every necessity the Communist Party mobilized the creative powers of the Soviet people. The organizational and guiding role of the Party was manifested above all in the fact that it set timely new tasks before the workers which reflected the needs of the changing situation, and achieved their fulfillment. As before, the Party concentrated the efforts of the working class, engineers and other technical workers on developing all branches of heavy industry, above all the metallurgical, fuel, mechanical engineering, and energetics industries, as well as on increasing the production of arms and ammunition. As before the rear's work was defined by the slogan, "All for the front, all for victory over the enemy!" The Party inspired the people to selfless labor. /627

The Soviet working class made a new contribution to the cause of defeating fascist Germany. Broad masses of workers and intelligentsia took active part in rationalizing processes of production and introducing new technology into industry. The great working activity of the Soviet people ensured a sharp rise in heavy industry, which developed at a rate exceeding the prewar speed. On the basis of the growth in heavy industry the production of the newest military technology and armaments increased considerably. The economic might of the USSR rose steadily, while an economic decline began in fascist Germany in the second half of 1944.

Supported by the superiority of the socialist economic system, the Communist Party capably maneuvered the country's economic resources, directing them toward satisfying the most urgent needs of wartime and not permitting them to be scattered. This above all explains the fact that while producing approximately three times less steel than Germany and the occupied countries, in 1944 the Soviet Union surpassed them in the production of tanks, airplanes and artillery.

Agricultural workers also achieved noticeable progress in 1944, although during the war years material and technical supply to kolkhozes, sovkhozes and MTS worsened considerably. In comparison with the previous year the area of cultivated land was expanded, and crop capacity increased. These achievements were a clear expression of the superiority of the Soviet agricultural system.

Railroad transportation of the USSR dealt successfully with the increased volume of shipments in 1944. Transportation workers accelerated shipments of fuel, raw materials, and materials for industry, and ensured an uninterrupted supply to the front of armaments, ammunition and equipment. The railroad network in the liberated territory was restored at a rapid rate.

One source of the growth of the Soviet Union's economic might in 1944 was the regeneration of the national economy in the land that had been cleared of the enemy. The history of wars knows no other example of a country restoring its economy in direct proximity to the area of military operations in the course of a war on such a large scale, and in such short periods of time. The restoration work in the territory that was in the operational and immediate strategic rear of the Red Army had great military and political significance. The organization of the millions-strong masses of the population for this extremely important state matter consolidated the socialist public and state order in the liberated regions and intensified assistance to the front.

"War is a test of all of the economic and organizational powers of every nation,"[1] stated V. I. Lenin. In the trial that fell to the lot of our people in the Great Patriotic War the Soviet military economy achieved a decisive advantage over the economy of fascist Germany in 1944. All of the necessary conditions were created to complete the war victoriously and make the transition to peaceful economic construction.

[1] V.I. Lenin, Collected Works, Vol. 30, p. 133.

CHAPTER 20

MASS POLITICAL AND IDEOLOGICAL WORK OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY IN 1944

1. Intensifying the ideological-educational work of the Party among the masses.

The mass political and ideological work of the Communist Party, which /628
was always one of the most important prerequisites for the success of the Soviet people and played an exceptionally important role during the years of the Great Patriotic War, was intensified still more in 1944. This was due both to the needs of the military-political situation that had developed, and to shortcomings that had been discovered in the matter of the masses' ideological education.

The victories of the Red Army faced fascist Germany with inevitable catastrophe, but for the final defeat of the Hitlerites further mobilization was needed of the material resources of the country and the spiritual strength of the Soviet people. "One should not stop before any sacrifices to achieve the great tasks that are... entrusted to the Red Army"[1]: the Panty followed these instructions, teaching the workers in the spirit of Soviet patriotism

[1] Lenin Anthology XXXIV. M., Gospolitizdat, 1942, p. 45.

and the friendship of the peoples of the USSR, developing the best qualities in the Soviet people - confidence in the victory of our cause, the ability to overcome difficulties and deprivations on the path to the designated goal, readiness for any sacrifice in the name of victory over fascism. The Communist Party called on the Soviet people and their Armed Forces not to stop with the success they had achieved and to remember that the war against the German fascist invaders demanded great new efforts by the workers of the rear and heroic deeds by the soldiers at the front.

The intensification of the ideological education of the masses was promoted by the favorable military-political situation in the country. The historic victories of the Red Army in 1944 filled the hearts of the Soviet people with joy and pride and inspired them to heroism and wholehearted labor for the sake of final victory over the enemy. Both in times of the /629
ordeals of war and during the period of these great victories the thoughts and feelings of the workers, kolkhoz workers and intelligentsia were turned toward the dear Communist Party, which led the national struggle for the freedom and independence of the Motherland.

The close, constantly strengthening link of the Party to the masses was indicated by the rapid growth of its ranks. The reinforcement of the Party with the best representatives of the working class and all workers, in which V. I. Lenin saw "the most reliable source of the power and strength of Soviet authority,"[1] took on a mass nature during the years of the war. In 1944 alone 1,124,853 people were accepted as members of the Party and 1,336,350 as candidates. By January 1, 1945 the Party numbered 5,760,369 persons.[2] If one bears in mind the great losses suffered by the Party at the fronts one may conclude that the numerical strength of the Party ranks had never increased as rapidly as during the war years. This was a clear testimony to the growth of political activity of the masses, the further increase in their trust in

[1] V. I. Lenin. Works, Vol. 30, p. 53.

[2] IML. Documents and Materials of the Department of History of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #16574, pp. 19, 32.

and love for the Communist Party, the urge to strengthen their vital tie to it not only ideologically, but organizationally.

The unprecedently rapid growth in the Party ranks pushed forward the extremely urgent problem of intensifying the Marxist-Leninist education of Communists, especially the young, who had entered the Party during the period of the war. In 1944 they comprised almost two-thirds of all members and candidates for membership of the AUCP(b). Tens of thousands of them had been selected for leading Party and Soviet work. For example, in the Moscow region 1,440 Secretaries of primary Party organizations, or 40.8 percent, had less than one year of experience with Party work, including 18.5 percent with less than 6 months.[1] In the regions and republics liberated in 1944 there were still more Communists who did not have sufficient experience. In the Belorussian SSR by the end of the year 1,234 out of 1,920 Secretaries of primary Party organizations, 456 out of 517 Secretaries of city and district Party committees, and 160 out of 189 Chairmen of district executive committees had been selected for those positions for the first time.[2] The same situation was observed in the Party organizations of the Ukraine and the Baltic area. In order to orient themselves under the complex circumstances of the war and correctly direct Party and economic construction, the young cadres had constantly to expand their political outlook. This was also a primary condition of intensifying the ideological education of the masses.

Furthermore, during the war years many Party organizations had weakened their attention to ideological work, the Marxist-Leninist education of Communists. This was confirmed, specifically, by a check in 1944 on the instructions of the CC AUCP(b) of the Tatar, Chitinskaya, Bashkir and certain other Party obkoms.

The shortcomings in ideological-political education were aggravated to a significant degree by the manifestations of the cult of personality of I. V.

---

[1] CPA IML, col. 17, inv. 3, div. 1278, p. 24.

[2] Ibid, div. 155, p. 402.

Stalin. In oral and printed propaganda, in historical science, in many works of literature and art, the role of Stalin and his activity were greatly exaggerated. The successes and victories achieved by the Soviet people and their army under the direction of the Communist Party were ascribed to one person - Stalin. He was considered the creator of all of the most important strategic plans to defeat the Germans in 1944, the "brilliant commander of the Red Army." The major operations conducted by the Soviet forces in 1944 were called "Stalin thrusts," and the commanders of the fronts and armies, eminent commanders and political workers, were depicted as mere executors of the concepts and plans of one person. Of course, Stalin, like other Party, State and military figures, performed services in organizing the rout of the enemy, but there was no basis to /630 consider him the sole organizer and inspirer of all of the Red Army's victories.

The cult of personality left its mark on the activity of local and army Party organizations. It tied up their initiative. Party-political work, as in the first years of the war, was conducted in the rear and at the front largely on the basis of the speeches and orders of Stalin, which comprised the book "On the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union." The enormous military-theoretical heritage of V. I. Lenin, the revolutionary and military traditions of the Communist Party, and the activity of the CC, and many eminent Party and military workers was greatly disparaged. This impoverished the ideological work of the Party organizations.

The speeches and lectures of Stalin during the war period, including those of 1944, played a positive role in mobilizing the people and their army to defeat the enemy. However, they were praised excessively and considered an outstanding contribution to Marxist-Leninist teachings on war and the army, although they contained shortcomings and serious errors.

In November 1944 in a lecture on the 27th Anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution, Stalin said that "aggressive nations... are usually - and should be (stress ours - Ed.) - better prepared for war than

peace-loving nations..."[1] calling this a natural historical principle. It is true that he observed that it would be dangerous not to take this principle into consideration. However, it is entirely evident that this false thesis was in pursuit of the goal of theoretically justifying Stalin's miscalculationsin preparing the country for war in 1940-1941. Exposing the cult of personality, the Communist Party rejected this harmful thesis, which had in practice condemned the Soviet Union to a lag in military construction. It could not and cannot permit a repetition of the lessons of 1941. Following the instructions of V. I. Lenin, the Party keeps the Armed Forces of the country in a constant state of extreme military readiness.

In 1944 distortions of Leninist national policy were committed by Stalin. On his instructions, for instance, the Kalmyk and Chechen-Ingushskaya Autonomous Republics of the RSFSR were abolished and the populations of those republics were subjected to relocation to other parts of the USSR. This was a gross violation of Socialist law. Proceeding from the resolution of the XXth Session of the CPSU, the Party and government corrected these violations of Socialist law and the Leninist national policy.

The cult of personality hindered but could not stop the work of the Communist Party and its Central Committee in the ideological-political education of the workers. The CC AUCP(b) directed the organizational and educational activity of the Party organizations in the rear and at the front, revealed shortcomings in the ideological life of Party organizations, and took essential measures to eliminate them. Many resolutions of the Party Central Committee passed in 1944 on questions of the ideological education of Communists and ideological work among the masses testified to this very fact.

In an editorial in the central theoretical organ of the Communist Party, the magazine "Bol'shevik," analyzing the state of Party education and the

---

[1] I. Stalin. On the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union, p. 167.

level of political knowledge of the most active Party, Soviet and economic workers, concluded, "There is a clear danger of a theoretical lag in our cadres."[1] The elimination of such a serious deficiency in the activity of Party organizations took a long time. But even in 1944 a number of measures were taken in that direction. The CC AUCP(b) proposed to organize the study of Party history and theory by Communists everywhere, to restore the method of independent work of leading cadres to increase theoretical knowledge, and to practice oral and printed consultation on questions of Marxist-Leninist education. It was recommended that evening six- and eight-hour Party schools /631 be created for workers of a district group and that the system of political schools of the primary Party organizations in the villages be expanded.

Party organizations began to devote more attention to the ideological-political education of Communists. In 1944, 60 evening universities of Marxism-Leninism were operating in the country. They acquired great popularity as a form of political education. For example, 6,253 applications were submitted for 500 places in the Moscow evening university of Marxism-Leninism. The students included 145 Secretaries of primary Party organizations, 10 raykom Secretaries, and responsible workers of the Moscow city and district committees of the Party. A great influx into the evening university of Marxism-Leninism was also seen in the large industrial and cultural center of the city of Gor'kiy, where in 1944 1,400 people studied. Trying to create favorable conditions for study by the leading cadres, engineers and technical workers, the university opened branches in the main industrial regions of the city. Thus in the Avtozavod district branch 200 people studied in two departments - the historical and economic departments. In the national republics instruction in the system of Party education was conducted in the national language. In the Azerbajdzhan SSR in five universities of Marxism-Leninism lectures and seminars were conducted in three languages: the Azerbajdzhani, Armenian, and Russian languages.

District evening Party schools and political schools in rural Party organizations became a mass form of Party education during this period. In

---

[1] "Bol'shevik," 1944, No. 9, p. 4.

the 1944-45 school year there were approximately 25,000 such schools. They numbered over 500,000 students - active Communists and non-Party members, Party, Soviet, economic and Komsomol workers, including 61,400 people in the Ukraine alone. Party organs began to be more attentive to the staffing of schools with teachers. To raise the skill level of propagandists one-year republic and inter-regional schools were created in the Ukraine, in Belorussia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Kuybyshev. At the end of 1944 the Central Party Committee opened a correspondence higher Party school with a two-and-a-half year period of study. From December 1, 1944 over 3,000 leading Party workers began study through it.

The basis of all forms of Party education was the study of the theory and history of the Communist Party, the most important questions of the domestic and foreign policy of the USSR. Great attention was paid in the programs of schools and classes, as well as in the plans of independent work, to the study of the main stages of the Great Patriotic War and the heroic history of the Soviet Motherland. Study armed the Party cadres with knowledge of the laws of social development and strengthened their confidence in rapid victory over the enemy. The ideological growth of Communists promoted the growth of their role in the vanguard in production and the improvement of leadership of the most important sectors of Party, Soviet and economic construction.

Along with increased ideological education of Communists the Party devoted great attention to ideological questions, fought for the purity of Marxist-Leninist ideas, boldly exposed shortcomings and errors committed by some workers of the theoretical front.

In May 1944 the CC AUCP(b) passed a resolution in connection with the publication of the third volume of "History of Philosophy," which contained erroneous appraisals of German philosphy of the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th centuries. In the resolution it was emphasized that the authors of that work, which depicted German philosphy of the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th centuries as progressive on the whole, did not take into consideration the fact that the opposition of Hegelian

dialectics and the Marxist dialectical method reflected the opposition of the bourgeois and proletarian world views. They did not show the contradictions revealed by the founders of Marxism between the two sides of Hegel's philosophy - the progressive dialectical method and the conservative idealistic system - and did not subject to criticism such reactionary social political ideas of German philosophy as praise of the Prussian monarchist state, justification of wars and colonial invasions, scorn of the Slavic peoples and others. The Central Committee of the Party showed the necessity of correcting the errors that had been committed, overcoming the known backwardness in the development of theory, and beginning a consistent struggle against any type of deviation from the principles of Marxism-Leninism in science. /632

The false views expressed during that period by some historians may also have caused must damage to the Party's ideological work. Thus in Tataria and Bashkiria works appeared in which in elucidating the historical past of the peoples of those republics the patriarchal-feudal system was idealized, and incidents of the participation of the Tatar and Bashkir workers in the struggle of the Russian workers and peasants against the landholders and capitalists were concealed. Certain Kazakh scholars declared progressive any act directed against pre-Revolutionary Russia, and the annexation of Kazakhstan to Russia was regarded, essentially, as a negative fact. On the other hand, some historians made efforts to justify colonialist invasions and the oppression of non-Russian peoples by czarism. Such concessions to bourgeois nationalistic ideology of both a local and a great-power nature led to an undermining of the peoples' friendship - a most important basis of the Soviet state system - and were all the more intolerable under the conditions of war, which demanded the greatest possible unity of the forces of all nations of the USSR.

The Party indicated that it considered the creation of works that truly depicted the past of the peoples of our country, their revolutionary-democratic traditions and their participation in the struggle of the Russian people against czarism and foreign oppressors, to be the most important task of historical science. Researchers were to turn particular attention to

histories of the socialist reorganizations that had taken place in the national republics during the years of Soviet power and to the role of previously oppressed nations in the common struggle of the Soviet people against the German fascist invaders.

A large role in increasing the ideological education of the population was played by the resolution of the CC AUCP(b) of August 9, 1944, "On the state of and measures to improve mass-political and ideological work in the Tatar Party organization."[1] In it was noted that that work in the republic had been neglected and the proper attention had not been paid to the study of Marxist-Leninist theory by Party, Soviet and scholastic cadres. The Tatar obkom of the Party had been weak in enlisting representatives of Soviet intelligentsia to participate in conducting political and cultural-educational work, and directed the local press unsatisfactorily. The resolution obliged the regional committee of the Party to eliminate those shortcomings. They stressed that radical improvement of the ideological education of the masses must become the most important means of mobilizing the workers to perform economic-political tasks.

The defects in the activity of the Tatar Party organization cited in the resolution of the CC AUCP(b) were also seen in other Party organizations. Meetings of the most active Party members held in the Novosibirsk, Sverdlov, Ivanovsk, Gor'kiy and other regions as well as in many krays and republics discussed the state of educational work and outlined concrete ways to intensify it.[2] As the result of the measures taken by local Party organizations ideological-political work in the majority of regions, krays and republics of the country improved. The forces of the Party organizations were enlisted

---

[1] See Propaganda and Agitation in Resolutions and Documents of the AUCP(b). M., Gospolitizdat, 1947, pp. 463-468.

[2] CPA IML, col. 17, inv. 2, div. 1216, p. 7.

to propagandize the resolutions of the Party and government, the military-political results of three years of war, and the tasks of the Soviet people and their army at the final stage of the struggle with the fascist invaders. In the Moscow region alone by November 1944 3,686 Communists had given lectures to 3,700,000 workers.[1] By the same time in the Sverdlovsk region over 14,000 lectures had been read, at which 1,183,000 persons had been present.[2] The talks, reports and lectures helped the workers, kolkhoz members and intelligentsia to obtain timely information on the successes of Soviet soldiers at the fronts and new achievements by the workers of the rear, and maintained in them the desire to hasten the final defeat of the enemy with selfless labor. /633

The revitalization of educational work among the workers depended largely on the level of scientific-educational propaganda. Broad interest in the knowledge of the phenomena of nature and social life was due to the cultural level of the people, which had increased immeasurably during the years of Soviet power. It was all the more important to satisfy these demands under the conditions of wartime because the propaganda of natural-scientific knowledge had increased the ideological preparedness of the Soviet people. Moreover, many local Party organizations, organs of popular education and scientific establishments underestimated that important part of their activity. If in 1943 only 0.8 percent of the lectures read by educational workers concerned natural scientific subjects,[3] in 1944 the situation had not changed for the better.

Therefore, the CC AUCP(b), in its resolution "On the organization of scientific-educational propaganda," passed in August 1944, turned the attention of Party organizations toward the need to intensify that work. The tasks of the final period of the war insistently demanded ever greater combination of mass agitation, which predominated in the first war years, with propaganda of scientific knowledge among the population. In the resolution

---

[1] See "Propagandist," 1944, No. 11 -12, p. 26.

[2] CPA IML, col. 17, inv. 2, div. 1216, pp. 28-29.

[3] See Propaganda and Agitation in Resolutions and Documents of the AUCP(b), p. 475.

it was emphasized that "propaganda of natural history knowledge under contemporary conditions acquires especially great importance in the matter of the further rise of the cultural level of broad strata of the workers, and overcoming the survivals of the lack of culture, superstitions and prejudices,"[1] one source of the spread of which was religion.

It was recommended that propaganda of scientific knowledge and human society be made the basis of all scientific-educational work, that teachers, doctors, agronomists, zoological technicians and engineers be enlisted to take part in it, and that it be closely combined with the practical activity of the workers. It was acknowledged as essential that in reports and talks, in articles and brochures, medical knowledge be popularized, the scientific bases of agriculture and animal husbandry and ways to increase the crop capacity of fields and the productiveness of livestock be explained. The united state publishing houses were assigned to issue a series of popular science brochures, and the Committee on Matters of Cinematography a series of special films. The editorial offices of the magazines "Sputnik Agitatora" and "Politprosvetrabota" were ordered to elucidate the experience of scientific-educational work systematically, and to publish material on natural scientific questions to help the agitators.

Party organizations and organs of popular education set about fulfilling these instructions of the CC AUCP(b). Thus the Leningrad Party gorkom created a special lecturing bureau where instructors from institutions of higher education and scientific workers read lectures. On instructions from the Party gorkom the city's collective of scientific workers prepared a series of popular science brochures for publication. In the Saratov region the question of propagandizing scientific knowledge among the population was discussed at teachers' meetings in all districts. With the participation of broad circles of the intelligentsia, in the third quarter of 1944 1,777 lectures were read on natural scientific subjects, andover 2,000 in the fourth quarter.[2] In the Smolensk region lecture groups consisting of /634

[1] "Propagandist," 1944, No. 18, p. 6.

[2] CPA IML, col. 17, inv. 8, div. 430, p. 2.

teachers, doctors, agronomists and other specialists conducted over 630 such lectures in 34 districts during the same period. In the fall of 1944 scientific workers of Ufa read 145 lectures on agricultural subjects in rural districts.

An important part should have been played in the organization of cultural-educational work by clubs, village reading rooms and libraries. However, many of them were closed during the first years of the war. The reconstruction of the system of cultural-educational institutions everywhere and their use for their designated purpose became one of the Party organizations' urgent tasks in 1944. In certain regions and republics cinema facilities for the population were unsatisfactory. The improvement of that work was greatly promoted by the CC AUCP(b) resolution "On the operation of cinemas and portable film projectors in the Ul'yanov region."[1] It stated that cinema was one of the most mass means of educating the workers in the spirit of Soviet patriotism and friendship of the peoples of the USSR, and of mobilizing the workers of the rear for the final defeat of the enemy. The Ul'yanov Party obkom was ordered to organize regular showings in all cities, district centers, kolkhozes and sovkhozes of topical-documentary and feature films about military operations at the fronts and the heroic struggle of the entire Soviet people against the German fascist invaders. For this every district center was to be provided with a stationary film projector, and service to the rural population was to be provided using portable film projectors. Although that resolution concerned the Ul'yanov region directly, it was also timely for other areas of the country, where local Party organizations also took measures to improve the activity of cultural-educational institutions and cinema facilities for the workers.

Mass political and cultural-educational work acquired exceptional importance in the liberated regions. It was essential to liquidate not only the material, but also the moral and political consequences of the occupation. In the two to three years of their sway in the Ukraine, in

---

[1] See Propaganda and Agitation in Resolutions and Documents of the AUCP(b), pp. 473-474.

Belorussia, the Baltic and certain parts of the RSFSR the Hitlerites attempted to poison the consciousness of the workers with the venom of fascist propaganda. Day after day they defamed the socialist social and governmental order, praised the capitalist system, and spread slanderous rumors about the alleged defeats of the Red Army. The fascists tried in every way to plant individualism and the spirit of acquisitiveness, and to inflame national enmity between Russians, Ukrainians, Belorussians, Lithuanians, and other peoples of the USSR. However, most of the Soviet people, even when deprived of true information, preserved their loyalty to Soviet power and to the ideas of the Communist Party. This was promoted to a considerable degree by the political work of underground Party organizations and partisan detachments operating in the enemy's rear.

Nonetheless, the bloody fascist regime, unbridled slander and demagoguery left their pernicious traces. The consciousness of a backward segment of the population was obstructed with ideas alien to the Soviet world view. Private-ownership tendencies had been strengthened in some kolkhoz workers. Various kinds of "smart dealers" appeared, lovers of easy profit, speculators who did not wish to occupy themselves with labor for the common good. In the western regions of the Ukraine and Belorussia, and also in the Baltic republics, the petty bourgeois segments of the population yielded to a certain degree to the provocative nationalistic propaganda of the fascist invaders and the bourgeois nationalists. For that very reason mass political work among the population in those areas required enormous attention from Party organizations.

In resolutions "On the immediate tasks of Party organizations of the CP(b) of Belorussia in the field of mass political and cultural-educational work among the population" (August 9) and "On shortcomings in political /635
work among the population of the western regions of the USSR" (September 27) the CC AUCP(b) proposed that measures by the Party and government to restore the Soviet order be widely explained to the workers of the liberated regions. Party organizations were shown the necessity of resolutely exposing bourgeois-nationalist propaganda, demonstrating to the population with actual

examples that Ukrainian, Belorussian and other nationalists took part in all of the atrocities committed by the Hitlerites on Soviet soil. The importance of educational work among the intelligentsia, its enlistment for active participation in the political and cultural life of cities and villages of the western regions was particularly stressed.

Mass political work in the liberated territory, which was conducted insufficiently in the first months after the expulsion of the occupiers, improved noticeably by the end of 1944. The Party organization of the Ukraine did especially much in this respect. At meetings of the most active regional and district Party members, at which CC CP(b)Ukr Politbureau members M. S. Grechukha, L. R. Korniyets, D. S. Korotchenko and N. S. Khrushchev and leading workers of the CC CP(b) and the CPC USSR apparatus took part,[1] shortcomings were resolutely exposed, and concrete ways to eliminate them were outlined.

Work on the ideological education of the masses in the western regions of the Ukraine and Belorussia was organized taking the interests and questions of various segments of the local population into consideration. Although industry in those regions had not been widely developed in the past due to the policies of the Polish landowners and bourgeoisie, nevertheless there were many workers there. The Party organizations ably rallied them around themselves at the enterprises undergoing reconstruction. In the rural territory district and regional meetings and conferences of peasants were conducted at which questions of the restoration of the national economy that agitated the workers, events at the fronts and the international situation were discussed.

The regional convention of peasants held by the L'vov Party obkom in November 1944 may serve as a characteristic example. One thousand ninety delegates were present at it, 1,011 of whom were illiterate or had elementary

---

[1] CPA IML, col. 17, inv. 8, div. 351, p. 39.

education. This clearly showed the results of the long years of oppression by the Polish landholders and bourgeoisie, and then by German fascism. Many delegates had come to the regional center for the first time, although there were many people among them who were 40 to 70 years of age. At the convention two reports were heard and discussed: "Returning land taken by the German occupiers to the peasants" and "Ukrainian-German nationalists - the bitterest enemies of the Ukrainian people." The reports were read by the chairman of the L'vov regional executive committee N. V. Kozyryev and the secretary of the Party obkom I. S. Grushetskiy. The delegates displayed great interest in the problems raised by the speakers. Approximately 50 people took part in the debates. Their emotional speeches clearly reflected the moods, thoughts and attitudes of the working peasants concerning the measures of Soviet authority and the Communist Party.

An old peasant from the village of Velikiye Peredelikhi, Kulikovskiy district, A. M. Gayduchok, made a picturesque speech. "The Ukraine was divided into two parts," he said. "Like a little sister in captivity the Western Ukraine suffered. On one bank the Ukraine took water from the river and sang happy songs. On the western side the Ukraine was sad, tears were heard in her voice and grief pressed her heart. And the sister from the great Ukraine asked her western sister: why are you always so sad? And she heard the answer: my life is hard, the pans (Polish landowners - Trans.) scorn us, we have no land, no joy... But it cannot be so," the orator said in conclusion. "Happiness has come to our homes also."[1]

This is what the peasant woman G. N. Gerega of the Zolochevskiy district said of her fate, which was typical for women of the western regions of the Ukraine: "I cannot believe that I am sitting at such a distinguished conference, I who lived for a whole year in the house of a German frau in painful slavery in Germany. In 1942 the Germans, tearing us away from our native land, like cattle, drove me and my cousin away to Germany, where I

/636

[1] CPA IML, col. 17, inv. 8, div. 361, p. 36.

nearly died of hunger. We were able to escape to our village, where we hid in cellars and attics for a whole year. Banderovtsy helped the Germans to catch escapees... I was saved from slavery by the arrival of the Red Army, for which I will always be grateful. I tried to help them every way I could."[1]

The chairman of the Strutinov village soviet, L. S. Soltinskiy, spoke of the need for a ruthless struggle with the bands of Ukrainian-German nationalists. "Now our village has begun to come to full-blooded life," he declared. "We have fulfilled all plans assigned to us. But these cursed scorpions, the banderovtsy bands, often disrupt our working life. Several days ago I received from them a note with a threat, that if I work actively my family and I will be eliminated. But that will not stop me. On my return from the conference I will tell the peasants of the tasks that have been set for them. The conference has inspired me."[2]

Similar conferences and meetings of peasants were held in Belorussia. Their mass nature is indicated by the fact that at district meetings of the peasants of the Grodno region alone approximately 80,000 people were present.[3]

The return of land to landless and land-poor peasants promoted the rallying of the working peasantry of the western regions of the Ukraine and Belorussia around the Communist Party. But Soviet authority was not limited only to that. Under the direction of the Party organizations the Soviets in the western regions of the Ukraine and Belorussia helped the poor with seed and in cultivating the soil, and, most importantly, promoted the creation of collective farms and thereby led the working peasantry out onto the only correct path - the path of breaking with the private, petty goods economy.

---

[1] CPA IML, col. 17, inv. 8, div. 36, pp. 41-42.

[2] Ibid, p. 42.

[3] Ibid, inv. 3, div. 156, p. 276.

All of this sharpened the class struggle in the villages: the kulaks of the western regions of the Ukraine increased their resistance to the measures of Soviet power, and the poor and middle peasants, united around the Communist Party, increased their activity in the struggle against hostile elements. The rural workers of the western regions responded with deep gratitude to the Communist Party and Soviet government for their concern for the peasantry's fundamental interests. The thoughts and feelings of the peasants were well expressed by a woman of the Belorussian village of Teteryevka, Berestovichi district, L. G. Lukovoz. "Before, under the Poles and the Germans," she said at a meeting, "the Belorussians were oppressed, not even allowed to buy land; several brothers would work on their little patch of land, and go to court over the land. Now Soviet power gives land in a large enough amount; just don't be lazy, work."[1]

The return of land to the peasants and the constant attention of the Party to the needs of the people of the western regions of the Ukraine and Belorussia were the best agitators for Soviet power and were the most effective weapon in the struggle against the local kulaks and the bourgeois nationalists.

Many Party organizations conducted great explanatory work among women. Class enemies, exploiting the political and cultural backwardness of the peasant women in the western regions, had spread various provocative rumors among them and slandered the kolkhozes. In order to stop these schemes and raise the level of political consciousness among village women, district meetings of peasant women, for example, were held in the Brest region, at which the questions that most interested them were discussed: the position of women in the Soviet Union, the participation of Soviet women in the Great Patriotic War, the superiority of kolkhozes over individual peasant farms, and so on. The meetings were large. Thus, for example, over 500 delegates were present at one meeting in the Zhabchitskiy district.[2] /637

[1] CPA IML, col. 17, inv. 3, div. 156, p. 277.
[2] Ibid, p. 305.

Meetings, lectures and talks devoted to the 27th Anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution had great educational value for the population. Millions of Soviet people recently liberated by the Red Army from the German fascist yoke observed that notable date with all citizens of the USSR. Leading Party and Soviet workers of the regions and districts spoke before the workers. Agitators and propagandists explained to the population the role and significance of the October Revolution, the historic victories of the Red Army and the tasks facing the people at the final stage of the Patriotic War. In the Party organization of the Pinsk region alone 1,263 people were enlisted to conduct lectures and talks.[1] The active participation of the leading Party and Soviet cadres in political work still further rallied the working masses around Soviet power, supporting the restoration of the national economy in the liberated areas.

Political work among the intelligentsia of the western regions of the Ukraine and Belorussia involved great difficulties. It was necessary, above all, to help a known segment of the intelligentsia to overcome bourgeois ideology. Much time and effort was required for this. Thus the Party organizations drew into public life those people in particular who had always been close to the people and were loyal to Soviet power. For example, in the districts of the Grodno region even in the fall of 1944 over 800 representatives of the intelligentsia took part in the work of village reading rooms and village soviet assistance commissions, as well as in other forms of public activity.[2] In the Baranovichi region 270 agitational collectives were formed, of which three-quarters of the members were non-Party members, largely teachers. They read over 50,000 lectures for the population and conducted many talks, in which they intelligibly explained the tasks facing the residents of the liberated regions.[3]

No less difficult tasks faced the Party organizations of the Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian SSR, which were liberated at the end of 1944. In addition to struggling with the bourgeois nationalists, the Communists of the

---

[1] See "Pravda," 25 December 1944.

[2] CPA IML, col. 17, inv. 3, div. 156, p. 273.

[3] Ibid, inv. 8, div. 382, p. 34.

Baltic republics, as instructed by the CC AUCP(b), were to develop political work among the population, direct the labor activity of the workers, peasants and intelligentsia toward helping the Red Army in every way, and restoring industry, agriculture and cultural-educational institutions. Resting on the support of the peoples of the USSR, the workers of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, led by the Communist Party, began to liquidate the grave consequences of the German fascist occupiers' sway in the Baltic area. The Party organizations of the republics used all forms of Bolshevik agitation and propaganda to educate the masses in the spirit of the friendship of the peoples of the USSR and to strengthen their brotherly cooperation.

In 1944 the question of conducting political work among repatriated Soviet citizens became urgent. The Communist Party and the Soviet government never forgot those who languished in Hitlerite torture-chambers or were worn out in fascist slave labor. The May-day slogans of the CC AUCP(b) included warm words of encouragement, and confidence was expressed in the rapid liberation of Soviet citizens who had been driven into captivity by the occupiers. Now, beginning in the second half of the year, when the Red Army broke through to the borders of Germany and entered the territory of Poland and the countries of Southeastern Europe, many Soviet people, torn from their homes by force, as well as some prisoners of war, received the opportunity to return to the Motherland. In October the Soviet government /638
passed a resolution to assist repatriates in finding work and proper living conditions. At the same time the special apparatus of the CPC USSR Official Agent on Repatriate Affairs, led by Col.-Gen. F. I. Golikov, was formed, called upon to cooperate in the return to the Motherland of Soviet citizens who were still languishing in camps in various countries. In an interview with the CPC USSR Official Agent on Repatriate Affairs published in November 1944 it was stated, "The country of Soviets remembers and is concerned for its citizens who have fallen into German slavery. They will be welcomed at home as sons of the Motherland. In Soviet circles it is felt that even those among the Soviet citizens who committed acts contrary to the interests of the USSR under German violence and terror will not be made answerable if they begin to fulfill their duty honorably when they return to the Motherland."[1]

[1] "Pravda," 11 November 1944.

The desire of Soviet people to return to the Motherland quickly was unanimous. By October 1944 approximately 100,000 people from among those forced to go to Germany had already arrived.[1] "The local population," it was stated in a report of the CC CP(b) of Belorussia to the Central Committee of the Party, "is meeting the repatriated citizens with a feeling of warmth and concern, helping them to find work and bring their lives back to normal."[2] It must, however, be noted, that here as well Beria and his confederates took a hand, and their hostile actions met no opposition under the circumstances of the cult of personality. However, even the unfounded repressions to which many repatriates were subjected (they were later fully rehabilitated) cannot detract from the great organizational and educational work conducted in 1944 by Party and public organizations in connection with the return of Soviet citizens to the Motherland.

Thus, in 1944 the Party intensified its mass political activity among the workers. Certain steps were also taken to raise the level of ideological work and to improve methods of Marxist-Leninist education of cadres. The political and ideological activity of the Communist Party in the rear was an extremely important means of mobilizing the popular masses for the final defeat of the fascist invaders.

---

[1] CPA IML, col. 17, inv. 8, div. 382, p. 46

[2] Ibid, p. 47

2. New tasks for ideological-educational work in the army.

In July - October 1944 the Red Army completed the liberation of Soviet soil and broke through to the national borders of the USSR along its entire length. However, in order to achieve a final victory over the enemy and prevent the possibility of further fascist aggression it was necessary to pursue and smash the Hitlerite armies beyond the borders of our country until their final destruction. Consequently, the Soviet Armed Forces were also faced with fulfilling their patriotic duty to protect the socialist Homeland from its deadly enemy, German fascism, abroad.

In the summer of 1944 the Red Army was faced with an immediate task - to help the peoples of Europe to throw off the fascist yoke and win freedom and independence. The Soviet forces entered the territory of the bourgeois states adjacent to us. In connection with that the conditions under which the Red Army was to operate changed radically. The mode of life, mores and /639

ideology of the capitalist society could negatively influence a certain segment of our troops. Hostile acts on the part of agents left by the fascists and by anti-Soviet elements were to be expected. Therefore questions of increasing the vigilance of the Soviet soldiers became especially urgent. It was essential to explain to the personnel the policy of the Soviet government toward the liberated countries and to establish normal relations with the local population. A difficult new task arose for the army political organs and Party organizations - to conduct political work among the populations of those countries in the territory of which the Red Army was dealing the final blows to the enemy. The ability to orient themselves correctly in the new political situation was required of commanders and political workers.

Their guiding document was the directive of the State Defense Committee of April 10, 1944, given in connection with the crossing of the national border of the USSR with Rumania.[1] In it the political goals for the sake of which the Soviet Armed Forces were conducting military operations against the fascist forces in the territory of Rumania were clearly formulated and the tasks of the Red Army were defined. They were to help the Rumanian people to rout the German invaders, giving them complete freedom to resolve the question of the state and social system of the country. The SDC directive strictly ordered the Soviet command group not to interfere in Rumania's internal affairs, to treat the system and customs established there with respect, and to guard the rights and property of citizens. The SDC directive of October 27, 1944, issued to the troops entering Hungary, was based on similar propositions.[2]

Thus the new conditions under which our Armed Forces were operating and the international tasks facing them made increased demands on the Party-political apparatus. Moreover, by no means did all of the political organs correctly understand the essence of the new situation. The main political

---

[1] See Chapter 9, pp. 264-265.

[2] See Chapter 13, p. 388.

directorate of the Red Army required that the Party-political apparatus reorganize all of its ideological-educational work, and indicated the need to educate the soldiers skillfully in the spirit of Soviet patriotism and proletarian internationalism. It emphasized the importance of "increasing the speed and intensity of work, further consolidating the political-moral state of the personnel, heightening vigilance, discipline and organization in every way, and improving the quality of all political work among the troops."[1]

The political organs and Party organizations intensified their propaganda of the ideas under the banner of which the Armed Forces of the USSR waged the struggle with fascism beyond the borders of the Motherland. In lectures and talks the commanders and political workers explained that the liberation mission of the Red Army flowed organically not only from the character of the Great Patriotic War, but from the very nature of the army of a socialist state - a new type of army. In its educational work among the troops the Communist Party proceeded from the instructions of V. I. Lenin, who, as early as May 5, 1920, speaking before the Red Army troops being sent to the Polish front, said, "... you - soldiers of the worker-peasant republic... are going to them (the Poles - Ed.) not as oppressors, but as liberators."[2] For the very reason that the Party conducted such educational work systematically both before and during the war, the Soviet soldiers were found to be politically prepared to perform their historic role. In delivering the people from fascist oppression, our soldiers and officers understood that they were fulfilling their international duty.

In addition to propaganda of international tasks, the political organs /640 emphasized more strongly than before that the restoration of the borders of the USSR should not lead to a weakening of work to develop the moral and military qualities of our soldiers and officers. It was explained to the

---

[1] IML. Documents and Materials of the Department of History of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #377, p. 1.

[2] V. I. Lenin. Works, vol. 31, p. 106.

personnel that victory could be lost if the fascist beast was not beaten in his own lair. "The enemy is rushing about, losing his breath," wrote "Pravda" in July 1944. "He is fighting for his last strength, frenzy is stupefying him, but a mad dog is also dangerous at his last breath."[1]

The operations of the Red Army in the second half of 1944 took place in the territory of eight countries: Poland, Rumania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Norway and Germany. In the majority of them the population greeted our forces ecstatically. Even in Rumania and Hungary, the ruling classes of which succeeded in 1941 in drawing their people into the war against the USSR, the workers, greeting the Soviet soldiers and officers, were quickly imbued with a feeling of warm friendship, and were convinced for themselves that the Red Army had entered their territory as a liberating army. The population expressed its gratitude to the Red Army not only in its warm greeting, but also in its active assistance in the conduct of military operations.

The command group and political organs of the Soviet forces strictly kept to the policy advanced by the government of USSR, that of noninterference in the internal affairs of the states in the territory of which military operations took place. However, the situation itself insistently demanded that broad explanatory work be conducted among the local population in order to help it to form a correct impression of the operations of the Red Army. It must be borne in mind that before the arrival of our troops the Hitlerites had frightened the inhabitants in every way with "Bolshevik horrors," slandered the Soviet Union, representing its policy in a distorted form. Some, believing the lies, left for the woods and mountains.

Under these conditions it was necessary to inform the population of the truth about the Soviet Union and about the nature of the Great Patriotic War. It was essential to explain the policy of the Communist Party and the government of the USSR concerning the liberated countries, to demonstrate in

[1] "Pravda," 24 July 1944.

practice that the Soviet people and their army were drawing a precise line between the working ma[illegible]es and the ruling cliques of the countries fighting on the side of fascist Germany, and that the Soviet government, demanding a severe penalty for war criminals, simultaneously gave the people total freedom to decide their fate independently.

Along with the representatives of the democratic social organizations, commanders and political workers who were fluent in the local languages conducted talks, meetings, rallies, and read reports and lectures on the most urgent and vitally important subjects.

Printed propaganda also received broad distribution, specifically newspapers published by the political directorates of the fronts in the languages of the peoples of the liberated countries. In an order of the chief of the Main Political Directorate of August 12, 1944 on the publication of the newspaper "Novaya Zhizn'" in the Polish language it was emphasized that its purpose was to explain to the Polish workers the policy of the Soviet Union in relation to Poland as a sovereign friendly state. The work was to tell the Poles that the Red Army was faced with the task of routing the German army and helping the Polish people to throw off the yoke of fascism. The explanation of the essence of the Soviet government's policy and the tasks of the Red Army was the main content of the newspapers "Svobodniy golos" (in Rumanian), "Vengerskaya gazeta" and "Izvestiya" (in Hungarian, and "Karpatskiy vestnik" (in Ukrainian for the population of the Trans-Carpathian Ukraine). In addition, special leaflets were issued with summaries of the Soviet Information Bureau and with reports on international life. They were posted in visible places and used by agitators.

Popularity among the population was soon won by Soviet films, showings /641
of which, as a rule, were preceded by an introduction by a Soviet officer who elucidated the ideological concept of the picture. Radio broadcasts also played a large role. Workers and representatives of the local intelligentsia with democratic views often took the microphone. The civil population related to the measures conducted by our political organs with

enormous interest. Hundreds of thousands of people gathered in the squares near loudspeakers and by display cases with newspapers and leaflets. A large number of people attended showings of Soviet films and performances by Army singing and dancing groups.

Bearing in mind the varied social composition of the population, the political organs differentiated their work. For example, the political workers of the 1st Ukrainian front arranged separate meetings of workers, peasants and intelligentsia. Talks were held with votaries of religious cults on the theme "The Soviet Union's attitude toward religion and the clergy." Almost all who were invited came to the meetings, listened attentively to the speakers, asked them many questions, and spoke themselves. The greater part of the workers, peasants and intelligentsia were glad that the Red Army had destroyed the hated fascist "new order." Now, not fearing the Gestapo, people could speak freely to each other and discuss all political and economic questions.

Thus the Red Army carried out its liberating mission not only with the use of arms, but through the power of the great ideas of Marxism-Leninism. The hopes of the leader of the worldwide proletariat, V. I. Lenin, were justified that "the working masses of all countries will be for us and that our truth, exposing all falsehood, will be more and more victorious."[1]

In connection with the entrance of the Red Army into the territory of capitalist countries, hostile propaganda intensified, praising the bourgeois way of life in every way and blackening the Soviet order. Goebbels' secret service calculated that the outward tinsel characteristic of bourgeois life would influence at least some Soviet soldiers and lower their fighting spirit. It was essential to resolutely expose the enemy's attempts to sow doubt in our soldiers about the superiority of the Soviet social system over the bourgeois. Therefore propaganda of the superiority of the Socialist

---

[1] V. I. Lenin. Works, vol 30, p. 362.

order over the capitalist had a large share in Party-political work. Moreover, to depict the vices of the latter there was no need to take proof from books. Agitators utilized examples that the surrounding circumstances provided in abundance. The neediness of the worker and the peasant, the unsureness of the intellectual and the small craftsman about tomorrow - the Soviet soldiers saw all of this with their own eyes. The agitators helped them to understand the causes of such phenomena, which were typical of capitalist countries. The fact that the Armed Forces of the USSR were smashing the Hitlerite armies, so praised by bourgeois propagandists, was our agitators' most convincing argument for the superiority of the Soviet social order.

The further west the Soviet troops progressed, the more the soldiers and officers wanted to know about the economic and cultural life of their Motherland. The political organs of the active army tried to satisfy the growing interest of the personnel in the life of the country as fully as possible, to develop the feeling of love for the Socialist Homeland and pride in its labor victories still more. Agitation in the form of talks about the krays and regions in which the soldiers and officers of the given unit or formation had lived and worked before the war was particularly successful. Soldiers - formerly front-rank workers in plants and factories, combine or tractor operators - acted as agitators. Lecturers of the political directorates of the fronts as well as division and regimental agitators read reports and conducted talks on the superiority of the socialist economic system over /642 the capitalist. In front, army and division newspapers, articles on the achievements of our industry and agriculture, on the course of restoration of cities and towns, sovkhozes and kolkhozes, cultural and educational institutions destroyed by the enemy, began to appear more often. All of this helped the Soviet servicemen to assess bourgeois reality correctly, to see through its vices and be convinced once more of the superiority of a socialist over a capitalist society.

"One looks at those narrow little strips of land at the disposal of each farmer;" one junior commander wrote home from Poland; "how unlike they

are to our huge kolkhoz fields, where any agricultural machine can be used."[1] In a letter home in November 1944 another serviceman wrote, "Only here, abroad, I have seen clearly how far ahead our country has gone. At first I admired these places. But now I have looked closely and understood that there is little that is good here. An individual farm does not allow the peasant to acquire machinery, and the poor sandy soil does not give a rich harvest. In the Soviet Union we have powerful diesels, but here the peasant plows his miserable two hectares of land with one horse and a tiny plow, and mows by hand."[2] The soldiers' letters usually ended with these words: "All the same, there is nowhere better than our Soviet Russia," "It is better at home in Russia, of course," "How I want to go home to my Russia!" "I long incredibly for home, where everything breathes of what is my own and free, happy and dear."[3] The patriotic feelings of the Soviet soldiers were widely popularized in the army press.

In 1944 in the active army approximately 800 newspapers, the circulation of which in the ranks was over 3 million copies, were published.[4] In all fronts newspapers were issued for non-Russian soldiers in their native language. In addition to elucidating the questions of the country's internal life, the front-line press also widely explained the policy of the Communist Party and the Soviet government concerning the liberated peoples of Europe. Notes and declarations of the government of the USSR in connection with the Red Army's entrance into Rumania, Bulgaria and Poland were commented upon in detail by front-line newspapers.

In the operations of 1944 Polish, Czech and Yugoslav soldiers fought shoulder to shoulder with the Red Army. The Bulgarian and Rumanian armies made their contribution to the final rout of the enemy. Therefore the front-line newspapers devoted great attention to propaganda of the military cooperation of the Red Army with those forces allied to us, to cultivating a feeling of their international duty in the Soviet soldiers.

---

[1] Archives of the MD USSR, col. 32, inv. 22152, div. 13, p. 284.

[2] Ibid, inv. 142111, div. 1, pp. 395-396.

[3] Ibid, pp. 397, 398.

[4] See Questions of Journalism. Collection of Articles. M., Izd-vo Moskovskogo universiteta, 1959, p. 191.

Some Soviet armies fought in regions through which Russian regiments had once passed with glory. The newspaper of the 3rd Ukrainian front, "Sovyetskiy voyin," wrote during the battles in Bulgaria, "Remember, comrade, the many centuries of friendship of the Russian and Bulgarian peoples, remember the traditions of blood brotherhood of Russians and Bulgarians, and try at every step to strengthen and multiply those glorious traditions."[1] Thus the newspaper successfully utilized the heroic past of our people in the interests of the struggle with the fascist army and of strengthening friendship with the Bulgarian people.

It is well known that the majority of the operations in 1944 were conducted by two or more fronts. Under these conditions it was important to demonstrate the adhievements of neighboring armies, to call for all to be equal to the front-rank armies, and to explain that the successful completion of the common objective assigned by Headquarters to the group of fronts depended on the degree of activeness of the troops from each front.

Questions of the education of the Soviet troops, of forming a high level /644 of moral and military qualities in them, were also borne in mind by the central Party and Soviet press. Every month the active army received 19,300,000 copies of newspapers, 1 million copies of magazines and a large number of books on various political and military subjects.[2] The newspaper "Pravda," the organ of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, remained a powerful means of ideological training of the masses. It was with the soldiers on the front line, with the partisans behind enemy lines, and with the workers who were forging weapons for the front. Clearly elucidating the remarkable victories of the Red Army, "Pravda" inspired millions of Soviet soldiers to new feats, to the rout of the enemy.

During this period of the war commanders, political workers, Party and Komsomol organizations devoted particular attention to the political education of reinforcements. Their proportionate share was quite great.

---

[1] "Sovyetskiy voin," 23 September 1944.

[2] See CPSU - Inspirer and Organizer of the Victories of the Soviet People in the Great Patriotic War, M., Voyenizdat, 1959, p. 276.

/643

Some front-line newspapers and leaflets of 1944

Approximately one-third of the reinforcements arriving at the 2nd Ukrainian front before the Iasi-Kishinyev operation were natives of the western regions of Soviet Moldavia, former prisoners of war, soldiers who had been surrounded at the beginning of the war and left in occupied territory.[1] The reinforcements were extremely varied in composition and differed sharply from the main contingent of the Red Army. This is a typical example. In May 1944 over 2,800 new recruits arrived in the 48th Army, natives of the western regions of the Ukraine. Almost none of them had military experience. Sixty percent of the recruits were totally or nearly illiterate; 75 percent had not served in the army before; 25 percent were former soldiers of the Polish army.[2] On the whole the new recruits were politically undeveloped, and knew little of Soviet reality, the structure of our government or the course of the Great Patriotic War. During talks they asked questions such as "Who can be an officer of the Red Army?" and "Who are our allies?"[3]

A directive by the chief of the Main Political Directorate issued on March 22,1944 on the order of the CC AUCP(b) in connection with the conscription of citizens from the liberated areas of the western regions of the Ukraine into the Red Army gave a comprehensive description of the new reinforcements. The majority of the conscripts, the directive read, were witnesses of the Hitlerites' atrocities, sincerely welcomed their liberation, and had declared their readiness to serve honorably in the Red Army. However, it could not be overlooked that these people had long been subjected to the effect of false fascist and bourgeois-nationalist propaganda. Therefore it was made the duty of the commanders and political workers to help the new recruits to rid themselves as quickly as possible of the aftereffects of enemy propaganda and to prepare them to fulfill their military duty before the Motherland. "Regard educational work with conscripts from the liberated areas of the western regions of the Ukrainian SSR," it was emphasized in the directive, "as an extremely important political task of primary significance."[4] This description also concerned conscripts from the western regions of Belorussia and from Bessarabia.

---

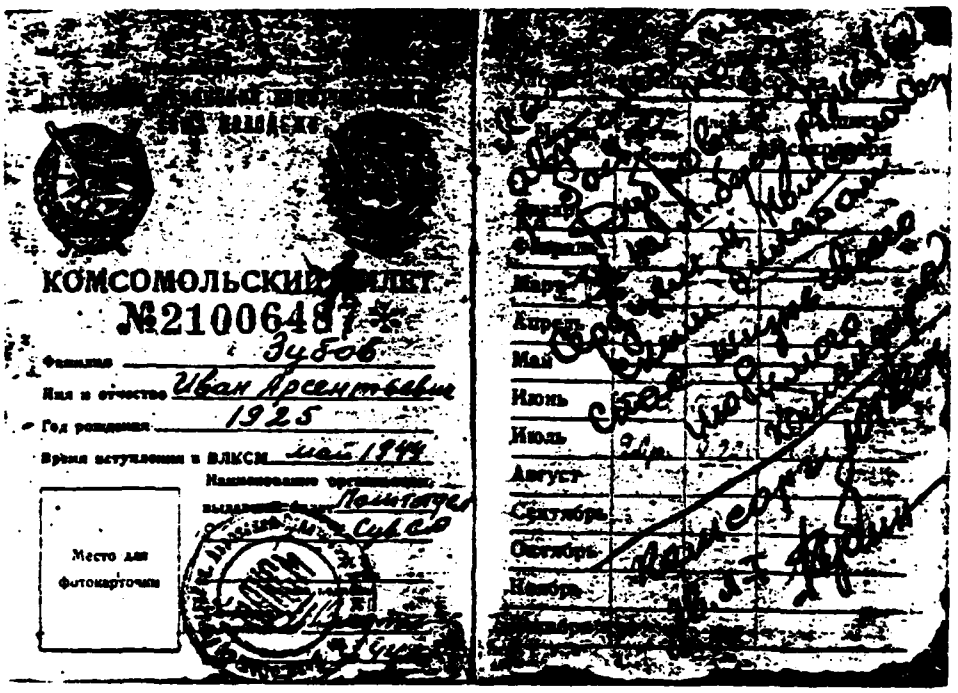
[1] CPA IML, col. 88, inv. 1, div. 972, p. 5.

[2] Archives of the MD USSR, col. 32, inv. 22152, div. 12, pp. 2-3.

[3] Ibid, pp. 6-7.

[4] IML. Documents and Materials of the Department of History of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #373, p. 1.

Speaking in July 1944 at a meeting of the Council of Military-Political Propaganda, the chief of the Main Political Directorate, A. S. Shcherbakov, said that "our work with these reinforcements must be organized differently, the approach must be entirely different. Questions that are clear for one of our Soviet people are still for them a closed book."[1]



The Komsomol card of I. A. Zubov, which was pierced by an enemy bullet. /645

Political work with the reinforcements began even before they joined the active army. Representatives of the units met the conscripts on the march or came to reserve regiments and from there accompanied them to their units, where commanders, political workers and agitators got acquainted with them, told them of the unit's campaign record, its military traditions, and the might of Soviet arms. Special talks were held with soldiers from the western regions on the significance of the victories gained by the Red Army,

[1] CPA IML, col. 88, inv. 1, div. 972, p. 6.

on the fulfillment of its mission of liberation. Seasoned soldiers imparted their experience to the young fighters and taught them to bear all of the burdens of life at the front staunchly.

The work conducted by command and political personnel played its part in the reeducation of the reinforcements. But the complete change in their political and moral state occurred when in the summer of 1944 the offensive operations of the Armed Forces of the USSR began on a wide front. Every new recruit saw in operation hundreds of Soviet airplanes, tanks and artillery guns in his sector of the front. The logic of objects, the living facts, finally dispelled the belief that many of them had in the myth of the German army's "invincibility." Military reality showed them the power and might of the Red Army, the soundness of the Soviet rear, and the inexhaustible reserves of the socialist government. "I've seen such technology for the first time," declared Private Romanenko from the Rovno region. "With it the strongest fortifications can be approached."[1] His countryman A. Shutnitskiy observed ironically, "The Germans always repeated that the /646
Red Army had been annihilated. But it turns out that only the liar Goebbels had annihilated it in words."[2]

The increased political consciousness of the reinforcement troops was shown during the battles in mass heroism. They frequently replaced division commanders in battle and saved the lives of their comrades. Many of them received government awards even during the first days of the offensive. For example, in the 130th rifle division of the 28th Army the regimental commanders decorated 26 privates in the field of battle, and in the 54th Guards rifle division 15 privates. All of them were natives of the western regions of the Ukraine. In the 47th Army during the offensive the command group recommended 148 soldiers from among those mobilized in the western regions of the Ukrainian SSR for decoration from July 5 through 10.[3]

---

[1] Archives of the MD USSR, col. 32, inv. 22152, div. 12, p. 237.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid, inv. 142111, div. 1, p. 242.

Summarizing the military activity of the reinforcements, the political directorate of the 1st Belorussian front reported to the Main Political Directorate that "the officers give a favorable evaluation of the military qualities of the soldiers conscripted from the western regions and of their conduct in battle."[1]

Thus, as the result of ideological influences, well-thought out organizational measures and the effect of the circumstances at the front, the reinforcement soldiers received political and military training and became regular soldiers.

As the end of the war approached some servicemen began to display a mood of being tired of the war. Some did not want to improve their battle training. Such moods presented a certain danger, and the political organs fought against them energetically. In addition to political educational work they took steps to give the soldiers, especially veterans of the Patriotic War, the opportunity to rest without any detriment to the cause. At some fronts in many armies and divisions rest clubs were formed for soldiers, sergeants and officers. Seminars and studies with commanders and political workers were so conducted as to combine military and political study with cultural rest. In many regiments and divisions special meetings were held of sergeants and soldiers who had been at the front for a long time. Commanders and political organs did all they could to see that veterans of the war were treated with respect in the units and that the most deserving of them were promoted and recommended for decoration.

Thus the CC AUCP(b), SDC and Main Political Directorate of the Workers and Peasants Army guided the military councils of the fronts, the commanders and political workers toward timely completion of the new tasks that had arisen in connection with the movement of military operations onto the territory of bourgeois states. The realization of those tasks depended to an enormous degree on the further strengthening of the Party organizations and

---

[1] Archives of the MD USSR, col. 32, inv. 22152, div. 12, p. 241.

on their influence on the entire army personnel.

In 1944, as in previous years, political organs and Party organizations conducted a great deal of work to enlist into the Party servicemen who had fought heroically for the freedom and independence of the Motherland. On January 1, 1944 there were 2,549,945 people in the Party organizations of the Red Army. In spite of considerable losses the number of Communists increased by 12 percent during the year, and was 2,851,426 on January 1, 1945.[1]

In October 1944 the CC AUCP(b), observing the growth and strengthening of the army Party organizations as a positive phenomenon, pointed out the necessity of observing the principle of individual acceptance into the Party very strictly in order to eliminate any possibility of infiltration into its ranks of doubtful people, unworthy to bear the high title of Communist. In a directive of the Main Political Directorate of the Red Army of October 14, 1944, approved by the Organizational Bureau of the CC AUCP(b), the main attention of the political organs and Party organizations was /647
turned toward increasing the ideological-political education of Party members and candidates.[2]

The strengthening of army Party organizations, the growth of the political consciousness of Communists, and as a result the increase in the quality of all Party-political work among the troops, were the most important conditions for the fulfillment of the new tasks facing the Red Army at the final stage of the war.

---

[1] Archives of the MD USSR, col. 32, inv. 64595, div. 3, p. 1.

[2] IML. Documents and Materials of the Department of History of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #367, pp. 1-7.

3. The role of literature and art in educational work.

In the ideological-educational work of the Party among the workers and soldiers of the Red Army in 1944, as in the previous war years, a large part was played by literature and art. Writers, artists, cinema and theater figures were active helpers of the Communist Party, its propagandists and agitators. The heroic feats of the Soviet people at the front and in the rear, depicted in works of art, and images of heroes inspired millions of people to the struggle with the hated enemy.

The ideas of Soviet patriotism, friendship of the peoples of the USSR, proletarian internationalism, faithfulness to military duty, and devotion to the Motherland and the Communist Party were the leitmotif of the works of our artistic masters. In connection with the realization of the liberation mission by the Red Army the ideals of proletarian internationalism sounded in them still more strongly. Propaganda by artistic methods of the

superiority of the Soviet social order over the bourgeois was intensified. This acquired particular significance when the Red Army began to smash the Hitlerite forces in the territory of capitalist countries.

In popularity, accessibility, effect on peoples' consciousness and variety of genres the first place was occupied, beyond doubt, by literature. It responded rapidly to all burning issues, agitating the soldiers and the workers in the rear. In their works Soviet writers were not limited to a simple of events that had occurred. Encroaching actively into life, they themselves presented new questions concerning the peoples' struggle at the front and in the rear. In 1944 there were approximately 800 writers at the fronts of the Great Patriotic War. Positioned among the soldiers and sometimes taking direct part in military operations, they had the opportunity to study life at the front and to penetrate the thoughts and feelings of soldiers and officers. Constant association with the soldiers enriched the creative imagination of the writers and inspired them to create new, true to life works.

Publicism, as before, was a powerful weapon - essays, articles, pamphlets and satires. However, unlike the first years of the war, major artistic works began to appear, many of which are correctly placed by our society among the finest examples of Soviet literature. Thus, in 1944 the first chapters of M. A. Sholokhov's novel They Fought for the Motherland rirst saw light, as did the stories of L. M. Leonov The Taking of Velikoshumsk and of A. O. Sakse Returning to Life; the poems of D. Dzhabayev Songs of War were an important event in poetry, as well as A Letter from a Foxhole by M. Dzhalil' and the new chapters of A. T. Tvardovskiy's poem Vasiliy Terkin, a poem that later inspired the artist Yu. M. Neprintsev to create the painting "Rest After the Battle."

Short stories occupied a place of honor, as before. A. N. Tolstoy's /648
story The Russian Character became widely known during that period. In it the writer clearly showed the distinguishing features of the Russian nation: inflexible will, tenacity, nobility, modesty, daring, and the ability

to overcome difficulties. "Yes, there they are, Russian characters!" wrote A. Tolstoy. "The person seems simple, but when a grim misfortune comes, in the great or the small, a great strength arises in him - human beauty."[1] Such works nurtured a feeling of courage in all Soviet people, instilled in theman unwavering faith in their strength, increased their will to victory. "We were unable to read that story, so simple and accessible to a soldier's heart, without agitation," wrote front-line soldiers to A. N. Tolstoy.[2]

Writers and poets of all brotherly union republics devoted great attention in 1944 to the important theme of the liberating role of the Red Army. Ya. Kolas (K. M. Mitskevich) and P. F. Glebka, S. Neris (Bachinskayte-Buchene) and N. I. Nagnibeda, P. G. Tychina and A. M. Upit and many others celebrated the heroic feat of the soldiers-liberators. The inspiring poems The Ukraine is Liberated by M. Ryl'skiy, Greetings, Vilnius! by S. Neris, Often in My Thoughts I See the Carpathians by N. Nagnibeda, Belarusi by P. Glebka and others had great educational value.

The Soviet soldier - the bearer of the most progressive ideas - was shown life size in correspondence from the front, clear in form and deep in content, by B. L. Gorbatov and B. N. Polevoy. In his essays Order of Lenin, Belgrade Stories, On the Cliffs of Norway, K. M. Simonov painted an impressive picture of the ecstatic meetings of the Soviet soldier-liberators and the population of Europe. Writers and journalists located in the active army also elucidated military and political events in an accessible artistic form. Even questions of the art of war found their reflection in some front-line essays, for example in the series of essays of M. G. Bragin, Maneuvers and Thrust by Tank Formations.

In 1944 many essays and articles appeared that with great artistic power exposed the seeming "culture," the outer gloss and the spiritual poverty of the bourgeois world. Thus, L. S. Sobolev published a series of

---

[1] "Pravda," 10 May 1944.

[2] Writers in the Patriotic War 1941-1945. Letters of Readers. M., Goslitmuzey, 1946, p. 26.

articles in "Pravda" under the general title "Roads of Victory." The voice of the author rang out as a passionate summons when he addressed the Soviet soldiers: "We still have to pass through foreign countries. Much bright outward tinsel will blind your eyes, soldiers. Do not believe the deceptive illusions of that seeming civilization. Look into the heart of the country, see the people's soul: it will not deceive you, it will show you what the culture of that country is like. And remember: true culture is walking with you. That is your love for humanity, it is the torments you have borne for them, it is our dream of justice, of the friendship of peoples, of happiness for all..."[1] The wrathful articles and lampoons of I. G. Erenburg castigated fascist ideology, revealing its misanthropic nature. In 1944 a series of his lampoons with the characteristic title "In the Fascist Menagerie" were published in "Pravda." In a witty, satirical form the writer showed repulsive images of the Hitlerite scoundrels. They evoked in the reader hatred, a feeling of loathing, and a desire to clear the land of that nasty lot as quickly as possible.

Considering the growing interest of the Soviet people in questions of the art of war, the central newspapers and magazines often published the articles of military historians and writers in their pages. "Pravda," for example, printed the article by Lt. Gen. Ye. A. Shilovskiy, "The Growth of the Military Skill of the Red Army," and "Krasnaya Zvezda" and the magazine "Bol'shevik" published articles by Maj. Gen. N. A. Talenskiy on the Iasi-Kishinyev operation.

Writers continued to follow the workdays of workers and kolkhoz members with great attention. Many stories and essays were devoted to their heroic /649 labor in 1944. A. A. Surkov published letters on the Soviet rear, Fires of the Great Urals; A. A. Karavayeva brought out an essay, Brigade Leader Aleksandr Shashkov, and M. S. Shaginyan the essay In the Goriyskiy Kolkhozes. The writers showed the link of the rear with the front as one source of our army's strength.

---

[1] "Pravda," 24 September 1944.

The near prospect of total victory over the enemy engendered works toward the end of the war devoted to themes of peace. One of the first harbingers of the post-war theme was V. V. Ovechkin's tale Greetings From the Front. Created at a time when the rumble of guns had not fallen silent, it was already full of thoughts about constructive labor and of the difficulties yet to be overcome. Thus writers helped the soldiers to comprehend the tasks that would face them immediately after the end of the war.

Our Party and Soviet press sharply criticized writers who stood to one side from the intense struggle with the enemy and produced vicious, anti-artistic works. In 1944 the story Before the Rising of the Sun by M. M. Zoshchenko was justly criticized as a work alien to Soviet literature. Zoshchenko, forgetting his responsibility to the people, showed the spiritual world of Soviet people in a distorted form. "Zoshchenko's tale," wrote the magazine "Bol'shevik," "has nothing in common with our time; it is alien to the feelings and thoughts of our people."[1] Criticism by the press had an influence not only on the development of literature, but on the ideological education of the workers as well. It helped the reader to penetrate into the idea of the work more deeply, to correctly understand what comprised the progressive and the new, and what perverted the people's moral makeup.

In its struggle with fascism and its ideology and morals the Communist Party attached great importance to propaganda of the humanistic and patriotic traditions of the literature and art of the past. The works of our best writers and artists were imbued with love for the Motherland, the ideas of humanism and democracy - all that fascism opposed, and for which Soviet people fought to the death. In spite of the tense military situation, the Communist Party and the Soviet government found it possible to observe, with the entire people, the jubilees of the great representatives of Russian culture I. Ye. Repin, N. V. Gogol', A. S. Griboyedov, I. A. Krylov, N. A. Rimskiy-Korsakov, and the 40th anniversaty of the death of A. P. Chekhov.

---

[1] "Bol'shevik," 1944, No. 10-11, p. 45.

In connection with the 150th anniversary of the date of A. S. Griboyedov's birth, L. M. Leonov wrote in an article that was in the nature of a sincere talk with the reader, that our great spiritual forerunners were not "eternal" and indifferent fellow-travelers, but our real comrades in arms and participants in our battles and campaigns. They were "the same laborers of their age as you and I," Leonov remarked. "Unseen, keeping pace, they stride with us, and in the rustling of our banners we hear their breathing."[1] Revealing the organic link between the best aspects of the literary heritage of A. P. Chekhov and the contemporary, an editorial in "Pravda" showed that during the years of the war Chekhov grew even closer to us. His words rang out in angry protest against the savagery and obscurantism of the Hitlerite invaders, who had become like wild beasts. On July 15 "Pravda" published the statements of Red Army soldiers about their favorite author. In one it was said, "Anton Chekhov, that great optimist and humanist, was with us even during the war."[2]

Political satire was also widely employed in 1944. A place of honor here belonged to the immortal images created by the great Russian fable-writer I. A.Krylov, the centennial of whose death was observed by our country in November 1944. By that time the adventuristic Hitlerite strategy, /650 unraveling at the seams, recalled Trikshi's caftan. In a report by the Soviet Information Bureau on the military and political results of three years of war it was stated that "the situation of the Hitlerite clique recalls the fate of the frog in Krylov's fable, which ventured to compete with a bullock in girth and started to puff and swell up, but burst from the strain and died."[3] In the satires of D. I. Zaslavskiy, the fables and poems of D. Bednyy (Ye. A.Pridvorov), S. Ya. Marshak, and S. V. Mikhalkov, the caricatures of the Kurkryniks (M. V. Kupriyanov, P. N. Krylov and N. A. Sokolov) and V. Ye. Yefimov, Krylov's images of the envious frog, the "repentent" snake, and the moralist-wolf Trikshi, patching his caftan, acquired a new political coloring.

---

1 "Pravda," 14 January 1945.

2 "Pravda," 15 July 1944.

3 Report of the Soviet Information Bureau, Book 6, p. 292.

Cinematic art remained a powerful means of ideological education of the masses. In April 1944 the Soviet government conferred orders and medals on approximately 500 cinematographic workers. This testified to its gratitude for their great service to the people. In the difficult conditions of wartime many highly ideological feature films were created. In 1944 alone 26 full-length films appeared on the country's screens. Some of them, for example "Zoya," "Invasion" (Nashestviye), "Person No. 217" (Chelovek No. 217), "Six O'Clock in the Evening After the War" (Shest' Chasov Vecherom Posle Voyny), and "Dzhurgay's Shield" (Shchit Dzhurgaya) have stood the test of time and won the recognition of the people.

In the films devoted to the struggle of the peoples of the USSR with the Hitlerite invaders the finest features of Soviet people were vividly portrayed. The film "Zoya" (director L. A. Arnshtam, performer of the title role G. V. Volyanitskaya) depicted the immortal deed of the loyal daughter of our homeland, Zoya Kosmodem'yanskaya. The service of the creative collective is in the fact that the film shows not only the deed itself, but its causes: fervent love for the Motherland, high moral intelligence and burning hatred of the fascist oppressors. For many thousands of Soviet citizens, especially youths and girls, the unforgettable image of Zoya became an example of service to one's people. In this lay the enormous educational value of the film.

The film "Invasion" (director A. M. Room, performers of the leading roles actors O. P. Zhakov, V. V. Vanin, O. A. Zhizneva), taken from L. M. Leonov's play of the same name, told of the harsh and courageous struggle of Soviet people behind enemy lines. Implacability to fascism, inflexible will, readiness for self-sacrifice - these are the main moral qualities characteristic of the heroes of this work of cinema.

The film "Person No. 217" (director M. I. Romm, performer of the main role Ye. A. Kuz'mina) rang out as a wrathful protest against fascist barbarism. It told of the grim fate of Soviet people driven by the Hitlerites

into forced labor in Germany. German landholders and kulaks, factory owners and major officials did all they could to deprive them of their individuality: they replaced names with numbers, branded them like cattle, and subjected them to refined tortures. But no humiliations by the 20th-century slave owners could break the morale of our countrymen. The film taught the country to struggle against the enemy under all conditions and to be unswerving and steadfast in protecting the interests of the Motherland.

The resolution of the CC AUCP(b) of May 15, 1944 "On the production of newsreels and documentary films" was a notable event in the history of Soviet documentary film. In it it was observed that the newsreels that were being produced did not reflect the power and scope of our troops' offensive, the heroism and military skill of Soviet soldiers, and the power of our military technology. The Central Committee of the Party demanded "the creation of documentary films and newsreels on the Patriotic War on a high artistic level, opportunely and truly depicting the military operations of Soviet troops, the heroism and great military skill of our soldiers and officers, the might of Soviet technology and its skillful application in battle, and /652 the national support of the Red Army by the workers of the Soviet rear."[1] This resolution testified to the important place given by the Communist Party to documentary cinematography in the propaganda of our successes at the front and in the rear. The extremely important military events of 1944 found their reflection in such documentary films as "Victory in the Right-Bank Ukraine" (Pobeda na Pravoberezhnoy Ukraine), "Battle for Sevastopol'" (Bitva za Sevastopol'), "The Liberation of Soviet Belorussia" (Osvobozhdeniye Sovyetskoy Belorussiyi), "The Entrance of the Red Army into Bucharest," (Vstupleniye Krasnoy Armiyi v Bukharest), "The Entrance of the Red Army into Bulgaria," (Vstupleniye Krasnoy Armiyi v Bulgariyu), "The Liberation of the Capital of Yugoslavia - Belgrade," (Osvobozhdeniye Stolitsy Yugoslaviyi - Belgrada), "Budapest" (Budapesht). These films entered history as a chronicle, depicted on film, of the military operations of the third period of the Patriotic War, although some of them were not without the influence of Stalin's cult of personality.

---

[1] IML. Documents and Materials of the Department of History of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #375, p. 2.

Some of the books that were issued in 1944

/651

Training films also occupied a significant place in film production. Of 89 films released in 1944, 35 fell to the share of military instructional and military training films. A series of training films, the so-called "cinema-courses," were created: "Guards Mortars," "Fire Preparation of the Tank Operator,""The Infantry in Battle," "Aircraft Operation" and others. With the help of the expressive resources of the cinema, the might and reliability of our homeland's arms, and the necessity of mastering military technology, were graphically propagandized.

An important part in mobilizing the spiritual forces of the people for the final defeat of the enemy was played by figures of Soviet theatrical art. At the beginning of 1944 the collective of the State Academic Malyy Theater, the oldest in the country, addressed all theatrical workers with a call to increase the scope of military sponsorship work. The figures of the Soviet stage fervently took up the call. In connection with the 26th anniversary of the Armed Forces alone over 100 concert and theatrical troups were sent to the active army and the navy, including artists of the largest theaters in the country: the State Academic Bol'shoy and Malyy Theaters, the Moscow Artistic Academic Theater (MAAT) named for M. Gor'kiy, the theater named for Ye. Bakhtangov, the Musical-Dramatic Theater named for K. S. Stanislavskiy and V. I. Nemirovich-Danchenko, the Kharkov Theater of Ukrainian Drama named for T. G. Shevchenko, Belorussian dramatic theaters, and many others.

In a letter to the workers of the Malyy Theater after their performance at the front one serviceman wrote, "Thank you dear comrades. You poured so much power and energy into us with your art!"[1] Sharing his impressions of the performance of a troupe of artists of the same theater, another soldier noted in his letter, "This evening emphasized with exceptional force the connection between Soviet theater, the people, and their valiant Red Army."[2]

In January 1944 the collective of the Kiev Theater of Opera and Ballet named for T. G. Shevchenko displayed valuable initiative, resolving to

---

[1] The Malyy Theater at the Fronts of the Great Patriotic War. Collection of Articles. M. - L., Izd-vo "Iskusstvo," 1949, p. 160.

[2] Ibid.

conduct a Day of Cultural Service to the Wounded Soldier. On the designated day 259 workers from the theater went to hospitals, where they gave 102 concerts, 78 of them in tents.[1] Before the wounded soldiers performed the people's beloved artists M. I. Litvenenko-Vol'gemut, Z. M. Gayday, and I. S. Patovzhinskiy. The patriotic initiative of the workers of the Ukrainian theater was praised by theatrical collectives of Moscow, Kazan', Baku and other cities.

On the stationary stage many performances were given that reflected the heroic struggle of the Soviet people with the German invaders. The play by V. V. Vishnevskiy, A. A. Kron, and V. B. Azarov, "The Sea Spreads Wide," was written in 17 days as early as 1942 on instructions from the political directorate of the Baltic Fleet. The great theme of the heroic operations /653
of the Baltic seamen was successfully unfolded in the form of a musical comedy. In 1944 the comedy ran in Moscow theaters. The Vakhtanga theater gave the play "Living Sources" by N. F.Pogodin, which spoke of a patriotic movement of the Soviet people, the collection of resources for the fund of the Red Army. The Moscow Theater named for the Leninist Komsomol staged the play "It Will Be So" by K. M. Simonov. These performances, like many others, testified to the fervent, insistent desire of the theater's active figures - dramaturgists, directors, and actors - to reveal the nature of Soviet man, and the sources of his feats of labor and arms, more fully and deeply.

In ideological-educational work a place of honor belonged to our artists, who struck blows on the enemy with brush and pencil. Easel painting and posters, caricatures and sketches - all genres of the fine arts were employed by Soviet propagandists. P. A. Krivonogov's painting "The Korsun'-Shchenko Slaughter" evoked many thoughts. The artist depicted the field of battle, strewn with the corpses of Hitlerites, and covered with German fighting equipment that had been turned into a heap of metal. What might had to be mastered to crush that mass of enemy manpower and equipment! This was a field of glory of the Red Army and a field of shame to the German fascist

[1] See "Literatura i iskusstvo," 29 January 1944.

invaders. The painting evoked pride in our army and a feeling of hatred and contempt for those who came to our land to steal and kill.

The desire of Soviet artists to walk in step with the extremely important events occurring at the front must be emphasized. In the spring of 1944 at several fronts field workshops were installed on trucks, which moved after the advancing troops. Walking a long road with the army, the artists gathered very rich material. Studies, sketches, and watercolors reflected the personal observations of the artists. The service by the masters of the studio of war artists named for M. V. Grekov was great. Leading artists of that group, N. N. Zhukov, A. V. Kokorin, and N. M. Avvakumov, showed in their finest works the swiftness and might of the Soviet troops' advance in the spring of 1944.

Posters and caricatures occupied a large place in figurative art during that period of the war. Their clarity and political acuteness promoted their exceptional popularity. Thus, for example, the posters of L. F. Golovanov "Soldier, liberate Soviet people from fascist captivity," and "We will reach Berlin," and many posters of I. M. Toidze, gained wide popularity. Among artist-caricaturists, masters of graphics and newspaper drawing, a prominent role was played by the Kukyrniks, who regularly published their works in "Pravda," B. Ye. Yefimov, Yu. A. Ganf, K. S. Yeliseyev, and L. G. Brodata. The works of Soviet graphic artists enjoyed wide fame: D. A. Shmarinov (the series of drawings "We will not forget, we will not forgive"), B. I. Prorokov ("Aryan warriors"), and others. The caricatures of our talented artists ridiculed the Hitlerite clique with deadly sarcasm. The capabilities of that genre made it possible to respond quickly to events taking place on the Soviet-German front and in international life. In "Windows of TASS" P. P. Sokolov-Skalya, P. M. Shukhmin, N. F. Denisovskiy and M. M. Cheremnykh were constant colleagues.

The images of the heroes of the Patriotic War were immortalized in the works of Soviet sculptors. At that time the sculptor Ye. V. Vuchetich worked on plans for monuments to fallen Soviet generals - the commander of the 1st Ukrainian front Gen. N. F. Vatutin and Lt. Gen. M. G. Yefremov, and

the sculptor N. V. Tomskiy was working on a monument to Gen. I. R. Apanasenko. Sculptural portraits of the famous fliers, the three-time Hero of the Soviet Union A. I. Pokryshkin and two time Hero of the Soviet Union B. F. Safonov, two-time Hero of the Soviet Union tank operator I. N. Boyko, the submariner-heroes I. A. Kolyshkin, N. A. Lunin and I. I. Fisanovich, the renowned partisan commanders S. A. Kovpak and A. F. Fyedorov and many others were created by I. G. Pershudchev and L. Ye. Kerbbel'. "The portrait of the Hero of the Soviet Union, Lt. Col. Sychenko," said the sculptor Pershudchev to /654 correspondence from "Komsomol'skaya Pravda," "I modeled from life at a temporary airfield. All of the work took place before the eyes of the fliers."[1] In 1944-1945 the well-known sculptor, People's Artist of the RSFSR M. G. Manizer, fruitfully continued to work. His sculptural group "Partisans," which was installed at the Moscow "Izmaylovskaya" subway station, symbolized the resolution of Soviet people not to submit to the enemy.

Soviet artists and sculptors made a significant contribution to the cause of restoration of the liberated cities and towns. Masters of brush and knife took part in the restoration of historical monuments that had been ruined by the fascist vandals, architects created plans for the restoration of cities and towns, attempting to make them more beautiful than before. With their poster-summons and drawings artists helped the Party to mobilize the workers for the swift liquidation of the results of fascist occupation. For example, the artist A. F. Pakhomov glorified the heroic labor of the people of Leningrad in the renewal of their city in a series of drawings on the subject, "The Restoration of Leningrad."

Figures of Soviet music were in step with their brothers in arms, writers and workers in the fine arts. In the works of N. Ya. Myaskovskiy, D. B. Kabalevskiy and D.D.Shostakovich written during that period the heroic feats of Soviet people were glorified. Composers and song and lyric writers

[1] "Komsomol'skaya Pravda," 18 February 1944.

responded quickly to all events occurring in the rear and at the front. At that time the Red Army was waging battle far from its native land. The thoughts and feelings of the soldiers, their love for the Homeland, found expression in many songs. A clear example of this is the song by M. I. Blanter to M. V. Isakovskiy's verses, "Under Balkan Stars":

> And under Balkan stars,
> We remember, and with reason,
> Sights of Yaroslav and Bryansk,
> And of Smolensk.

Thus Soviet literature and art made no small contribution to the ideological victory over German fascism. Figures in literature and art fully subordinated their talents and abilities to the interests of the final defeat of the fascist horde. Their finest works helped the Communist Party to educate the soldiers and the workers of the rear in the spirit of high moral intelligence, selfless heroism and moral purity, in the spirit of boundless devotion to the Motherland.

The multinational character of Soviet literature and art was displayed as never before. National in form, socialist in content, the works of Soviet writers, artists, composers, script writers, and directors played an important role in the education of the workers in the spirit of Soviet patriotism and proletarian internationalism. These works expressed the desire of all peoples of the country to conclusively rout the enemy.

In the winter and summer-fall military campaigns of 1944 the Soviet people and their Armed Forces gained historic victories over fascist Germany. However, the commanders and political workers always remembered that the enemy had only been brought to the brink, and if he was not pushed over, our victories, gained at such a great cost, could be lost. It was necessary to complete not only the military, but also the moral and political defeat of German fascism. Further mobilization of the peoples' spiritual strength was required. To the performance of this task the mass political and ideological work of the Party in the rear and at the front was subordinated in 1944.

The expulsion of the Hitlerite invaders from the borders of the Mother- /655
land faced the Party with the task of liquidating the moral and political consequences of the German fascist occupation. The Communist Party mobilized the working masses of the liberated regions to overcome these consequences and for the struggle against nationalist and espionage-diversionary agents left on Soviet soil by the Hitlerites.

The Communist Party conducted great ideological-educational work in connection with the movement of military operations into the territory of capitalist states and the realization by the Red Army of its liberating mission. The activity of the political organs, Party and Komsomol organizations was directed toward assuring that each of our soldiers and officers deeply understood the international-historical, liberating nature of the military operations by the Armed Forces of the USSR in Europe. The Soviet soldier walked through European countries with pride in his Motherland, bearing the high title of liberator of the peoples with honor.

The calls and slogans of the Communist Party and the heroic feats of the Soviet people at the front and in the rear inspired Soviet writers and artists, composers and cinema figures to create bright, memorable works that promoted the strengthening of the brotherly family of peoples of the USSR, and the ideological education of the workers. The Communist Party breathed into the people the new strength so needed to strike the final blows on the enemy.

CHAPTER 21

STRENGTHENING AND EXPANDING THE ANTIFASCIST COALITION THE STRUGGLE OF THE USSR FOR A DEMOCRATIC POST-WAR ORGANIZATION OF THE WORLD AND THE SECURITY OF PEOPLES

1. The international significance of the victories of the Soviet Armed Forces in 1944

In 1944 historic events took place on the Soviet-German front that /656
radically changed the strategic and political situation in Europe and had enormous international significance. The mighty blows of the Armed Forces of the USSR shook Hitlerite Germany to its foundations. The Red Army, crushing the German fascist defense in various sectors of the Soviet-German front during the year, overturned the Hitlerites' calculations on conducting lengthy defense operations. It expelled the occupiers from the territory of our Motherland, and liberated tens of millions of Soviet people.

In April 1944 the Soviet troops entered the northeastern regions of Rumania, and in August-September began an offensive throughout its entire territory. In the first days of September they crossed the border of Bulgaria, at the end of September they crossed into Hungary, and in October into Germany. By its military operations the Red Army removed from the war on the side of fascist Germany all of its satellites, Rumania, Bulgaria, Finland and Hungary, in the territory of which, comprising 778,000 square kilometers, 34,434,000 people had lived in 1937.[1]

By the end of the year fascist Germany was without allies in Europe. This meant that it had irrecoverably lost not only the armed forces of the countries that had participated in the war against the USSR and other countries of the anti-fascist coalition, but also major industrial regions /657 as well as considerable raw material and food resources.

In 1944 the Soviet Armed Forces, in the composition of which the 1st Polish Army also operated, liberated almost the entire territory of Poland east of the Vistula. Together with units of the 1st Czechoslovak army corps, the 4th and 1st Rumanian Armies, the Red Army drove the German fascist invaders out of the eastern regions of Czechoslovakia. Cooperating with the People's Liberation Army of Yugoslavia and Bulgarian troops, it cleared the eastern regions of Yugoslavia of the enemy and liberated Belgrade jointly with units of the PLAY. Exploiting the advantageous conditions created as the result of the defeat of the German forces in the Balkans, the people of Albania drove the occupiers out of the bounds of their homeland.

The collapse of the Hitlerite bloc put Germany in a difficult position. Countries such as Turkey, Argentina, and Sweden, which had previously provided considerable support, began to withdraw from it. Fascist Germany was almost totally isolated in both the political and the economic respects.

---

[1] See Statistical Yearbook 1949-1950. United Nations. New York, 1950, pp. 24-25.

At the same time the victories of the Soviet Union promoted the expansion and strengthening of the antifascist coalition. Delivered from the fascist yoke, Rumania, Bulgaria, then Hungary as well entered the war against Hitlerite Germany. The Resistance movement intensified in the occupied countries. Although in the ruling circles of the USA and England, particularly in Churchill, these successes caused growing mistrust of the USSR, on the whole in 1944 the military cooperation of the leading powers in the coalition - the USSR, the USA and England - was strengthened still more. The opening of the second front in Western Europe in June 1944 was a clear expression of this.

For the first time during the war the mighty, crushing blows of the Red Army began to be combined with the offensive operations of the Allied forces in Western Europe. In spite of the fact that the second front was very late in opening and did not lead to the withdrawal of units of Hitlerite troops from the Soviet-German front, nevertheless by their actions the Allies tied down the German fascist army's forces located in France, Belgium and Holland, diverted part of its strategic reserves toward themselves, and then deprived Germany of a number of occupied territories of economic importance. Undoubtedly the opening of the second front in Europe tied down large German forces (before June 6 the Allies were opposed by 60 enemy divisions, and by the end of the year by 73). This helped the Soviet troops to complete the liberation of the socialist Motherland quickly. But it is even more obvious that without the mighty offensive operations of the Red Army in the summer of 1944, which paralyzed enormous enemy forces, the troops of our allies would have been unable to drive the German fascist forces so quickly from Central Italy, France and Belgium.[1] The coordinated

[1] By the start of the summer-fall campaign the Red Army tied down 228 divisions and 23 brigades of the enemy, 179 divisions and 5 brigades of those German (see Chapter 4, p. 125). From June through December the German command group transferred 60 more divisions and 13 brigades to the Soviet-German front. During the same period only 12 divisions and 5 brigades were transferred from the Soviet-German front to the West (Collected Materials on the Composition of the Forces of Fascist Germany, 4th Ed., pp. 89-215).

operations by Soviet and American-British forces undertaken against the fascist aggressor from the east, west and south had positive results. Germany finally found itself gripped in a vise between two fronts. Thus in the second half of 1944 the resolution of the three powers to operate jointly in the war against Germany achieved at the Teheran Conference at the end of 1943 began to be realized.

The military collaboration of the Allies was not expressed only in that. It also took on other forms, although it is true that they were less important. For example, the Soviet command group supported the air forces of the USA and England in the conduct of shuttle bombing operations against Hitlerite Germany. For that purpose several airfields were designated in the territory of the USSR in the region of Poltava to base American and British airplanes. Visiting the USSR in June 1944, the commander in chief of the Mediterranean Allied Air Forces conveyed his gratitude to the Soviet government "for the splendid bases provided by the Soviet Union."[1] /658

In 1944 the exchange of military-technical information and experience of the conduct of military operations between the Allies was expanded. After the opening of the second front the General Staff of the Soviet Armed Forces and the Headquarters of the Allied command group began to inform one another regularly on the course of operations.[2] In July 1944 the Soviet Supreme High Command permitted the commander of the USA tactical air forces, Maj. Gen. D. Kennon, to familiarize himself "with methods of cooperation by our air forces with the troops of the front."[3]

During this period a further strengthening took place of the relations between the Soviet Union and France, to which, above all, the treaty of alliance and mutual aid concluded December 10, 1944 testified.[4] The policy

---

[1] Archives of the Foreign Policy of the USSR, col. 06, inv. 6, pt. 55, div. 638, p. 1.

[2] IML. Documents and Materials of the Department of History of the Great Patriotic War, Inv. #17560, p. 19.

[3] Archives of the Foreign Policy of the USSR, col. 06, inv. 6, pt. 53, div. 621, p. 17.

[4] This is discussed in more detail in Chapter 17.

of the USSR concerning France was directed toward its restoration to a great power. The connections between our country and other allied states of Western Europe - Belgium, Holland Norway, Luxembourg - were strengthened.

The relations of the Soviet Union and the countries of Central and Southeastern Europe took on a new form. In that part of the world, as the result of Germany's catastrophic defeats, the political situation had changed radically. The people, delivered from fascism, started, under the leadership of Communist and worker's parties, on the road to deep revolutionary reorganizations, on the road to the construction of a new life. In some of those countries, for example in Bulgaria and Poland, even in 1944 people's democratic governments were formed, and in others governments were formed under which the development of the mass political struggle to establish truly people's democratic power was possible.

The Soviet Union conducted a policy of noninterference in the internal affairs of the liberated peoples and respect for their national interests. In bringing its troops into the territory of foreign states, the government of the USSR announced that it was not pursuing the goal of acquiring any part of the territory or changing the existing social order in those countries. Immediately after the liberated regions ceased to be zones of direct military operations their administration was transferred fully to national authorities.

As the result of the efforts of the USSR, the Allies also concluded truce agreements with Rumania, Bulgaria and then with Hungary as well, guaranteeing their independence and democratic development.[1] The break by these countries with Hitlerite Germany and their declaration of war - one of the main terms of the agreements - gave them the opportunity to make a contribution to the cause of finally defeating fascism and restoring their national independence. The articles calling for the dissolution of pro-Hitler

[1] The content of these agreements is elucidated in chapters 9, 10 and 13.

organizations, the banning of propaganda directed against the antifascist coalition, the immediate release from prison of all political prisoners and the trial of war criminals had enormous significance for the democratization of political life. This undermined the reaction's position, paralyzed its forces, and at the same time developed the initiative of the popular masses, promoting their active inclusion in political life. The articles of the agreement that proposed the establishment of the power of national administration in the entire territory cleared of the enemy except the front-line zone, were directed toward ensuring the sovereignty of the liberated countries. On the basis of these principled positions of the truce agreements, the representatives of the USSR in the Allied monitoring commissions thwarted all attempts by the Anglo-American representatives to form anti-democratic governments and to establish reactionary regimes against the peoples' will. The Soviet government used every means to promote the consolidation of the international positions of the Polish National Liberation Committee, the National Liberation Committee of Yugoslavia, the democratic government of Albania and the government of the Patriotic Front in Bulgaria. /659

The USSR, true to its unchanged policy of defending the independence of small peoples, gave not only political but also economic support to the countries of Central and Southeastern Europe. In spite of great economic difficulties caused by the war, the Soviet Union helped them to restore their ruined economies quickly and return life to normal, thereby earning the deep gratitude of the working masses.

M. Spykhal'skiy, the leader of a delegation from Warsaw, said on arriving in Moscow in October 1944, "Warsaw-Prague not only was liberated by the joint efforts of the Red Army and the Polish Forces, but immediately after its liberation it received generous assistance from the brotherly Soviet Union."[1]

The Ambassador of Czechoslovakia to the USSR, Z. Firlinger, wrote in a note to the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs on November 5, 1944,

---

[1] Quot. from Foreign Policy of the Soviet Union during the Patriotic War, Vol. II, p. 305.

"We are deeply touched by the attention of the Soviet government to the needs of the peoples of the Czechoslovak territory liberated by the unparalleled feats of the Red Army; I permit myself in the name of all who have received this help to express deep gratitude to the Soviet government."[1]

Appearing at a meeting of the Antifascist Veche on August 8, 1945, the head of the Yugoslav government, I. Tito, remarked, "The Soviet government provided us with a large quantity of the most varied modern weaponry, starting with rifles and ending with tanks and aircraft. We were thus able to arm many of our divisions and make them capable of completing the difficult task facing them. With the help of the glorious Red Army Belgrade and Serbia were rapidly liberated."[2]

Between the USSR and the countries starting out on the road of democratic development an entirely new type of relationship began to be established - a relationship of brotherhood, friendship and mutual aid based on the principles of proletarian internationalism. The Soviet Union tried to eliminate from relations with the liberated countries absolutely everything that could cause any conflict, dissatisfaction, mistrust or intrigues. In this our Party rested on its enormous experience and the immortal teachings of Marxism-Leninism. As early as October 1922 Lenin wrote, "Our experience has created in us the unwavering conviction that only enormous attentiveness to the interests of different nations eliminates the grounds for conflicts, eliminates mutual mistrust, eliminates the danger of any type of intrigue, creates that trust, especially in workers and peasants who speak different languages, without which peaceful relations between peoples or any successful development of all that is valuable in modern civilization are absolutely impossible."[3] The fulfillment of the great Lenin's behest was facilitated by the fact that the leading role in the liberated countries was played by

---

[1] Quot. from Soviet-Czech relations during the Patriotic War 1941-1945. Documents and Materials. M., Gospolitizdat, 1960, p. 214.

[2] I. B. Tito. Sabrana dela. Izgradn'a nove Jugoslavije,II,Knige Dva, p. 114.

[3] V. I. Lenin. Works, Vol. 33, p. 349.

Communist and worker's parties, which shared with the Communist Party of the Soviet Union common desires and goals, ideology, unity, on the firm basis of Marxism-Leninism.

Thanks to the outstanding victories of the Red Army and the correct foreign policy of the Soviet government, in 1944 the international authority of the USSR increased immeasurably and its international ties were strengthened. During the year the Soviet Union established diplomatic relations with Italy, Denmark, New Zealand, with the countries of Asia that had started on the road to independent development - Syria, Lebanon, Iraq - as well as with countries of Latin America - Chile, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica. While at the beginning of the Great Patriotic War the USSR had diplomatic relations with 17 countries, by the end of 1944 this number had increased to 41. /660

Under the conditions of the Soviet Armed Forces' enormous victories in 1944, the growth of the international authority of the country of socialism, and the strengthening of the antifascist coalition, all diplomatic steps by the governments of Germany and Japan, attempting to exploit the existing conflicts between the USSR, the USA and England and to split the coalition, were doomed to failure. The Hitlerite clique took a number of steps, trying to conclude a compromise peace with England and the USA. "Peace" maneuvers by Japan in Germany's favor also increased.

The Soviet Union repulsed all attempts by Germany and Japan to drive a wedge between the Allies. The government of the USSR declared several times that only an unconditional surrender by Germany could lead Europe to peace. The peoples of the world demanded the total defeat of fascist Germany. For this very reason all attempts by the enemy states aimed at a breach in the unity of the Allied powers ended in failure. However, this did not mean that the ruling circles of England and the USA were totally loyal with respect to the Soviet Union and completely rejected the possibility of a separate peace with Germany. It was no accident that the conspiracy of July 20, 1944 in Germany was connected with the highest levels of England and the USA, which

wished to save German imperialism from total defeat. The Anglo-American ruling circles were not averse to concluding a separate peace with Germany behind the back of the Soviet Union. However, the failure of the conspiracy prevented them from executing their plan.

The year 1944 was marked by new progress by the USSR in negotiations with the Allies. In spite of different social systems and the different approaches to the solution of many international problems that they caused, the Allies, thanks largely to the efforts of the USSR, found mutually acceptable solutions to questions of war, peace and security based on just democratic principles. This was shown, specifically, by the resolutions passed by the representatives of the three powers during negotiations in London (European Consulting Commission), in Moscow and at the conference in Cumbarton Oaks.

2. The activity of the European Consulting Commission in 1944

The victorious course of the war against Germany placed before the states of the antifascist coalition the question of the need to organize a permanent organ to discuss the most important international problems connected with working out the terms of the capitulation of the ene[illegible]ates, preparing and establishing the post-war world. At the Moscow conference of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the USSR, the USA and England as early as October 1943 a resolution was passed to form the European Consulting Commission (ECC). The Commission at first consisted of representatives of the three powers - the Soviet Union, the USA and England. Subsequently a representative of France also joined. Beginning its work on January 14, 1944 in London, the Commission considered a large number of questions. In connection with the rapid development of military operations in Europe, the

ECC concentrated its attention largely on German and Austrian questions. It developed terms for Germany's capitulation and agreements on the occupation of Germany and on the monitoring mechanism of the Allies there, and it also examined problems of restoring the independence of Austria. Furthermore, the ECC was occupied with agreement on truce terms with Bulgaria.

During the discussion of these questions, above all the German question, two lines in international politics appeared clearly. The Soviet Union wished to achieve the swift and total defeat of fascist Germany, the liberation of the peoples of Europe, including the German people, from Hitlerite tyranny, and the transformation of Germany into a peace-loving democratic state; the ruling circles of the United States of America and England only wished to remove Germany as a dangerous imperialist rival. /661

In developing the terms of Germany's unconditional capitulation the British (January 15, 1944) and the US delegations (January 25 and February 15) presented plans for agreements for the Commission's consideration. In addition to military articles that directly concerned the capitulation (on the end of military operations, on the occupation of Germany by Allied forces, on Germany's transfer of all military materiel to the Allies, and so on) they also contained political and economic demands pursuant to the far-ranging goals of the USA and England. Thus, for instance, in accordance with the American plan of January 25 "the period of occupation should not be limited to any specific time." This proposal was directed toward perpetuating the occupation of Germany. The US plan of February 15 called for all of Germany's resources to be given to the Allies. In the British plan it was stated that the war should end on Germany's part and on the part of the United Nations simultaneously. This would deprive the Allies of the formal basis to continue military operations against separate German military formations or irregular formations that might refuse to submit to the German high command's order to cease resistance after the declaration of Germany's general capitulation. It was characteristic that the British and American plans permitted the existence in Germany even of Nazi organizations, which

"would be found useful" and "could be preserved and converted to the performance of economic and social functions."[1]

The delegation from the USSR in the European Consulting Commission could not agree with such proposals by England and the USA. On February 15 the Soviet representative to the ECC, F. T. Gusev, on the instructions of his government, presented for the Commission's consideration a plan of terms of Germany's unconditional capitulation, containing only military demands. The Soviet side proceeded from the premise that terms for Germany's capitulation should above all call for the total surrender of its armed forces, including SS, SA and Gestapo formations and units. In connection with this the plan demanded the immediate cessation of military operations against the United Nations by all armed forces of Germany in all theaters of the war.

Unlike the British plan, the Soviet plan obliged only Germany to cease military operations, not placing such an obligation on the states of the antifascist coalition. The plan called for the immediate disarmament of all German forces and the transfer of their arms and military stores to the Allied command group. The head of the Soviet delegation to the ECC emphasized that the goal of the document of capitulation should be to hasten the victory of the Allies and draw the end of the war closer. "In Germany," he said, "there are armies, air force, a navy, comprising its armed forces. But in addition there are also SS, SA and Gestapo formations and units, which are at once civilian and military. The regime of civilian life in Germany is permeated and bound by the military or semi-military apparatus. Therefore the Allies are faced with very great tasks: not only to defeat the armed forces of Germany in open battle, but to break and smash the entire military machine of the German state."[2]

---

[1] Archives of Foreign Policy of the USSR, col. 0425, inv. 1, div. 2, pp. 20, 39.

[2] Ibid, p. 41.

The Soviet delegation opposed the inclusion of the political and economic demands proposed by the British and American representatives in the document on the terms of Germany's capitulation. The Soviet representative emphasized that if the document contained propositions like the American demand that all of Germany's means and resources be placed at the disposal of the Allies, that could be used by the German government to force the German people to continue the struggle against the Allies.[1] /662

The well-grounded position of the delegation from the USSR led to the passing of Soviet proposals as the basis in further discussion. On April 18 the delegation of the USA presented to the Commission a generalized plan for the document of Germany's unconditional capitulation. Even the American representative to the ECC, D. Weinant, acknowledged that "four-fifths of the new plan were taken from the Soviet plan for the terms of capitulation." On July 25, 1944 the European Consulting Commission signed the document "The Unconditional Capitulation of Germany." In it the military terms of capitulation above all were specified, which the delegate from the USSR had sought to achieve. The final point of the document was so formulated that the Allied governments had "complete freedom to make subsequently such additional demands as may be found necessary."[2]

From March through September the ECC discussed the question of zones of military occupation in Germany. Agreement was reached to create three occupation zones in the territory of Germany within the 1937 borders: the Soviet forces were to occupy the eastern section of Germany, the British the northwestern section, and the Americans the southwestern. With this, as the result of bilateral negotiations between the American and British governments, the USA also won the right to establish control over the ports of Bremen and Bremerhaven, which were located in the British zone, and passage for American forces through the British zone of occupation.

From March through November the ECC also discussed the question of the mechanism for supervision of Germany. A Soviet plan was submitted for the

---

[1] Archives of Foreign Policy of the USSR, col. 0425, inv. 1, div. 41, p. 63.
[2] Ibid, col. 069, inv. 27, div. 10, pp. 103, 7.

Commission's consideration proposing the structure of the monitoring mechanism in Germany for the initial period immediately following its capitulation. During the discussion of the project no serious disagreements arose, and the main part of the Soviet proposals was included in the Agreement on a Mechanism of Supervision of Germany, which was signed by the Commission on November 14, 1944. This Agreement established that during the period of Germany's fulfillment of the main demands of unconditional surrender supreme authority would be exercised by the commanders in chief of the Armed Forces of the USSR, the USA and England, each in his zone of occupation. On questions concerning Germany as a whole they were to act jointly in the capacity of member of the Control Council, the supreme organ of control in Germany. In the Agreement the following functions of the Control Council were formulated: to ensure proper coordination of the acts of the commanders in chief in the separate zones; to develop plans and achieve agreed-upon decisions on the main military, political, economic and other questions common to all of Germany; to supervise the German central administration. Furthermore, the tasks of the Coordinating Committee of the Control Council were defined. In the Commission's report, composed for the governments of the three powers, it was stated on the proposal of the Soviet delegation that the tasks of the supervisory and control organs would include "supervision of the disarmament of Germany, including the most urgent tasks of economic disarmament, of the liquidation of the Nazi regime, and preparation of conditions for the formation of organs in Germany along democratic lines."[1]

In working out the terms of capitulation, the British and American delegations displayed extreme interest from the very beginning in the question of Germany's dismemberment. However, due to the firm position of the USSR, plans to dismember Germany suffered failure. The examination of /663
that question was postponed, and the ECC did not subsequently return to it.

Thus as the result of discussion of the German problem in 1944 the European Consulting Commission, thanks to the efforts of the Soviet government,

---

[1] Archives of Foreign Policy of the USSR, col. 07, inv. 10b, pt. 46, div. 5, p. 53.

developed agreements that could, if fulfilled, promote Germany's transformation into a peace-loving democratic country. The representatives of the western powers, taking into consideration the Soviet Union's decisive role in the war, were forced to accept the plans for these agreements. They were subsequently approved by the Yalta Conference of the three powers, and after some changes in connection with France's become the fourth occupying power, were made the foundation of the corresponding agreements of the four powers on Germany's defeat, its occupation and the monitoring mechanism there after the war.

In 1944 the European Consulting Commission conducted a preliminary discussion of the Austrian question. As is well known, even in October 1943 at the conference in Moscow of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the USSR, the USA and England a declaration was passed in which the three powers stated the necessity to restore the freedom and independence of Austria. In considering that question the ECC recognized as expedient the occupation of Austria by Allied forces after its liberation. However, while working out the terms of Germany's unconditional capitulation the British and American delegates attempted to push through a resolution on Austria's occupation by British and American forces only. Thus, in the British plan of the terms of Germany's capitulation of January 15, 1944 it was directly recommended that "the government of the USA be invited to assume, if it wishes, the main responsibility for the occupation of Austria."[1] In this it was impossible not to see the desire of the western powers to prevent the liberation of Austria by Soviet troops, and to remove the USSR from participation in resolving its fate.

The Soviet delegation, naturally, could not agree with this. It directed the attention of the Commission to the fact that such a proposal contradicted the declaration of the Moscow Conference, in accordance with which Austria should be "restored through the efforts of the countries." On June 29, 1944 the Soviet delegation submitted for the consideration of the ECC a plan for

---

[1] Archives of Foreign Policy of the USSR, col. 0425, inv. 1, pt. 5, div. 24, p. 21.

an agreement by the governments of the USSR, the USA and England that "the entire territory of Austria within the boundaries existing on December 31, 1937, is to be occupied jointly by forces of the USSR, England, and the USA."[1] The representatives of England and the USA were forced to accept this proposal of the USSR. Subsequently, throughout 1945, the ECC worked out specific agreements on zones of occupation in Austria and on the control of the city of Vienna as well as on the monitoring mechanism in Austria, which were approved by the governments of the USSR, the USA, England and France.

In September-October 1944 the ECC devoted much attention to agreeing on the terms of truce with Bulgaria. With the entrance of the USSR into the war against czarist Bulgaria the plans of the USA and England concerning that country were frustrated. The governments of the western powers were forced to agree that the terms of truce with Bulgaria be discussed jointly with representatives of the USSR. However, serious disagreements arose between the three governments in considering the question. The Soviet government proposed that the truce agreement include a point stating that "Bulgaria will wage war on the side of the Allies and place the military forces that will conduct military operations under the general control of the Soviet Supreme High Command."[2] This proposal was in accordance with the actual situation. The government of the Patriotic Front, which was formed as the result of the September Uprising of the Bulgarian people, had declared war on Germany; the Bulgarian troops were already waging the struggle for the liberation of Yugoslavia and Hungary jointly with the Red Army.

However, the British and American representatives did not wish to reflect in the agreement the fact of people's Bulgaria in the war against Germany on the side of the Allies. They agreed only that part of the Bulgarian armed forces should be put at the disposal of the Union (Soviet) Supreme High Command on the condition that "under no circumstances will such armed forces be used in Allied territory without the agreement of the

---

[1] Archives of Foreign Policy of the USSR, col. 0425, inv. 1, pt. 7, div. 41, p. 1.

[2] Ibid, col. 06, inv. 6, pt. 34, div. 314, p. 28.

Allied governments concerned."[1] Exposing the causes of such a position by the Allied powers, the Bulgarian government observed later, "They could not reconcile themselves to the idea that by its participation in the war under the general Soviet high command Bulgaria guaranteed its existence and received the support of the great Soviet Union in the matter of preserving its territorial integrity and independence. They saw that Bulgaria was dropping out of the imperialist system."[2]

At the same time the British and American plans included points giving the Allied forces the right to occupy Bulgarian territory,[3] which was not in the terms of truce with Finland and Rumania. It was natural that the government of the USSR considered this unacceptable.

The Soviet proposals also called for the fulfillment of the truce terms to be supervised by the Soviet Supreme High Command, operating through the Allied Control Commission.

The representatives of the USA and England objected to the leading role of the Soviet Supreme High Command in the Allied Control Commission in Bulgaria. Furthermore, they insisted that the terms of truce with Bulgaria, where only Soviet troops were located, be signed by representatives of the Anglo-American command group in the Mediterranean Sea. When the Soviet side proved the faultiness of such a demand they advanced a proposal that the truce be signed by representatives of the Soviet and Anglo-American command groups. The delegations of the USA and England also proposed that a point be introduced to the truce terms obliging the Bulgarian government to fulfill not only the instructions for realization of the terms of truce, but also the further requirements of the Allies for the restoration of peace and security.[4] This would lead to unlimited interference by the Allies in Bulgaria's internal affairs after the conclusion of the truce.

---

[1] Archives of Foreign Policy of the USSR, col. 06, inv. 6, pt. 34, div. 314, p. 29.

[2] Documents on the Hostile and Aggressive Policy of the Government of the United States of America toward the People's Republic of Bulgaria. Sofia, 1952, p. 33.

[3] Archives of Foreign Policy of the USSR, col. 0425, inv. 1, pt. 8, div. 44, pp. 4, 7, 9.

[4] Ibid, col. 06, inv. 6, pt. 34, div. 314, p. 30; col. 074, inv. 33, pt. 113, div. 6, p. 78.

The Soviet government objected to binding Bulgaria with conditions that placed it in a worse position than other former Allies of Germany. As the result of the firm position of the USSR the western powers were forced to abandon their demands. The British and American delegations also acknowledged that during the period of the truce the Allied Control Commission in Bulgaria should be under the general control of the Union (Soviet) Supreme High Command. Agreement was achieved that the terms of truce would be signed both by the a representative of the Soviet command group and by a representative of the Anglo-American command group. On October 22, 1944 in the ECC the agreed plan for the terms of truce with Bulgaria was signed. This plan was the basis of the agreement between the USSR, England and the USA, on one side, and Bulgaria on the other, concluded October 28, 1944.

Thus, in 1944 the European Consulting Commission conducted great work to prepare the terms for the unconditional capitulation of Germany, developed a number of documents on the Austrian question, and prepared the terms of truce with Bulgaria. All of this testified to the possibility of achievement by the three powers of agreements on questions both of war and of peace.

3. Negotiations between the governments of England, the USA and the USSR in the fall of 1944

In connection with the rapid and successful development of military /665
events in the summer of 1944, particularly on the Soviet-German front, the need arose for a new meeting of the heads of the governments of the USSR, the USA and Great Britain to resolve pressing military-political questions in Europe and Asia. Roosevelt and Churchill proposed to Stalin that such a meeting be arranged in Scotland approximately between September 10 and 15, 1944.[1] The proposal to conduct a new British-American-Soviet conference met with no objections on the part of the Soviet government. However, it was acknowledged that for the head of the government of the USSR to leave

[1] See Correspondence of the Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers with the Presidents of the USA and the Prime Ministers of Great Britain during the Great Patriotic War 1941-1945, Vol. II, p. 149; Vol. I, p. 245.

the country's borders while major battles were taking place in Belorussia and in the western regions of the Ukraine, and the Soviet forces' offensive in Moldavia and Rumania, as well as in the Baltic area, was unsuitable.

Churchill and Roosevelt then resolved to hold bilateral negotiations in Quebec. At the Quebec conference, held from September 11 through 16, 1944, the President of the USA and the Prime Minister of England discussed questions of the further conduct of the war in Europe and Asia. The plans of the British command group, as has been noted, were to seize Western Europe and forestall the Red Army in Central Europe and the Balkans.[1] This explained the particular interest of the British government in the Mediterranean theater of the war. The British imperialists attached great importance to the Balkans as an important economic and strategic region of Europe. Churchill and his advisors, specifically, regarded the Balkans as the shortest way for the American-British armed forces to penetrate Hungary and Austria. The American delegation agreed in principle with Churchill's plans, but considered it essential, above all, to hasten the offensive in the West in order to occupy the largest possible part of Germany's territory after the Germans' expulsion from France, Belgium and Holland.

The Quebec conference passed a resolution in which it was stated that "the main efforts will be concentrated on the left flank," that is, in Northwestern Europe. "Our plans," Roosevelt and Churchill informed Stalin on the results of the conference, "are to progress rapidly for the purpose of destroying the German armed forces and penetrating to the heart of Germany."[2] However, Churchill's insistent demands that the operation in Italy be accelerated and an assault landing on the Istrian peninsula be prepared were also satisfied.

---

[1] See Chapter 13, pp. 376-377.

[2] Correspondence of the Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers with the Presidence of the USA and the Prime Ministers of Great Britain during the Great Patriotic War 1941-1945, Vol. II, p. 160.

Plans for the conduct of military operations in the Pacific Ocean were also discussed at the Quebec conference. The governments of the USA and England, assuming that the war with Japan would continue after the defeat of Germany for another year and a half, attempted to accelerate the entrance of the USSR into it. They did not themselves intend to develop major military operations on land. Churchill admits this in his memoirs on the Second World War. Writing of the Quebec conference, he remarks that the superiority of the Anglo-American forces on the sea and in the air gave them the opportunity to "avoid military operations on land that could cause great casualties."[1]

In spite of the Soviet government's announcement that the USSR would enter the war in the Far East only after the defeat of fascist Germany in 1944, the western powers attempted to compel the Soviet Union to abandon /666 that condition. It is known that even before the opening of the second front the American ambassador in Moscow, A. Harriman, tried persistently to have a plan of joint operations against Japan discussed. Attempting to draw the USSR into the war in the Far East prematurely, officials of the USA also considered it possible to exert pressure accordingly. Thus, the American embassy and military mission in Moscow recommended to Washington that the policy toward the Soviet Union be changed: that lend-lease shipments be partially ceased and certain other discriminatory measures be taken.[2] The real purpose of such a policy was to lessen the rate of the Soviet forces' advance in Europe by forcing the USSR to wage war simultaneously against Germany and Japan, thereby facilitating the realization of Anglo-American imperialism's plans on the European continent.

The course of events on the southern flank of the Soviet-German front from the end of August through the beginning of October upset the Anglo-American plans involving the Balkans. Churchill's "Balkan strategy" suffered complete failure. As is well known, on September 15, 1944 units of

---

[1] W. S. Churchill. The Second World War, Vol. VI, p. 141.

[2] See Herbert Feis. Churchill, Roosevelt, Stalin, pp. 402-404, 405.

the Red Army entered the capital of Bulgaria, Sofia, and on September 28 they entered the territory of Yugoslavia, to help the Yugoslav people throw off the fascist yoke. The advance of the British-American allied forces into Italy at that time was developing extremely slowly.

At the beginning of October Churchill and Eden undertook a journey to Moscow in order to consult with the Soviet government on policy in the countries of Southeastern and Central Europe undergoing liberation, and also to attempt to preserve British influence there, at least in part. The government of England hoped after the expulsion of the occupiers from Poland, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia to return to those countries the emigre governments located in London, and to impose bourgeois regimes on the peoples once more.

Churchill's negotiations with Stalin began October 9, 1944. At the first meeting it was resolved that the ambassador of the USA in Moscow, A. Harriman, "will be present as an observer at all meetings when important matters are discussed" and that the head of the American military mission in Moscow, Gen. D. Dean, should be present "when military questions are discussed."[1] Churchill and Stalin advised Roosevelt that they would inform him of the course of the negotiations.

The Polish question was discussed first of all. On Churchill's suggestion the parties resolved once again to invite to Moscow the representatives of the emigre Polish government and the Polish Committee of National Liberation. The PCNL delegation, led once more by Bierut, as in August 1944, expressed its readiness to reach agreement with the representatives of the emigre government on the condition that the fascist constitution of 1935 be revoked and the constitution of 1921, which advanced elementary democratic liberties, be restored. Bierut observed that the PCNL delegation "always regarded as its main task the realization of the Polish peoples'

---

[1] Correspondence of the Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers with the Presidents of the USA and the Prime Ministers of Great Britain during the Great Patriotic War 1941-1945, Vol. I, p. 263.

unification, and was ready for the sake of that principle to support all sincere desires to realize that goal."[1] The members of the delegation declared their desire to ensure the existence of a Poland that was strong and friendly to the Soviet Union with the borders along the Curzon line to the east and along a line including age-old Polish lands to the west. They agreed on the formation of a Polish government of national unity led by Mikolajczyk, but on the condition that the majority of places in that government be given to the Polish Committee of National Liberation. The Soviet government supported the PCNL position. However, the representatives of the Polish emigre government, and Mikolajczyk specifically, categorically rejected that proposal. In order to achieve the acceptance of their pro- /667
posals on the composition of the future government, they attempted to make the question of the Soviet-Polish border on the Curzon line an object of bargaining. They were supported in this by Churchill and Eden.

The British Prime Minister stressed during the negotiations the fact that his government stood for the Soviet proposal to establish the border between the USSR and Poland along the Curzon line. Churchill declared that the question of the Soviet-Polish border was already resolved, and that when the Allies met at the truce conference table he would support the Russians' claim to the boundary line that had been shown him in Teheran. This intention, said Churchill, had been approved by the cabinet.[2] However, on October 16 Churchill submitted for the consideration of the Soviet government a plan for an agreement in which only previously agreed views relative to the Polish border in the west were expressed. In the plan it was indicated that "after the unconditional capitulation of Germany the territory of Poland in the west will include the free city of Danzig, the regions of East Prussia west and south of Konigsberg, the administrative city of Oppeln, in Silesia and the lands that Poland wishes to possess east of the line of the Oder..." As regarded the eastern border, the plan stated only that "the Polish government accepts the Curzon line as the demarcation line between the USSR and Poland."[3]

---

[1] Foreign Policy of the Soviet Union during the Patriotic War, Vol. II, p. 273.
[2] Archives of Foreign Policy of the USSR, col. 06, inv. 7a, pt. 73, div. 15, p. 2.
[3] Ibid, inv. 6, pt. 48, div. 555, pp. 14, 15.

The Soviet government could not agree with the British plan. The formulation it contained of the Curzon line as a demarcation line was unacceptable, since the question of the boundary remained open. Churchill asserted that that was the maximum that it had been possible to gain from Mikolajczyk. At the same time Mikolajczyk declared that he was "leaving for London in order to consult with his colleagues."[1] As a result no agreement was passed on the Polish question. However, it should be noted that during the negotiations the positions of the parties on the Polish question were more fully revealed, and that created favorable prerequisites for a just resolution of the Polish problem in the future.

For Churchill the most important question discussed in Moscow was the question of the policy concerning the Balkan question. At the first meeting with Stalin Churchill informed him that "he had prepared quite a rough and crude document, in which the distribution of the influence of the Soviet Union and Great Britain in Rumania, Greece, Yugoslavia, and Bulgaria was shown. He had composed the table in order to show what the British thought about this question."[2]

The Soviet government, unwaveringly conducting a policy of non-interference in the internal affairs of other peoples and respect for their national sovereignty, could not, of course, accept Churchill's proposal and allow the British imperialists to dictate their will to the liberated peoples. Churchill's statement in his memoirs that in Moscow in 1944 an agreement was reached on the division of spheres of influence of the USSR and England in the Balkan countries is a fabrication.[3]

In Moscow the heads of the governments of the Soviet Union and England discussed many unresolved problems concerning the Balkan states and reached

---

[1] Archives of Foreign Policy of the USSR, col. 06, inv. 6, pt. 48, div. 555, p. 21.

[2] Ibid, inv. 7a, pt. 73, div. 15, p. 6.

[3] See Chapter 14, pp. 431-432.

agreement on them. Thus, for example, the terms of truce with Bulgaria were considered. When the question of the creation of an Allied Control Commission in Bulgaria was discussed, Churchill and Eden insisted on a position in that Commission for the representatives of the USA and England equal to that of the representative from the USSR. The Soviet government did not grant that, citing the example of the Control Commission in Italy, where the leadership belonged to the representative of the Anglo-American command group, and in Rumania, where the chairman of the Allied Control Commission was Marshal of the Soviet Union R. Ya. Malinovskiy. In accordance with established practice the representative of the Soviet Supreme High Command should have the chairmanship of the ACC in Bulgaria. As the result of discussion the parties reached agreement on the terms of truce with Bulgaria. /668

During the negotiations the question of the situation in Yugoslavia was discussed. The British declared that it was necessary to conduct an agreed policy in relation to that country. They did not hide their dissatisfaction with Tito's trip to Moscow in September 1944. Eden recommended that messages be sent to Tito and Subasic with a proposal that they meet on Yugoslav territory and reach agreement on the formation of a single Yugoslav government. The Soviet government did not object to that.

The representatives of Great Britain proposed that the question of the future Germany also be discussed, citing the fact that it had been examined "very superficially" in Teheran. Churchill and Eden set forth a plan of the division of Germany into three states: Prussia, a zone of international control consisting of the Ruhr, Westphalian and Saar regions, and an Austro-Bavarian state with the inclusion of the southern German provinces." Justifying the plan to dismember Germany, Churchill pointed out that in his opinion "the cause of evil is Prussia. Therefore Prussia must be separated from Germany." He justified the proposal to create a zone of international control by saying that Germany must be deprived of the industrial might that enabled it to be reborn after the first world war. Churchill considered it just "to restore the western regions of the Soviet Union by removing equipment from German industry." However, the true goal of the plan to

divide Germany was the same desire on England's part to eliminate Germany as its imperialist rival. Simultaneously Churchill advanced the idea of "uniting Poland, Czechoslovakia, Austria and Hungary into one group (a confederation or federation - Ed.)."[1]

The Soviet government, while supporting the opinion of the need to destroy Germany's military-industrial potential to ensure security in Europe, did not accept any obligation in this case either to divide it. Further consideration of the German question was postponed until the conference of the three powers.

As regards Churchill's statements on the unification of several states, the Soviet government could not neglect to see in them a plan to create an anti-Soviet "sanitary corridor" after the war. In connection with the discussion of that question Stalin declared to Churchill and Eden that "it is impossible now to think of unification, all the more so as the peoples liberated from the fascist yoke will want only complete national life, without interference."[2]

During the meeting the question of the prospects for the conduct of military operations was also examined. The representatives of England, the USSR and the USA made a survey of the situation at the fronts and reported on the fulfillment of the military plans agreed upon earlier in Teheran. Firm confidence was expressed in the successful development of Allied operations on all fronts. With this the Anglo-American representatives tried to receive from the USSR a commitment to enter the war against Japan very soon. The Soviet government confirmed its agreement to act against the Japanese aggressors approximately three months after the end of the war in Europe. The final resolution on the Far Eastern questions was to be passed at the meetings of the heads of the three powers, which was then being planned for November 1944.

---

[1] Archives of Foreign Policy of the USSR, col. 06, inv. 7a, pt. 73, div. 19, pp. 3, 5.

[2] Ibid, p. 6.

Thus during the negotiations of the heads of government of the USSR and England in October 1944 a wide range of questions were discussed. No concrete resolutions were passed, but no such task had been set. However, as the result of the negotiations the positions of the participants on unresolved problems were better revealed. This facilitated the acceptance /669
of agreed-upon questions at the subsequent meeting of the heads of government of the three powers held in the Crimea in February 1945.[1] Therefore the Moscow negotiations in October 1944 should be positively evaluated, as they promoted the strengthening of the antifascist coalition.

[1] See Chapter 5 of this edition.

4. The conference in Dumbarton Oaks

During the war against Hitlerite Germany and its accomplices the Allied states could not but think of how to ensure peace and security after the war, since to win the war did not yet mean to give the peoples a secure peace in the future. The Moscow conference of Ministers of Foreign Affairs passed a declaration on general security even in October 1943, in which it declared the necessity of instituting in as short a time as possible a general international organization to maintain peace and security. Carrying out that declaration, the representatives of the USSR, the USA, England, and China conducted preliminary negotiations from August 21 through October 7, 1944 in Dumbarton Oaks (USA) on the formation of such an organization. From August 21 through September 29 negotiations were conducted between the

representatives of the USSR, the USA and England, and from September 29 through October 7 between the representatives of England, the USA and China.

The basis of the discussion at the conference in Dumbarton Oaks was a Soviet plan. It was planned to create the new international organization as a universal organization on the principle of the sovereign equality of all peace-loving states. It was given the name "United Nations." The participants in the conference developed "Proposals relative to the creation of a general international security organization."[1] Its goals, as stated in the "Proposals," were: to preserve international peace and security, to develop friendly relations between nations, and to effect international cooperation in the resolution of international, economic, social and other humanitarian problems. The organization of the United Nations was to become "a center for coordination of nations in the matter of achieving these common goals."[2] At the conference the future main organizations of the UN were defined: the General Assembly, the Security Council, the International Court, the Secretariat, and also the Economic and Social Council under the control of the General Assembly.

In accordance with the "Proposals" the General Assembly, in which it was planned that all members of the organization would take part, was called upon to examine common questions concerning the maintenance of peace and security, and also to give recommendations on those questions. However, the necessary actions, it was emphasized in that documents, could be undertaken only on the decision of the Security Council. In addition, the following functions of the Assembly were defined: acceptance and rejection of members and the removal from them of rights stemming from membership in the organization (on the recommendation of the Security Council); giving recommendations in the aims of encouraging international cooperation

---

[1] See Foreign Policy of the Soviet Union during the Patriotic War, Vol. II, pp. 243-258.

[2] Ibid, p. 244.

in the political, economic and social fields and in the aims of resolving situations that could harm the general welfare; election of temporary members of the Security Council, members of the Economic and Social Council and the UN General Secretary (on the recommendation of the Security Council); approval of the budget; giving recommendations in the aims of coordinating the actions of specialized institutions; evaluating the annual and special reports of the Security Council. The "Proposals" established that on im- /670
portant questions including recommendations on the maintenance of peace and security, the acceptance and exclusion of members of the organization, and the election of members to the main organs, decisions were to be made by a two-thirds majority, and on other questions by a simple majority vote. The Assembly was to meet at annual sessions and, if required, at special sessions.

It was not possible to agree at the conference on the initial composition of the membership of the future organization. Specifically, the question of the Soviet Socialist Republics in the UN posed by the Soviet delegation remained open.

The Security Council was formed as the organ to which the main responsibility for maintenance of peace and security was entrusted. It was planned that 11 members be included in its composition: 5 permanent - the USSR, England, the USA and China (later France as well) - and 6 temporary members selected for two years. The Council's functions included the investigation of debated situations that threatened the peace and also the taking of measures to maintain international peace and security by peaceful settlement of disputes or, if necessary, by the liquidation of aggression. The Council was designated to undertake diplomatic, economic or other sanctions not connected with the use of armed force. But "if the Security Council," it was stated in the "Proposals," "considers that such measures are insufficient, it is empowered to undertake such actions with air, naval or ground armed forces as may be necessary to maintain or restore international peace and security."[1] All members of the organization

[1] Foreign Policy of the Soviet Union during the Patriotic War, Vol. II, pp. 252-253.

were made responsible for placing the necessary forces and means of service at the Council's disposal for the indicated actions of compulsion.

The participants in the conference also discussed the question of the system of voting in the Security Council, the main organ of the international organization. That question occupied a large place in the correspondence of the governments of the three powers before the conference. All of them were proponents of the principle of unanimity. The former Secretary of State of the USA, C. Hull, writes in his memoirs, "...we had not the smallest doubt that the voting of permanent members of the Council in questions concerning security should be unanimous. The question was the so-called veto right."[1]

However, in Dumbarton Oaks the American and British delegations submitted a number of proposals directed at the limitation of that principle. Thus, for example, at the meeting on August 28 the American representative, E. Stettings, demanded that during the resolution of a question in which a party was concerned that party not be permitted to vote, regardless of the position it occupied in the Council. The British held the same position.[2] The Soviet delegation could not agree with that proposal, as its acceptance would mean dictation on the part of the Anglo-American majority in the Council in discussion of the fundamental questions of peace and security. Attempting to achieve an agreed-upon solution, the representative of the USSR, A. Gromyko, proposed that a special voting procedure be developed for cases when one of the great powers was drawn into a dispute. This called for the permanent members of the Council to have the right to vote under any circumstances.[3]

Elucidating the position of the USSR on this question, the head of the Soviet government wrote to the present of the USA, "...for the success of

---

[1] The Memoirs of Cordell Hull, Vol. II. New York, 1948, p. 1683.
[2] Archives of Foreign Policy of the USSR, col. 06, div. 125, p. 39.
[3] Ibid.

the International Security Organization's activity the order of voting in the Council will be of no small importance, having in view the significance of the Council's operation on the basis of the principle of agreement and unanimity of the four leading powers on all questions, also including those that directly concern one of those countries... In the opposite case the /671
agreement that we reached at the Teheran conference, proceeding from the principle of ensuring, above all, unity of action by the four powers, essential to struggle against aggression in the future, is negated."[1] Nevertheless, the question of applying the principle of unanimity in the resolution by the Security Council of disputes in which one or several of the great powers took part was not resolved at the conference. The representatives of the USSR, the USA and England agreed in principle that all important questions in the Council would be passed with a two-thirds vote, including the votes of all permanent members, and procedural and other questions without great importance by a simple majority.

The decisions of the conference in Dumbarton Oaks served as the basis of the Charter of the United Nations Organization, to which were entrusted tasks of ensuring the peace and security of peoples after the war. There were disagreements at the conference, but they were overcome.

The year 1944 - a year of outstanding victories by the Soviet Armed Forces at the fronts of the Great Patriotic War - was marked by new progress in the foreign policy of the USSR in the struggle for the swift defeat of fascist Germany and the deliverance of the peoples of Europe from Hitlerite tyranny, for the restoration of the national independence of the liberated countries, and for the creation of conditions for the democratic development and security of the peoples after the war.

The Soviet Union rendered all possible assistance and support to the peoples of Albania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia

[1] Correspondence of the Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers with the Presidents of the USA and the Prime Ministers of Great Britain during the Great Patriotic War 1941-1945, Vol. II, p. 159.

in their attempt to liberate themselves from fascist slavery and set foot on the path toward the formation of new people's democratic states. The USSR spoke out against all attempts by the imperialists of England and the USA to interfere in the internal affairs of the countries of Southeastern Europe. The Soviet government supported the rebirth of France as a great power.

In addition, the Soviet Union continued to strengthen relations with the USA and England. Thanks to the efforts of the Soviet government in 1944 many problems connected with the conduct of the war and the postwar organization of the world were successfully resolved. The leading role of the USSR in the just, liberating war against fascist promoted the passage by the Allies of democratic resolutions on many questions of peaceful settlement and the postwar organization of the world. In the European Consulting Commission the representatives of the USSR, the USA and England worked out terms for the unconditional capitulation of Germany and passed resolutions in principle on the Austrian question. The conference in Dumbarton Oaks did great and fruitful work on the creation of a new international organization to maintain peace and international security - the United Nations Organization. The results of the work by the ECC and the conference in Dumbarton Oaks demostrated graphically the possibility of the fruitful cooperation of the Soviet Union, the United States of America, and England on the most important questions of international politics.

The military alliance of the main powers in the antifascist coalition was also strengthened. Beginning in the summer of 1944 the Red Army conducted military operations not alone, but in strategic cooperation with the armed forces of the USA, England and France. In Northern France under conditions of the intensified struggle of the Western European peoples the offensive of the American-British forces was begun. The Soviet Armed Forces and the Allies' forces had by the end of the summer-fall campaign of 1944 taken up the initial positions from which the final operations of 1945 began. Conditions also developed favorably for the antifascist coalition in the /672

Pacific Ocean basin. In the East the American-British armed forces achieved considerable success in 1944. They established control over almost all islands of the central and southwestern sectors of the Pacific Ocean. Military operations gradually approached the shores of Japan. It became evident that as soon as the war in Europe was completed the necessary conditions would be created to strike the final blows on the Far Eastern aggressor. The mighty antifascist front of peace-loving peoples moved surely toward total and final victory.

IMPORTANT DATES

End of December 1943 - the beginning of January 1944 - The beginning of the offensive by the forces of the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th Ukrainian fronts with the goal of liberating the Right Bank Ukraine and the Crimea. /673

January 1 - Formation of the Polish People's Government, the supreme representative underground organ of the democratic forces of Poland.

- the decree of the Polish People's Government on the formation of the People's Army.

January 3 - The troops of the 1st Ukrainian front liberated Novograd-Volynskiy.

January 4 - The troops of the 1st Ukrainian front liberated the city of Belaya Tserkov'.

January 5 - The troops of the 1st Ukrainian front liberated the city of Berdichev.

January 8 - The troops of the 2nd Ukrainian front liberated Kirovograd.

January 11 - The troops of the 1st Ukrainian front liberated the city of Sarny.

- Announcement by the Soviet government on Soviet-Polish relations.

January 12 - Directive of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command to the commanders of the forces of the 1st and 2nd Ukrainian fronts to surround and destroy the enemy grouping in the Zvenigorod-Mironov (Korsun'-Shevchenko) salient.

- The Allied forces renewed the offensive in Central Italy in the area of the city of Cassino.

January 13 - Decree of the SDC on the dissolution of the Central Headquarters of the partisan movement and the transfer of control of the partisan movement in the occupied territories to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the union republics, regional Party committees and headquarters of the partisan movement.

January 14 - The beginning of the offensive by the troops of the Leningrad and Volkhov fronts near Leningrad and Novgorod.

- The forces of the Belorussian front liberated the city of Mozyr' and the major railroad junction of Kalinkovichi.

- The work of the European Consulting Commission began in London.

January 19 - In the area of the city of Ropsha the troops of the 2nd Shock and 42nd Armies of the Leningrad front were united.

January 20 - The forces of the Volkhov front liberated Novgorod.

January 21 - A solemn memorial meeting in Moscow dedicated to the 20th anniversary of the death of V. I. Lenin.

January 22 - Resolution of the CPC USSR "On urgent measures for the restoration of sovkhozes of the Narkomsovkhozov (People's Commissariat of Sovkhozes) of the Zaporozh'ye, Poltava, Chernigov and Dnepropetrovsk regions."

January 24 - Beginning of the Korsun'-Shevchenko operation by the forces of the 2nd and 1st Ukrainian fronts.

January 27 - Final liberation of Leningrad from the enemy blockade.

- Beginning of the Rovno-Lutsk operation by the forces of the 1st Ukrainian front.

January 28 - The troops of the 1st and 2nd Ukrainian fronts completed the encirclement of the enemy's Korsun'-Shevchenko grouping.

January 30 - Beginning of the Nikopol'-Krivoy Rog operation of the forces of the 3rd and 4th Ukrainian fronts.

January - Plenum of the CC AUCP(b) considered proposals by the CPC USSR on the expansion of the union republics' rights in the area of defense and foreign relations and approved them for submittal for consideration by the Supreme Soviet of the USSR.

January 28-February 1 - The Xth Session of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR was held.

February 1 - American troops began their landing in the Marshall Islands.

February 2 - The troops of the 1st Ukrainian front liberated the cities of Lutsk and Rovno.

February 4 - Beginning of an offensive by Japanese forces in the Burma sector of the front.

February 5 - The forces of the 3rd Ukrainian front liberated the important railroad junction of Apostolov.

- Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on the approval of a new type of Red Banner, the Guards Red Banner, and Regulations of the Red Banner of Naval Units and Formations. /674

February 8 - The troops of the 4th Ukrainian front in cooperation with the troops of the 3rd Ukrainian front liberated the city of Nikopol'.

- SDC resolution "On measures to develop extraction of coal in the Pechora coal basin in 1944."

February 11 - The troops of the 1st Ukrainian front liberated the city and major railroad junction of Shepetovka.

February 12 - The troops of the Leningrad front liberated the city of Luga.

February 13 - The directive of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command on the dissolution of the Volkhov front.

- Resolution of the CPC USSR "On the confirmation of regulations for chest badges: 'Best MTS tractor operator,' 'Best sovkhoz combine operator,' 'Outstanding MTS mechanic,' 'Outstanding sovkhoz mechanic.'"

February 17 - The troops of the 2nd Ukrainian front completed the liquidation of the enemy's Korsun'-Shevchenko grouping.

- Resolution of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command on renaming the Belorussian front the 1st Belorussian front.

February 18 - Directives of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command to the commanders of the forces of the 1st and 2nd Ukrainian fronts on the development of the offensive in the Right Bank Ukraine.

- Resolution of the CPC USSR and the CC AUCP(b) "On the construction of tractor plants and the development of production capacities for production of tractors for agriculture."

February 19 - Resolution of the CPC USSR "On measures for the further development and improvement of individual and collective vegetable gardening by workers and employees in 1944."

February 20 - CC AUCP(b) calls issued for Red Army 26th Anniversary

February 22 - The troops of the 3rd Ukrainian front liberated the city of Krivoy Rog.

February 23 - Order of the Supreme High Command in connection with the 26th anniversary of the Red Army.

February 24 - The troops of the Leningrad and 2nd Baltic fronts liberated the city and important railroad junction of Dno.

February 26 - Resolution of the CPC USSR "On urgent measures for restoration of animal husbandry of kolkhozes in regions of the Belorussian SSR liberated from the German invaders."

February 29 - Beginning of the second offensive of the Allied forces in Central Italy.

March 1-4 - The VIth Session of the Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian SSR was held.

March 1 - Rally of the workers of Leningrad dedicated to their meeting with partisans of the Leningrad region.

- Beginning of the general political strike in Italy.

March 3 - Decrees of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on the institution of the Orders of Ushakov I and II Degree, of Nakhimov I and II Degree, and the Medals of Ushakov and Nakhimov.

March 4 - Beginning of the Proskurov-Chernovitsy operation of the troops of the 1st Ukrainian front.

March 5 - Beginning of the Uman'-Botosani operation of the troops of the 2nd Ukrainian front.

- Resolution of the CPC USSR "On training skilled workers for enterprises and construction of building materials industry."

March 6 - Beginning of the offensive of the troops of the 3rd Ukrainian front in the Nikolayev-Odessa direction.

March 10 - The troops of the 2nd Ukrainian front liberated the city of Uman'.

March 10-15 - The XIIth Plenum of the AUCCLU was held and passed a resolution "On the further development of socialist competition among workers and employees."

March 11 - Communique of the Extraordinary State Commission on the atrocities of the German fascist invaders and their confederates and the damage they caused to citizens, kolkhozes, and social organizations of the USSR.

March 12 - Formation of the Political Committee of National Liberation of Greece.

March 13 - The troops of the 3th Ukrainian front forced the Dnepr downstream and liberated the city of Kherson.

March 14 - Resolution of the CPC USSR and the CC AUGP(b) "On the state plan of development of agriculture for 1944."

March 15 - The beginning of the third offensive of the Allied forces in Central Italy.

- The National Resistance Council of France passed a program for the armed struggle against the Hitlerite occupiers.

March 18 - The troops of the 1st Ukrainian front liberated the city and major railroad junction of Zhmerinka.

March 19 - The troops of the 2nd Ukrainian front liberated the city of Mogilev-Podol'skiy.

- The German fascist forces occupied Hungary.

March 20 - The troops of the 1st Ukrainian front liberated the city of Vinnitsa.

March 25 - The troops of the 1st Ukrainian front liberated the city and important railroad junction of Proskurov.

March 26 - The troops of the 2nd Ukrainian front broke through to the region of the city of Bel'tsy to the river Prut - the national border of the USSR and Rumania.

- The troops of the 1st Ukrainian front liberated the city of Kamenets-Podol'skiy.

- During the liberation of the city of Nikolayev a detachment of assault landing troops led by Sr. Lt.K. F. Ol'shanskiy accomplished an heroic feat.

March 28 - The troops of the 3rd Ukrainian front liberated the city of Nikolayev.

- The troops of the 1st Ukrainian front liberated the city of Chernovitsy. /675

March 29 - Resolution of the SDC "On immediate measures for the restoration of industry and the city economy of Leningrad in 1944."

March 30 - The statement of the VIth Session of the Supreme Soviet of the BSSR to the Belorussian people on the further development of the national partisan struggle against the German fascist invaders.

March 31 - Directive of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command on the tasks of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet for 1944.

April 2 - Statement of the Soviet government in connection with the entrance of units of the Red Army into the territory of Rumania.

April 3 - Resolution of the CPG USSR "On the return of evacuated livestock to kolkhozes of regions of the Ukrainian SSR liberated from German occupation."

April 4 - Resolution of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command on the dissolution of the 2nd Belorussian front.

April 5 - The troops of the 2nd Ukrainian front liberated the Rumanian city of Dorohoi.

April 6 - The troops of the 2nd Ukrainian front liberated the Rumanian city of Botosani.

April 8 - The beginning of the Crimean operation by the troops of the 4th Ukrainian front.

April 10 - The troops of the 3rd Ukrainian front liberated the city and port of Odessa.

- Resolution of the SDC on the line of conduct of Soviet troops in the territory of Rumania.

April 11 - The troops of the 4th Ukrainian front liberated the city of Dzhankoy, a major railroad junction in the Crimea.

- The troops of the Detached Maritime Army went over to the offensive in the Kerchen peninsula.

- Directive of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command on the tasks of the Black Sea Fleet in 1944.

April 12 - The troops of the 3rd Ukrainian front liberated the city of Tiraspol'.

- The Soviet government offered the Rumanian government terms of truce.

April 13 - The troops of the 4th Ukrainian front liberated the city of Simferopol'.

- The troops of the Detached Maritime Army liberated the city and port of Feodosiya.

- The establishment of diplomatic relations between the Soviet Union and New Zealand.

April 14 - The troops of the 1st Ukrainian front liberated the city and railroad junction of Tarnopol'.

April 15 - The talented general of the Red Army, the commander of the 1st Ukrainian front, Gen. N. F. Vatutin, died after being seriously wounded.

April 16 - The troops of the Detached Maritime Army liberated the city of Yalta.

- Resolution of the SDC on introducing new production capacities at electric power plants in 1944.

April 17 - Directives of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command for the troops of the 1st Belorussian and 1st Ukrainian fronts to go over to the defensive.

- Note of the Soviet government to the government of Bulgaria on the use by fascist Germany of Bulgarian territory and ports in the war against the USSR.

April 18 - Directive of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command for the troops of the 2nd Baltic front to go over to the defensive.

- The 3rd Baltic front was formed on the decision of Headquarters of the Supreme High Command.

April 19 - On the decree of Headquarters of the Supreme High Command the Western front was renamed the 3rd Belorussian front and the 2nd Belorussian front was re-formed.

- Directives of Headquarters of the Supreme High Command for the troops of the Leningrad, 3rd Baltic, 3rd and 2nd Belorussian fronts to go over to the defensive.

April 20 - The statement of kolkhoz men and women of the "Krasnyy putilovets" artel of the Kalinin region to all kolkhoz men and women, tractor operators and agronomists of the Soviet Union, calling on them "Let us organize All-Union Socialist Competition in the struggle for a good harvest!"

April 27 - The CC AUCP(b) slogans for May 1, 1944 were published.

- Resolution of the SDC on restoration work of primary importance in the most important railroad directions.

May 1 - The order of the Supreme High Command in connection with the observation of May 1.

- The decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on the institution of the medals "For the defense of Moscow" and "For the defense of the Caucasus."

- The Manifesto of the United Worker's Front of Rumania calling the workers to the struggle against Antonescu's clique and the German fascist forces.

May 6 - Directives of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command for the troops of the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts to go over to the defensive.

May 8 - The signing of an agreement between the government of the USSR and the government of the Czechoslovak republic on relations between the Soviet High Command and the Czechoslovak administration after the entrance of the Soviet troops into the territory of Czechoslovakia.

- The establishment of diplomatic relations between the Soviet Union and Costa Rica.

May 9 - The troops of the 4th Ukrainian front liberated the city and naval base of Sevastopol'.

May 11 - Declaration of the SDC on measures to increase the yield of oil in 1944.

- The beginning of the fourth offensive of the Allied forces in Central Italy.

May 12 - The troops of the 4th Ukrainian front completed the liberation of the Crimea.

May 13 - The statement of the governments of the USSR, England and the USA to Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria and Finland that they cease the war on Germany's side. /677

May 16 - The resolution of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command on the dissolution of the 4th Ukrainian front.

May 18 - Note of the Soviet government to the government of Bulgaria on Bulgaria's continuing cooperation with Germany.

- Statement of the General Secretary of the French Communist Party, M. Tores, to the French people with a call to intensify the struggle against the fascist occupiers for the freedom and national independence of their country.

May 20 - The government of D. Bozhilov in Bulgaria submitted its resignation.

May 21 - The 4th Ukrainian front was disbanded.

May 31 - Directives of Headquarters of the Supreme High Command to the commanders of the troops of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Belorussian and 1st Baltic fronts on preparation for conduct of the Belorussian operation.

May - The formation of the Hungarian Front consisting of the Communist, Social Democratic and Smallholders Parties.

Beginning of June - The CC of the Communist Parties of Czechoslovakia, Rumania, and Hungary appealed to the CC CP of the Ukraine for assistance in organizing and developing the partisan movement.

June 2 - Resolution of the SDC on restoration of power plants and electrical systems for the Krivoy Rog iron ore basin and the Nikopol' manganese mines.

- The formation in London of the Provisional Government of France led by Gen. de Gaulle.

June 4 - The American-British forces entered Rome.

June 6 - The landing of the American-British forces in Normandy (Northern France). The opening of the second front in Western Europe.

June 8 - The decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR "On mothers of many children and the protection of motherhood."

June 9 - The formation of the High Command of the Corps of Freedom Volunteers in Northern Italy.

June 10 - The beginning of the Vyborg operation of the troops of the Leningrad front.

June 13 - In Rumania a meeting took place between representatives of Communists, patriotic officer cadres and court circles, who passed a plan for an armed uprising.

June 15 - The call of the CC of the French Communist Party to the workers to intensify the struggle for the country's liberation from the German fascist occupiers was published.

- The landing of American troops on the Marianas Islands (the island of Saipan) began.

June 18 - Statement of the General Secretary of the Italian Communist Party, P. Togliatti, to the Italian people, with a call to begin a general armed rebellion against the German fascist occupiers.

June 20 - The troops of the Leningrad front liberated the city of Vyborg.

- The formation of the Rumanian National Democratic Bloc.

June 21 - The beginning of the Svirsk-Petrozavodsk operation by the troops of the Karelian front.

June 22 - The Soviet Information Bureau document "Three Years of the Patriotic War of the Soviet Union (Military and Political Results)" was published.

June 23-24 - The beginning of the Belorussian operation of the troops of the 1st Baltic, 3rd, 2nd and 1st Belorussian fronts.

June 24 - The troops of the Karelian front liberated the city of Medvezh'yegorsk.

- Directive of Headquarters of the Supreme High Command to the commanders of the troops of the 1st Ukrainian front for preparation for and conduct of the offensive operation in the Rava-Russkaya and L'vov direction.

- Private Yu. V. Simonov perfomned an immortal deed in the area of the village of Shalashino (Belorussia).

- Resolution of the CPC USSR "On urgent measures for the restoration of agriculture in the regions of the Moldavian SSR liberated from German fascist occupation."

June 24 - Troops of the 3rd Belorussian and 1st Baltic fronts encircled the enemy's Vitebsk grouping.

June 26 - The troops of the 3rd Belorussian front in cooperation with troops of the 1st Baltic front liberated Vitebsk.

- The troops of the 1st Belorussian front liberated the city of Zhlobin.

- American forces in Normandy seized the city of Cherbourg.

June 27 - The troops of the 3rd Belorussian front liberated the city and major railroad junction of Orsha.

- The troops of the 1st Belorussian front completed the encirclement of the enemy's Bobruisk grouping.

June 28 - The troops of the 2nd Belorussian front liberated the city of Mogilev and the troops of the 1st Belorussian front liberated the city of Osipovichi.

- The troops of the Karelian front in cooperation with the Onega military flotilla liberated the capital of the Karelo-Finnish SSR, Petrozavodsk.

- Directives of Headquarters of the Supreme High Command to the commanders of the troops of the 1st Baltic, 3rd, 2nd and 1st Belorussian fronts on the development of the offensive.

June 29 - The troops of the 1st Belorussian front completed the liquidation of the encircled enemy grouping in the Bobruisk area and liberated the city of Bobruisk.

June 30 - The troops of the 1st Belorussian front liberated the city of Slutsk.

July 1 - The troops of the 3rd Belorussian front liberated the city of Borisov. /677

July 2 - The troops of the 3rd Belorussian front liberated the city of Vileyka.

- The troops of the 1st Belorussian front liberated the cities of Stolbtsy, Gorodeya and Nesvizh.

July 3 - The troops of the 3rd Belorussian front with the cooperation of the 1st Belorussian front liberated the capital of the Belorussian SSR, Minsk.

- The troops of the 3rd, 2nd and 1st Belorussian fronts completed the encirclement of the main forces of army group "Centre" east of Minsk.

July 4 - The troops of the 1st Baltic front liberated the city and railroad junction of Polotsk.

- Directive of Headquarters of the Supreme High Command to the commander of the 2nd Baltic Front on preparation and conduct of the offensive in the Dvina direction.

July 5 - The troops of the 3rd Belorussian front liberated the city of Molodechno.

July 6 - The troops of the 1st Belorussian front liberated the city of Kovel'.

- Directive of Headquarters of the Supreme High Command to the commander of the 3rd Baltic front on preparation and conduct of the offensive with the goal of routing the enemy's Pskov-Ostrov grouping.

July 7 - Formation of the Yugoslav government of I. Subasic including two representatives of the National Liberation movement.

July 8 - The troops of the 1st Belorussian front liberated the city of Baranovichi.

July 9 - The troops of the 3rd Belorussian front liberated the city of Lida.

July 10 - The troops of the 2nd Baltic front went over to the offensive in the directions of Rezekne and Daugavpils.

July 11 - Completion of the liquidation of the enemy grouping encircled east of Minsk.

- Resolution of the SDC on measures to ensure construction of new capacities and restoration of ferrous metallurgical enterprises in the second six months of 1944.

July 12 - Establishment of diplomatic relations between the Soviet Union and Fighting Denmark.

July 13 - The troops of the 3rd Belorussian front liberated the capital of the Lithuanian SSR, Vilnius.

- The troops of the 1st Ukrainian front began the L'vov-Sandomierz operation.

July 14 - The troops of the 1st Belorussian front liberated the city of Pinsk.

July 16 - The troops of the 2nd and 3rd Belorussian fronts liberated the city and railroad junction of Grodno.

- Rally and parade of partisan formations in Minsk.

July 17 - The troops of the 3rd Baltic front went over to the offensive in the direction of Tartu.

- 57,600 captured German soldiers, officers and generals were escorted through Moscow.

- The troops of the 1st Ukrainian front crossed the national boundary of the USSR and entered the territory of Poland.

July 18 - The beginning of the Lublin-Brest operation by the troops of the 1st Belorussian front.

- The troops of the 1st Ukrainian front completed the encirclement of the enemy grouping west of the city of Brody.

- Resolution of the SDC "On further measures for the restoration of the coal industry of the Donbass to supply ferrous metallurgy, railroad transportation, power plants and the military industry of the South with coal."

July 19 - Directive of the Main Political Directorate of the Red Army on Party-political work among the troops in connection with their entrance into the territory of Rumania.

- Resolution of the CPC USSR and the CC AUCP(b) "On bringing in the harvest and deliveries of agricultural products in 1944."

- British forces in Normandy seized the city of Caen.

July 20 - The troops of the 1st Belorussian front forced the Western Bug River and crossed the border of Poland.

- Thetroops of the 1st Ukrainian front liberated the city of Rava-Russkaya.

- Assassination attempt on Hitler in Germany.

July 21-August 10 - American forces in the Pacific Ocean seized the island of Guam and other islands of the Marianas group.

July 21 - The creation of the Polish Committee of National Liberation.

- The passage by the Polish People's Government of a law creating the Polish Forces.

July 22 - The troops of the 1st Belorussian front liberated the Polish city of Chelm.

- The troops of the 1st Ukrainian front completed the liquidation of the enemy grouping encircled west of the city of Brody.

- The troops of the 1st Baltic front liberated the city of Panevezis.

- The Manifesto of the Polish Committee of National Liberation to the people with a call to devote all efforts to the rapid liberation of the country from the German fascist invaders.

July 23 - The troops of the 3rd Baltic front liberated the city of Pskov.

- The troops of the 1st Belorussian front liberated the city of Lublin.

July 25 - The troops of the Leningrad front went over to the offensive in the Narva direction.

- The troops of the 1st Belorussian front liberated the cities of Deblin and Pulawa and broke through to the east bank of the Vistula.

July 26 - The troops of the Leningrad front liberated the city of Narva. /678

- Conclusion of an agreement between the government of the USSR and the Polish Committee of National Liberation on the relations between the Soviet Commander in Chief and the Polish administration after the entrance of Soviet troops into the territory of Poland.

- Establishment of diplomatic relations between the Soviet Union and Syria.

July 27 - The troops of the 1st Belorussian front encircled an enemy grouping in the area of Brest.

- The troops of the 2nd Belorussian front liberated the city of Bialystok.

- The troops of the 1st Baltic front liberated the city of Siauliai.

- The troops of the 2nd Baltic front liberated the cities of Daugavpils and Rezekne.

- The troops of the 1st Ukrainian front liberated the cities of L'vov, Stanislav and Przemysl.

July 27-August 4 - The troops of the 1st Belorussian front forced the Vistula River south of Warsaw and seized bsachheads on the western bsnk in the region of Magnushev and Pulawa.

July 28 - The troops of the 1st Belorussian front liberated the city of Brest.

July 29 - The beginning of the forcing of the Vistula River by the troops of the 1st Ukrainian front in the region of Sandomierz.

July 30 - Directive of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command on the re-formation of the 4th Ukrainian front for military operations in the Carpathians from August 5.

July 31 - The troops of the 1st Baltic front liberated the city of Jelgava.

August 1 - The troops of the 3rd Belorussian front liberated the city of Kaunas.

August 2 - Directive of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command to the commanders of the forces of the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts on preparation and conduct of the operation with the goal of defeating the enemy grouping in th. region of Iasi-Kishinyev-Bendery.

August 5 - The troops of the 4th Ukrainian front liberated the city of Stryy.

- For outstanding service in the organization of the production and assimilation of new types of tanks, assault guns and tank diesels the Kirov plant, on which the orders of Lenin, the Red Banner, and the Labor Red Banner had earlier been conferred, received a fourth order, the Order of the Red Star. Diplomatic relations established between Soviet Union and Livan.

August 6 - The troops of the 4th Ukrainian front liberated the city of Dorogobych.

August 7 - The troops of the 1st Ukrainian front liberated the city of Sambov.

- The troops of the 4th Ukrainian front liberated the city of Borislav.

August 9 - Resolution of theCC AUCP(b) "On immediate tasks of the Party organizations of the CP(b) of Belorussia in the field of mass political and cultural-educational work among the population."

- Resolution of the CC AUCP(b) "On the status and measures to improve mass political and ideological work in the Tatar Party organization."

- The inhabitants of the Polish village of Gerasimoviche entered the name of Hero of the Soviet Union G. P. Kunavin, who died in battle for the liberation of the village, in the list of honorary citizens.

August 11 - Resolution of the CPC USSR "On urgent measures for the restoration of light industry enterprises in the liberated regions of the Ukrainian SSR in 1944."

August 12 - Statement by the government of the USSR to the government of Bulgaria on the necessity for Bulgaria to break off relations with fascist Germany.

August 15 - Beginning of the landing of American-French forces in Southern France.

August 17 - British forces occupy the city of Falaise.

August 18 - Troops of the 1st Ukrainian front liberated the city of Sandomierz.

- In the Buchenwald concentration camp the leader of the German working class, the chairman of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Germany, Ernst Telman, was killed by the fascists.

- Statement of the General Labor Confederation and the Paris Liberation Committee to the workers of France with a summons to raise a rebellion against the fascist occupiers and their accomplices.

August 19 - For model fulfillment of military assignments of command and heroic deeds at the front the commander of the 9th fighter air force division of the 1st Ukrainian front, Col. A. I. Pokryshkin, was awarded his third "Gold Star" medal.

- Beginning of the rebellion in Paris.

- The British forces completed the expulsion of the Japanese from the territory of India.

August 20 - The beginning of the Iasi-Kishinyev operation by forces of the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts.

August 21 - The troops of the 2nd Ukrainian front liberated the cities of Iasi and Tirgul Frumos.

- In Dumbarton Oaks a conference opened with representatives of the USA, the USSR and England on the question of creating an international security organization.

August 22 - The troops of the 3rd Ukrainian front liberated the city of Belgorod-Dnestrovskiy (Akkerman).

- On the call of the Communist Party the workers of Marseilles raised a rebellion against the fascist occupiers.

August 23 - The troops of the 1st Ukrainian front liberated the city of Dembitsa.

- Antifascist armed uprising in Rumania and the overthrow of Antonescu's government.

August 24 - The troops of the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts completed the encirclement of a large grouping of German fascist troops near Kishinyev. /679

- The troops of the 3rd Ukrainian front liberated the capital of the Moldavian SSR, Kishinyev.

- The Danube military flotilla liberated the ports of Vilkov and Kiliya.

- Withdrawal of Rumania from the war on the side of fascist Germany. Rumania declared war on Germany.

August 25 - The troops of the 3rd Baltic front liberated the city of Tartu.

- The troops of the 3rd Ukrainian front liberated the city of Izmail.

- Announcement by the USSR People's Commissar of Foreign Affairs in connection with events in Rumania.

- Resolution by the Council of Ministers of Hungary to continue the war against the USSR, in spite of the political changes that had occurred in Rumania.

- The victorious conclusion of the armed rebellion in Paris and the liberation of the city from the German occupiers.

August 26 - Circular No. 4 issued by the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Worker's Party on preparation for an armed rebellion in the country.

August 27 - The troops of the 2nd Ukrainian front entered the cities of Focsani and Rimnicul.

- The troops of the 3rd Ukrainian front entered the city of Galati.

- Ships and assault landing units of the Black Sea Fleet liberated the city and port of Tulcea and the port of Sulina.

August 28 - The troops of the 3rd Ukrainian front entered the city of Braila.

- Gen. de Gaulle issued a decree on the dissolution of the French Internal Armed Forces.

August 29 - The troops of the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts completed the liquidation of the enemy grouping encircled in the area of Kishinyev.

- Directive of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command to the commander of the 2nd Ukrainian front on the development of the offensive in the general direction of Ploesti - Slatina - Turnu Severin.

- Directive of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command to the commander of the 3rd Ukrainian front on the development of the offensive with the goal of breaking through to the Rumanian-Bulgarian border.

- Directives of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command to the commanders of the Karelian, 1st Baltic, 3rd, 2nd and 1st Belorussian, 1st and 4th Ukrainian fronts to go over to the defensive.

- Resolution of the CC CP(b) of the Ukraine on selecting and sending to the western regions of the Ukraine Party, Soviet and economic workers.

- Beginning of the Slovak people's rebellion.

- Formation in Hungary of a government led by G. Lakatos.

August 30 - The troops of the 3rd Ukrainian front in cooperation with the Black Sea Fleet liberated the Rumanian city and port of Constanta.

- The troops af the 2nd Ukrainian front seized the oil center of Rumania, Ploesti.

August 31 - The troops of the 2nd Ukrainian front entered the capital of Rumania, Bucharest.

- Resolution of the CC AUCP(b) "On shortcomings in political work in the regions of the Karelo-Finnish SSR that have been liberated from Finnish occupation."

Beginning of September - Breakthrough by the troops of the 3rd Belorussian front to the border of the USSR with East Prussia.

September 1 - Resolution of the CPC USSR on measures of urgent assistance to restore the agriculture of the Lithuanian, Latvian and Karelo-Finnish SSR.

- Resolution of the CPC USSR "On measures to restore the city of Novgorod.

- Resignation of the Bulgarian government of I. Bagryanov.

September 2 - Directive of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command to the commander of the forces of the 1st Ukrainian front to prepare for an offensive in the East Carpathians with the purpose of rendering assistance to the Slovak people's rebellion.

- Address of the Communist Party of Slovakia "To workers, peasants and working intelligentsia," with a call to rise to the struggle for national and social liberation.

September 3 - American-British forces seized the city of Brussels.

September 4 - Communique of the USSR People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs on Soviet-Finnish relations.

- The government of Finland declared its break in relations with fascist Germany.

- Entrance of British forces into the city of Antwerp, which had been liberated by Belgian patriots.

September 5 - Breakthrough of the troops of the 2nd Ukrainian front to the Rumanian-Yugoslav border in the area of the city of Turnu Severin.

- Breakthrough of the troops of the 3rd Ukrainian front to the Rumanian-Bulgarian border in Dobruja.

- Soviet government declares a state of war with Bulgaria.

September 6 - Polish Committee of National Liberation passed a decree on land reform.

- A meeting of representatives of democratic parties and organizations, which passed a resolution to form a National Democratic Front in Rumania.

September 7 - Resolution of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Worker's Party and the Main Headquarters of the People's Liberation Army on beginning an armed rebellion. /680

September 8 - Beginning of the Carpathian-Duklya operation of the troops of the 1st Ukrainian front.

- The troops of the 3rd Ukrainian front liberated the city and port of Varna.

- Entrance of Soviet troops into Bulgaria.

September 9 - The troops of the 3rd Ukrainian front in cooperation with the Black Sea Fleet liberated the city and port of Burgas.

- The troops of the 4th Ukrainian front began the Carpathian-Uzhgorod operation.

- Directive of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command to the Soviet forces to cease military operations in Bulgaria, in view of the fact that Bulgaria had broken off relations with fascist Germany, declared war on it and requested the Soviet government to begin truce negotiations.

- Armed rebellion in Sofia. Formation of a government of the Patriotic Front led by K. Georgiyevich.

- Signing of agreements between the Polish Committee of National Liberation and the governments of the Ukrainian and Belorussian republics on the evacuation of Polish citizens from the territory of the Ukraine and Belorussia and of the Ukrainian and Belorussian population from the territory of Poland.

September 10 - Resolution of the CPC USSR "On measures of urgent assistance to restore the agriculture of the Estonian SSR."

September 11-16 - The 2nd Quebec Conference of the heads of the governments of the USA and England.

September 12 - The USSR, the USA and England signed a truce agreement with Rumania.

September 13 - The establishment of diplomatic relations between the Soviet Union and Iraq.

September 14 - The troops of the 1st Belorussian front liberated the suburb of Warsaw, Praga.

- The troops of the 3rd, 2nd and 1st Baltic fronts went over to the offensive with the goal of completing the liberation of the Baltic area.

September 15 - The troops of the 3rd Ukrainian front entered Sofia with the agreement of the Bulgarian government.

September 17 - The troops of the Leningrad front went over to the offensive in the Tallin direction.

- The formation of a united Communist Party of Slovakia at a combined conference of the Communist Party of Slovakia and the Slovakian Social-Democratic Party.

September 19 - The USSR and England signed a truce agreement with Finland.

September 22 - The troops of the Leningrad front liberated the capital of the Estonian SSR, Tallin.

- Signing of an agreement between the government of the Lithuanian SSR and the Polish Committee of National Liberation on the evacuation of the Lithuanian population from the territory of Poland and of Polish citizens from the territory of Lithuania.

- Request by the regent of Hungary, Horthy, to the USA and England to conclude a truce.

September 23 - The troops of the Leningrad front liberated the city of Parnu.

September 24 - The troops of the Leningrad front liberated the city and port of Haapsalu.

- The breakthrough of the 2nd Ukrainian front to the Rumanian-Hungarian border in the area of the city of Mako.

- Formations of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet liberated the naval base of the city of Paldiski.

- Directive of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command to the commander of the 1st Baltic Front to regroup its forces from the Riga to the Memel directions.

September 25 - Directive of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command to the commander of the troops of the Leningrad front to conduct an operation in cooperation with the Red Banner Baltic Fleet to liberate the islands of Saaremaa and Hiiumaa.

September 27 - Resolution of the CC AUCP(b) "On shortcomings in political work among the population of the western regions of the UkrSSR".

- Resolution of the CC AUCP(b) "On the organization of scientific-educational propaganda."

September 28 - Beginning of the Belgrade operation of the troops of the 3rd Ukrainian front.

End of September - Summons of the Communist Party of Hungary to the Hungarian people published.

October 1 - Arrival in Moscow of the Hungarian government delegation for truce negotiations.

October 3 - The troops of the Leningrad front liberated the island of Hiiumaa.

- The troops of the 2nd Ukrainian front crossed the Rumanian-Yugoslav border southwest of Temesoara and liberated the cities of Petrograd, Vrsac and Bela Crkva in Yugoslav territory.

- Resolution of the CPC USSR "On urgent measures to restore the agriculture of the Belorussian SSR."

October 4 - Beginning of the occupation of Greece by British troops.

October 5 - The troops of the Leningrad front in cooperation with the Red Banner Baltic Fleet made an assault landing on the island of Saaremaa.

- The troops of the 2nd Ukrainian front liberated the city of Pancevo (Yugoslavia).

- The beginning of the Memel operation by the troops of the 1st Belorussian front.

October 6 - Beginning of the Debrecen operation by thetroops of the 2nd Ukrainian front.

- Soviet troops and the Czechoslovak army corps seized the Duklya Pass and crossed the border of Czechoslovakia.

October 7 - Beginning of the Petsamo-Kirkenes operation by the troops of the Karelian front in cooperation with the Northern Fleet.

October 8 - Completion of the liberation of the entire territory of Yugoslavia east of the Tisze River by the troops of the 2nd Ukrainian front.

October 9-18 - Negotiations by the heads of the governments of the USSR and England in Moscow.

October 10 - The troops of the 1st Baltic front broke through to the coast of the Baltic Sea south of Liepaja and cut off German army group "North."

- Resolution of the SDC on measures to ensure uninterrupted work of ferrous metallurgical enterprises.

- The Communist and Social Democratic Parties of Hungary concluded an agreement on a united front of the two parties.

October 10-11 - The troops of the 1st Baltic and 3rd Belorussian fronts broke through to the border of the USSR and East Prussia in the area east of Tilsit.

October 11 - The troops of the 2nd Ukrainian front liberated the cities of Cluj (Rumania) and Szeged (Hungary).

- Signing by the Hungarian government delegation in Moscow of preliminary terms for a truce agreement between the USSR, the USA and England, on one side, and Hungary on the other.

October 12 - The troops of the 2nd Ukrainian front liberated the city of Oradea (Rumania).

October 13 - The troops of the 3rd Baltic front with the cooperation of the troops of the 2nd Baltic front liberated the capital of the Latvian SSR, Riga.

October 14 - The Organizational Bureau of the CC AUCP(b) approved the directive of the Main Political Directorate of the Red Army "On major shortcomings in acceptance of members and candidates of the AUCP(b)."

- Ceremonial conference of the Party, Soviet and public organizations of Kiev dedicated to the liberation of the Ukraine from the German fascist invaders.

- Bulgarian and Yugoslav troops liberated the city of Nis (Yugoslavia).

October 15 - The troops of the Karelian front in cooperation with the Northern Fleet liberated the city and naval base of Petsamo.

- Nishalashist putsch in Hungary. Horthy removed from the position of head of the government in favor of Salashi.

October 16 - The troops of the 3rd Belorussian front went over to the offensive in East Prussia in the direction of Gumbinnen.

- By the resolution of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command the 3rd Baltic front was disbanded.

October 20 - The troops of the 3rd Ukrainian front jointly with units of the People's Liberation Army of Yugoslavia liberated the capital of Yugoslavia, Belgrade.

- The troops of the 2nd Ukrainian front liberated the city of Debrecen (Hungary).

- Beginning of the operation by American-British forces to seize the Philippines.

October 21 - The troops of the 2nd Ukrainian front liberated the cities of Baja (Hungary) and Sombov (Yugoslavia).

- By decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR Artillery Day was established on November 19.

October 22 - The troops of the Karelian front crossed the national border of the USSR and Norway.

October 23 - Announcement by the Soviet government recognizing the Provisional government of the French Republic.

October 24-25 - Battle of the fleets and air forces of Japan and the USA in the region of the Philippine Islands.

October 25 - The troops of the Karelian front liberated the city of Kirkenes (Norway).

- The troops of the 2nd Ukrainian front completed the liberation of the norther part of Transylvania.

- Establishment of full diplomatic relations between the Soviet Union and Italy.

October 26 - The troops of the 4th Ukrainian front liberated the city of Mukhachevo.

October 27 - The troops of the 4th Ukrainian front liberated Uzhgorod.

- Directive of the SDC on the line of conduct of the Soviet forces entering the territory of Hungary.

October 28 - The troops of the 4th Ukrainian front completed the liberation of the Trans-Carpathian Ukraine.

- The USSR, the USA and England signed a truce agreement with Belgium.

October 29 - The troops of the 2nd Ukrainian front began the Budapest operation.

- The troops of the Karelian front in cooperation with the Northern Fleet completed the total liberation of the Petsamo region.

October 30 - Resolution of the CC AUCP(b) "On shortcomings and tasks in the field of political work of the Party organization of the Lithuanian SSR."

- Resolution of the CC AUCP(b) "On shortcomings and tasks in the field of political work of the Party organization of the Estonian SSR."

October 31 - Resolution of the CC CP(b) of Belorussia on staffing the Party, Soviet and economic organs of the western regions of Belorussia with experienced cadres.

November 1 - Addresses of the CC AUCP(b) for the 27th anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution published.

- British troops occupied the city and port of Saloniki after the withdrawal of German fascist units from there.

November 4 - The troops of the 2nd Ukrainian front liberated the city of Solnok (Hungary).

- Formation of the second government of Sanatescu in Rumania.

November 6 - Ceremonial meeting in Moscow dedicated to the 27th anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution. /682

November 7 - Operations by the troops of the 3rd Ukrainian front to force the Danube and seize an operative beachhead on the west bank.

- Order of the Supreme High Command in connection with the 27th anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution.

November 10-11 - The last German units retreated from the territory of Greece into Yugoslavia.

November 15 - Statement of the workers of the Magnitogorsk and Kuznetsk metallurgical combines to all workers, employees, engineers and technical workers in industry and transportation of the Soviet Union with the summons, "Let us help the Red Army to beat the fascist beast and raise the Banner of Victory over Berlin!"

November 17 - The National Liberation Army of Albania liberated the capital of the country, Tirane.

November 19 - Resolution of the CPC USSR "On measures to restore the city of Sevastopol'."

November 22 - Resolution of the CPC USSR "On the training of tractor and combine operators, leaders of tractor brigades, drivers and mechanics of MTS and sovkhozes of the People's Commissariat of Sovkhozes."

November 22-24 - Meeting of the Plenum of the CC CP(b) of the Ukraine, discussing the results of fulfillment of the CC AUCP(b) resolution "On shortcomings in political work among the population of the western regions of the Ukr SSR."

November 24 - The troops of the Leningrad front in cooperation with the Red Banner Baltic Fleet totally cleared the island of Saaremaa of the enemy.

November 25 - Directive of Headquarters of the Supreme High Command to the commander of the 1st Ukrainian front on preparation and conduct of an offensive operation with the goal of defeating the enemy's Kielce - Radomsko grouping in cooperation with the 1st Belorussian front.

November 26 - Completion of the offensive operations by the 2nd Ukrainian front begun October 29 with the goal of seizing Budapest with frontal attacks.

- In Mukachevo the first convention of delegates from the People's Committee of the Trans-Carpathian Ukraine was held, passing a manifesto on the annexation of the Trans-Carpathian Ukraine to the Soviet Ukraine.

November 28 - Directive of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command to the commander of the 1st Belorussian front on preparation and conduct of an offensive operation with the goal of routing the Warsaw-Radomsko enemy grouping.

- Directive of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command to the commander of the 2nd Belorussian front on preparation and conduct of

an offensive operation with the goal of routing the Przasnysk-Mlawa enemy grouping.

November 29 - Total liberation of Albania from the German fascist invaders.

November 30 - Directive of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command to the commander of the 4th Ukrainian front to prepare the 38th Army for an offensive in the general direction of Cracow.

December 1 - Resolution of the SDC on measures to assist in the restoration of the Dnepr hydroelectric plant named for V. I. Lenin.

December 2 - The troops of the 3rd Ukrainian front liberated the city of Kaposvar (Hungary).

- The formation of the Hungarian National Liberation Front.

December 3 - The troops of the 2nd Ukrainian front liberated the city of Miskolc.(Hungary).

- Directive of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command to the commander of the 3rd Belorussian front on preparation and conduct of an offensive operation with the goal of defeating the Tilsit-Insterburg enemy grouping.

December 3-4 - Bloody reprisals by the British forces on Greek patriots in Athens.

December 5 - Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on the institution of the medal "For the defense of the Soviet Arctic."

December 7 - The government of N. Radescu was formed in Rumania.

December 8 - Resolution of the SDC "On urgent measures to assist in the material supply of railroads in the winter of 1944-45."

December 10 - Signing in Moscow of a treaty of alliance and mutual assistance between the USSR and France.

December 11 - Establishment of diplomatic relations between the USSR and Chile.

December 12 - Directive of Headquarters of the Supreme High Command to the commanders of the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts on the conduct of an offensive operation with the goal of defeating the enemy's Budapest grouping and seizing Budapest.

- The establishment of diplomatic relations between the Soviet Union and Nicaragua.

December 13 - Resolution of the SDC USSR "On the results of the All-Union Socialist Competition of regions, krays and republics to obtain a good harvest and improve kolkhoz animal husbandry in 1944."

December 16 - Beginning of the offensive of German fascist forces in the Ardennes.

December 20 - The troops of the 2nd Ukrainian front seized the important road junction of Levice (Slovakia).

December 21 - Meeting of the Provisional National Assembly of Hungary in Debrecen.

December 22 - The Provisional National Government of Hungary was formed in Debrecen.

December 24 - The troops of the 3rd Ukrainian front seized the city of Bicske (Hungary). /683

December 26 - The troops of the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts, united in the region of Esztergom, completed the encirclement of the Budapest grouping of the German fascist forces.

December 28 - The National government of Hungary declared war against Fascist Germany.

December 29 - Ultimatum of the command troops of the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian fronts to the enemy grouping encircled at Budapest.

December 31 - Resolution of the Polish People's Government on the transformation of the Polish Committee of National Liberation to the Provisional Government of the Polish Republic.

January 2-6, 1945 - Repulsion by the troops of the 3rd Ukrainian front of the first counterstrike of the German fascist forces attempting to raise the blockade on the grouping encircled in Budapest.

January 7-11 - Repulsion by the troops of the 3rd Ukrainian front of the second counterstrike of the German fascist forces.

January 18 - The troops of the 2nd Ukrainian front cleared the eastern part of the Hungarian capital, Pest, of the enemy.

January 18-26 - Repulsion by the troops of the 3rd Ukrainian front of the theird counterstrike of the German fascist forces.

January 20 - The signing of a truce agreement between the USSR, the USA and England on one hand and Hungary on the other.

January 27-February 7 - The troops of the 3rd Ukrainian front liquidated the breach by the German forces to the Danube.

February 13 - The troops of the 2nd Ukrainian front with the cooperation of the troops of the 3rd Ukrainian front completed the liquidation of the Budapest grouping of the German fascist forces and totally liberated the capital of Hungary, Budapest.