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MILITARY HISTORY JOURNAL

Greatest Possible Strengthening of One-Man Command, Military Discipline
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[Article, published under the heading "Toward the 70th Anniversary of the Soviet Armed Forces," by Col Gen A.A. Demidov: "The Greatest Possible Strengthening of One-Man Command and Military Discipline"]

[Text] In comparing actions and deeds with the decisions of the 27th CPSU Congress, we are clearly persuaded of the correctness of the party's course directed at a revolutionary renewal of all aspects of our life. The conclusions and instructions of the party forum concerning the strategy of restructuring have been concretized in the materials of the January and July (1987) Plenums of the CPSU Central Committee and in the speeches and comments of the General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee M.S. Gorbachev.

The Communist Party and its Central Committee have paid unflagging attention to strengthening our motherland's defense capability and to ensuring conditions for the peaceful, constructive labor of the Soviet people. This has been caused by the complex present-day international situation, by the aggressive activeness of imperialism, and by its attempts to apply military-political and economic pressure to us and our allies and to undermine the positions of socialism.

Our defensive doctrine is also aimed at carrying out the cardinal task confronting mankind, that is, preventing war, both nuclear and conventional. In following this doctrine, the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact countries are doing everything with their power to halt the arms race, to achieve specific results in the disarmament area and eliminate the nuclear threat.

In constantly following a policy of peace and in carrying out Lenin's legacy, the party has carried out and is carrying out a large range of defense tasks, it is leading the entire life and activities of the Armed Forces, it is creatively developing the principles of their organizational development and training and is concerned for indoctrinating the Soviet people and the military in a spirit of high vigilance and combat readiness. "As long as the danger of war exists and as long as social revanche remains at the heart of the strategy and militaristic programs of the West," said the General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee M.S. Gorbachev in a report at a joint ceremony of the CPSU Central Committee, the USSR Supreme Soviet and the RSFSR Supreme Soviet devoted to the 70th Anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution, "we in the future will do everything necessary to maintain our defense might on a level which will exclude the military superiority of imperialism over socialism."(1)

The commanders responsible for both military and political matters have been given enormous responsibility for carrying out the party's policy in the Armed Forces and for maintaining constant combat capability and high troop combat readiness. During the very first days of establishing the proletarian state's army, V.I. Lenin pointed to the necessity of a gradual but constant realization of the principle of one-man command. In analyzing subsequently the experience of military organizational development, Vladimir Ilich commented: "We must study this experience. It has moved, in developing naturally, from a random, hazy collectivism through collectivism raised to an organizational system penetrating all army institutions and now, as a general trend, has approached one-man command, as the solely correct set-up for the work."(2)

The 70-year history of the development of our Army and Navy irrefutably shows that one-man command is a natural necessity and a most important principle of Soviet military organizational development.

The process of restructuring is underway in the Armed Forces as it is throughout our entire nation. Along with other things this touches on the questions of the democratization of army life. Democratization in the Army and Navy is primarily the unity of one-man command, strong discipline and unswerving efficiency with the broad involvement of the party organizations, the Komsomol and all personnel in carrying out the tasks confronting the Armed Forces. This, as was pointed out at a meeting of the party aktiv of the USSR Ministry of Defense means the decisive rejection of unchallenged administrative rule, the closeness of the leaders with the masses of servicemen, respect for the dignity of each man, concern for the personnel and the combating of distortions in disciplinary practices and impoliteness.

Under present-day conditions, the significance of one-man command has increased even more. Its essence is in the completeness of executive authority of our commanders who take decisions, issue orders and instructions and organize the work of subordinates. However, one-man command is not merely power and extensive rights. It means above all personal responsibility for the men, for one's decisions, actions and deeds. The commanders answer to the Communist Party and the Soviet government for the constant combat and mobilizational readiness of the units and subunits assigned to them, for military and political training, for indoctrination, military discipline and the political-moral state of the personnel.

In order to be up to the level of the demands placed by the CPSU on a modern leader, including a military one, it is essential to rely skillfully on the party and Komsomol organizations and the ideological aktiv, for this helps the commanders avoid excessive management by mere injunction. "The CPSU considers it essential to subsequently strengthen its organizing and directing influence on the life and activities of the Armed Forces,

to strengthen one-man command, to raise the role and influence of the political bodies and party organizations of the Soviet Army and Navy and see to it that the vital link of the army with the people is made even stronger.”(3)

Restructuring, as the very process of renewal in the life of our army, presently requires a more specific approach to the strengthening of one-man command. Here the success depends primarily upon the well-conceived and effective personnel policy which should fully meet the increased demands of the times. The military personnel must be fully aware of their personal responsibility for the assigned area of service and for ensuring the motherland's security. And here as never before it is important to combine exactingness and supervision, help and comradely support to those who are at the head of the troop collectives.

The CPSU views the strengthening of one-man command on a party basis in close relationship to better party political work. Great responsibility for this rests on the primary party organizations. “All threads of the restructuring, in essence, run to them,” commented the General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee, M.S. Gorbachev. “The course of the changes, the ability to mobilize and inspire people and the ability to bring about a concrete improvement in work depend primarily upon the initiative of the primary party organizations.... For this reason there must be more professionalism, more democracy and more organization and discipline.”(4)

At present, the solely responsible commander is the chief figure in the restructuring in the army and the overcoming of stagnation phenomena, the carrying out of prescribed obligations by each serviceman and the organizing of supervision and help on the spot depend largely upon him.

In turn, the commander should meet the increased demands of the times and should possess ideological strength, high professional qualities and firm moral convictions. It is essential to see one's own shortcomings, to precisely spot the “sore points” in the subunit or unit, to be able to organize the collective's efforts to eliminate them and be able to mobilize the men to achieve high results. “The greatest successes are achieved here,” pointed out the USSR Minister of Defense, Army Gen D.T. Yazov, “where the commanders show a creative approach to organizing the exercises in combat training and in the exercises create a situation close to actual combat.”(5)

As is known, able and intelligent actions can be expected only from a soldier who has completely mastered his specialty and is well trained in conducting modern combined-arms combat. With all its enormous technical equipping an army has always been strong in its people and in the awareness of the masses. The experience of previous wars shows that large, well equipped but poorly

trained troops have fled the battlefield. V.I. Lenin gave enormous attention to military education. In speaking at the 7th RKP(b) [Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik)] Congress, he said that the party's slogan should be: “...Teach military affairs effectively....”(6) Vladimir Ilich emphasized that “intense military training for a major war requires not zeal, not shouting, not a battle slogan but rather protracted, intense, stubborn and disciplined work....”(7)

In these words of V.I. Lenin, I would particularly like to point up the last circumstance: “Disciplined Work.” At present, when equipment and weapons are collective-use, the factor of discipline, precision and clarity assumes particular importance. Good training levels and the ability to subordinate one's mood and emotions to the carrying out of the end task confronting the crew, squad or platoon—this is what we see as the discipline of each individual soldier. Let us recall what F. Engels said about this in his article “Company Drill Exercise”: “A soldier who must fish in his memory or wrack his brains to understand what a given command requires of him does more harm to a battalion than good.”(8)

The demands made on each member of a military collective both in the past and at present include mastery, and the capacity at any time of the year or day to be ready to carry out the set task. Standing in the forefront here is the figure of the commander the one with the duty to train steadfast, disciplined and conscious defenders of the motherland. Practice indicates that precisely aware soldiers, both in combat and in peacetime, show combat activeness, courage, independence and reasonable initiative.

It is essential to stress again that to a decisive degree the political, professional and moral qualities of the commanders determine the actual effectiveness of the principle of one-man command and its indoctrinational influence on the personnel. An order should be carried out unswervingly, precisely and on time. This is its profound indoctrinational and moral sense.

Our regulations state that an order is a law for subordinates. Nonperformance of an order in peacetime and particularly in wartime is viewed as an infraction of Soviet law and as the severest military crime. From the standpoint of today's demands, the solely-responsible commander must provide the complete fulfillment of the prescribed demands and take every measure to strengthen military discipline.

The strengthening of one-man command presupposes the greatest possible rise in the responsibility of the commanders and political workers for carrying out party policy and for the state of affairs in the area assigned to them. Party principledness and the fight against concessions and oversimplification in combat training and

against formalism—this is the touchstone on which the position of each officer as the leader of an army collective is honed. However, far from every serviceman acts in this manner.

The party aspect of one-man command, its very essence, oblige the commander to constantly observe the demands of the regulations and to feel himself personally responsible for the state of affairs in the unit or subunit. Particularly great responsibility rests on the officers of the regimental level as the effectiveness and viability of the principle of one-man command and its indoctrinational effect on the personnel depend primarily upon the political, professional and moral qualities of these officers.

One of the important indicators of a commander's party loyalty is his attitude toward criticism and self-criticism. These most important standards of party life are an active means of indoctrination and a dependable way for eliminating shortcomings. Under the effect of criticism the command personnel develops a correct style of work and the capacity to draw lessons from failings and errors, to objectively assess his own professional qualities and to determine the level of combat readiness in a subunit and unit. Such a position makes it possible for the commander to be closer to the men, it raises his authority in the eyes of subordinates and contributes to the activeness and militancy of the party organization.

Commander activeness and high military discipline are interrelated concepts. The experience of army service shows that only for an exacting commander do subordinates always precisely carry out their orders, show vigilance, discipline and initiative, act unstintingly in difficult conditions and when necessary promptly come to the aid of their comrades.

The party has always given and does give primary significance to the inculcating of these qualities in the armed defenders of our motherland. Here the party is guided by the instructions of V.I. Lenin who concluded that the founding of the Red Army was based on a new aware iron discipline. "...Without this iron discipline," said Vladimir Ilich in 1920, "we would not have founded the Red Army, we would not have withstood the 2 years of hostilities and could not generally have held out against organized, united capital." (9) Military discipline was one of the most important factors in the victory of our people and their Armed Forces in the Great Patriotic War.

The Communist Party has constantly emphasized the ever-growing importance of military discipline and vigilance in strengthening our Army and Navy. The 27th Party Congress and the June (1987) Plenum of the CPSU Central Committee with exhaustive completeness defined the importance of discipline, order and organization in carrying out the tasks confronting us. The great development of military affairs, and the ongoing growth of the scale and complexity of state defense and the

defense of our friends and allies under the conditions of the current international situation place the highest demands on combat readiness and its most important component, strong military discipline. Where ideological indoctrination is aimed at the shaping of a communist ideology, high ideological loyalty and a profound assimilation of the demands of the military oath and regulations, here order is higher, organization is greater and there is no laxity. However, this can be achieved only when the organization of military and political training, the life and relations between the servicemen conform to the prescribed standards. "...Only under the condition of magnificent organization," emphasized V.I. Lenin, "can our moral force be turned into a material one." (10)

A strengthening of military discipline is impossible without a correct understanding of its political essence on the part of the commanders, the political bodies, the party and Komsomol organizations. In working to instill order, it is indispensable to have an improvement in the ideological-political and military indoctrination of the servicemen, a complete explanation to them of CPSU domestic and foreign policy, the historic purpose of the Soviet Armed Forces as well as the requirements of the oath and regulations. Life has repeatedly shown that in the units and formations where political work is conducted most carefully, there is no laxness, troop morale is higher and there are more victories. The famous conclusion of Lenin's is pertinent at present as never before.

But for now, unfortunately, we cannot say that all the communist leaders understand this. How else to explain the shortcomings in the strengthening of discipline and instilling strict prescribed order in the area for which comrades V. Afanasyev, V. Avvakumov and L. Zenkov are responsible. Everyone recalls the air disaster which occurred last year. This tragic case was a severe reminder of what could happen as a result of the slightest lessening of attention to the questions of discipline and indoctrination of the personnel.

The restructuring and renewal presently occurring in the nation create new opportunities for strengthening military discipline. The role of the labor collectives is being increased and production relations are being improved. The army is receiving more and more persons who have undergone tempering on the job, in the vocational-technical schools and in agriculture. An important matter of our times is the increased general educational training of the inductees. All of this creates good conditions for uniting the combat collectives of the subunits and units and for strengthening military discipline.

However, these greater opportunities will be specifically realized in practical undertakings if the commanders and political bodies work in close contact with subordinates and consider the fact that the present-day level of military affairs places increased demands on military discipline. Even individual manifestations of laxness, thoughtlessness and negligence can lead to negative

consequences and for this reason are completely inadmissible. The instance of the landing of the West German sports aircraft in Moscow is clear confirmation of this.

In speaking about discipline under present-day conditions, one must pay particular attention to the discipline of personal and collective responsibility of the men for carrying out the set tasks, the discipline of carrying out taken decisions, the discipline of operating modern equipment and weapons and the discipline of alert duty. Each of these concepts moves to the forefront the serviceman and his readiness to always and in every way follow the demands of Soviet laws and the principles of communist morality as well as execute service obligations in an exemplary manner.

The prime duty of the commanders, the political bodies, the party and Komsomol organizations is to see to it that the serviceman develops a communist ideology, high moral-political and combat qualities, the capacity to consciously obey the commanders and maintain firm prescribed order in the units. In order to achieve all of this, it is essential, in particular, to consider the demographic, national and socioclass features of subordinates. This is what M.I. Kalinin had to say on this issue: "...It is essential to have a special approach to each nationality.... For example, the peoples of the Caucasus and Transcaucasia have a very great respect for weapons and the presentation of a weapon in a ceremony is of great importance for them. Among the Uzbeks elders have great respect. Without fail an agitator in his work should take into account the national customs, mores and way of life of one or another people."(11)

There is no doubt about it, it is not easy to control the process of strengthening military discipline and this requires vital experience, a searching spirit and a sincere desire to be useful to others, to protect them against wrong steps and help bring out the better qualities.

The state of military discipline depends largely upon the authority of the commanders and political workers. M.V. Frunze felt that the first condition for introducing discipline is the official authority and personal example of the commander. "The discipline of the rank-and-file," he pointed out, "is influenced in the worst way by the slightest instances of undisciplined conduct by superiors."(12) For this reason it is essential to raise the personal responsibility of the officer and more frequently focus attention on the problems of the honor and dignity of an officer. The success of all a commander's activities and in particular his activities to strengthen military discipline to a decisive degree depends upon the example he sets in labor and conduct. No position frees a leader from the high demands placed on himself and subordinates. In other words, you yourself must be as you wish to see your subordinates.

Strict and real exactingness and the ability to force the observance of the established standards and rules of conduct are indispensable conditions for a good commander and political worker.

The party has indicated the precise way for a mastery of the Leninist art of controlling the masses and the way for restructuring our work and which requires the development of democracy, glasnost, criticism and self-criticism combined with increased exactingness for the personnel and improved control of the men and collectives. The Military Council and Political Directorate of the Southern Troop Group have made a firm start at increasing the demands placed on the communists. The questions of their execution of service and party duties and the observance of moral standards have been raised at the recent sessions of the military council and at meetings of the party aktiv and the communists and Komsomol members in the formations and units. These were also resolved in the process of the work done by the communist leaders in the troops.

We are constantly focusing the command personnel, the staffs, the political bodies and party organizations of the units on increasing party principledness and exactingness. We direct them at using diverse forms and methods to instill in the communists initiative, professionalism and responsibility for the state of affairs in the assigned job, that they be concerned with developing a situation of exactingness and mutual demands in the party collectives, further criticism and self-criticism, improve the check on execution and actually influence the carrying out of new, more complicated tasks of combat training. Each time life confirms that an atmosphere of exactingness has a beneficial effect on the affairs of the military collective, it internally strengthens the men and encourages each to work at full force. Practice indicates that as yet not everyone correctly understands the essence of party principledness and exactingness. One can still hear that we must increase the demands on the men and instances are encountered when the party committee or bureau is only concerned with this, it discusses personal matters and places party reprimands against the communists. Of course, those persons who have besmirched the title of CPSU member and who do not value the authority of a party fighter must be held responsible and the strictest measures applied to them. However, it is much more important to indoctrinate the personnel in daily exactingness. In each party collective it is essential to establish an atmosphere in which no instance of deviation from the established procedure or standards of our morality is overlooked so that the activities of all the communists, without exception, are judged in a principled manner.

In being concerned with the strengthening of military discipline, the commanders and political bodies give great attention to establishing prescribed order. However, this question has not been resolved everywhere and in every instance. In analyzing the reasons for shortcomings and mistakes one can see that in some places

prescribed order has been reduced to cleanliness in the barracks and assigned territory. But in actuality this is far from the truth. Prescribed order first of all presupposes the providing of the required conditions for the exemplary fulfillment of the tasks of standing alert duty, guard duty and unit administration. It presupposes a clear organization of military and political training, the operation of equipment, correct relations between the servicemen, strict observance of the order of the day and the organizing of leisure for the personnel. If this is not observed, then the results can be the lowest.

The development of military affairs has brought about the appearance of new means of armed combat, predominantly collective ones. But the general responsibility for carrying out the set task in no way excludes but, on the contrary, presupposes individual responsibility and this means that the commander and political worker must pay more attention to individual work. The role of the human factor has increased significantly under present-day conditions. It is possible to note that during the exercises, firings and the driving of battle vehicles there are virtually no violations of discipline among the soldiers and sergeants. Has each commander reflected on why this happens and what is the reason for this. We feel that this circumstance must be more fully considered in our daily work.

Principled and professional relationships based upon the strict observance of the prescribed requirements and the standards of communist morality are one of the important factors in improving troop leadership and ensuring high indicators in combat and political training.

Footnotes

1. M.S. Gorbachev, "Oktyabr i perestroyka: revolyutsiya prodolzhayetsya" [October and Restructuring: The Revolution Continues], Moscow, Politizdat, 1987, p 55.
2. V.I. Lenin, PSS [Complete Collected Works], Vol 40, p 77.
3. "Materialy XXVII syezda KPSS" [Materials of the 27th CPSU Congress], Moscow, Politizdat, 1986, p 161.
4. M.S. Gorbachev, op. cit., p 42.
5. *Voyenno-istoricheskiy zhurnal*, No 7, 1987, p 5.
6. V.I. Lenin, PSS, Vol 36, p 26.
7. Ibid., p 325.
8. K. Marx and F. Engels, "Soch." [Works], Vol 15, p 280.
9. V.I. Lenin, PSS, Vol 40, pp 117-118.
10. Ibid., Vol 9, p 246.

11. M.I. Kalinin, "O kommunisticheskom vospitanii i voinskomo dolge" [On Communist Indoctrination and Military Duty], Moscow, Voenizdat, 1967, p 585.

12. M.V. Frunze, "Izbrannyye proizvedeniya" [Selected Works], Moscow, Voenizdat, 1977, p 234.

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Soviet Construction Troops

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[Article by Mar Engr Trps N.F. Shestopalov: "Soviet Construction Troops"]

[Text] In the Soviet Armed Forces a worthy place is held by the military construction units which are special troop formations designed to carry out work on military and certain national economic installations. The first military construction units of the Red Army were organized during the years of the Civil War and military intervention. In March 1918, directorates of individual work leaders of military field construction were organized for building defensive structures in the districts and on the fronts. These included construction sections. The construction of defensive works was carried out by the forces of the local population and by worker battalions. Among the prominent leaders of the first military field construction projects was the military engineer D.M. Karbyshev.

Over-all leadership over the activity of the military field construction projects on the Red Army scale was provided by the collegium for engineer defense under the Central Military Technical Directorate (from June 1918, the Main Military Engineer Directorate) and which was headed by the experienced military engineer K.I. Velichko.(1)

During the years of the Civil War, the military construction bodies were also involved in reconstruction and economic projects. On 9 May 1918, under a decree of Lenin's, in the aims of providing construction on a nationwide scale, the Committee of State Structures of the VSNKh [All-Russian Council of the National Economy] was established. For carrying out military construction projects in November-December 1919, in it they organized the Military Construction Bureau (Voenstroy), the Front Military Construction Bureau (Frontstroy) and a military construction directorate for the needs of the Naval Commissariat. Up to the end of 1921, these organizations carried out an entire range of national economic projects.(2)

Under the conditions of the transition of the young Soviet nation to a peacetime life, particularly urgent were the questions of rebuilding the war-devastated

national economy and the wider involvement of the Red Army troops in combating economic chaos. Large troop formations of the army type were organized numbering over 120,000 men: the Revolutionary Army of Labor, the Caucasus Army of Labor, the Petrograd Revolutionary Army of Labor, the Ukrainian Soviet Labor Army and the Military-Labor Army of Siberia. Just during the first months of labor activity, the personnel of these armies in addition to repair and construction projects, made 1.08 million sages³ of firewood and lumber, rebuilt 6,630 versts of railroad track and overhauled 9,577 steam engines and 53,761 railroad cars. They mined 210,000 tons of coal in the Kuzbass and Chernogorsk mines.⁽³⁾ For those times this was of enormous significance.

Such an organization of the military construction bodies existed until the end of the Civil War and the military intervention. The experience of their activities in 1918-1921 has been generalized in the works of K.I. Velichko, D.M. Karbyshev, G.G. Nevskiy, A.D. Malevskiy as well as prominent Soviet military leaders, party and state figures.⁽⁴⁾

During the years of peacetime construction, the main efforts of the construction troops were directed at building fortifications and erecting barracks projects. By an order of M.V. Frunze, on 1 April 1924, the organization was announced of the Military Construction Directorate of the Worker-Peasant Red Army (VSU RKKA).⁽⁵⁾ Under it were the billeting construction sections of the districts and the shore construction sections of the seas. Directly on the spot military construction projects were carried out by construction commissions organized on the basis of the Regulation Governing Temporary Construction and Troop Repair-Construction Commissions.

At the end of the 1920s, the VSU RKKA was ordered to build airfields for the Air Forces and a special construction department was established for directing the work.

Thus, the VSU RKKA became the central body of the Narkomvoenmor [People's Commissariat for Military and Naval Affairs] on the questions of defense, nondefense, special construction and troop billeting. This status was enacted in legislation in the Regulation Governing the Military Construction Directorate of the RKKA approved by the Narkomvoenmor in 1930.⁽⁶⁾

In the second half of the 1920s, the VSU RKKA was noticeably strengthened. Its own production facilities were improved. In 1932, as a result of the reorganization carried out, the VSU RKKA kept only all types of nondefense construction. The Defense Construction Department was turned over to the Main Military Engineer Directorate of the Red Army in which they established the Defense Construction Directorate (UOS). The Special Construction Department was reorganized as the Airfield Construction Department and put under the RKKA [Worker-Peasant Red Army] Air Forces while the

Troop Billeting Department was reorganized as the Barracks Services Directorate (KEU RKKA). A corresponding reorganization was carried out also in the military districts.

In the 1930s, the construction troops erected a range of defensive structures along the western frontier of the USSR, they built 536 airfields, a large number of complex hydraulic engineering structures as well as thousands of enterprises for the defense industry and the national economy.⁽⁷⁾

In June 1938, on the basis of the VSU RKKA they organized the Main Military Construction Directorate Under the Council of People's Commissars (Glavvoenstroy under the SNK).⁽⁸⁾ It was headed by L.B. Safrazyan. A.N. Budkin was appointed the chief of the political directorate. Within Glavvoenstroy were the military construction directorates of the districts, the industrial enterprises, trusts, design organizations and special offices and to which were attached military construction battalions numbering a total of around 300,000 men.⁽⁹⁾ Initially, Glavvoenstroy was given tasks related to housing and social service construction for the People's Commissariat of Defense, however subsequently in line with the importance of industrial construction, and particularly in the eastern regions of the nation, it was also put in charge of building duplicate plants and enterprises of the defense industry. In 1940, industrial construction comprised around 30 percent of the total volume of work and at the beginning of 1940, some 50 percent.

In considering the complexity of the tasks being carried out by Glavvoenstroy, the SNK gave great attention to establishing its own production facilities. Over the period from 1939 through 1941, the SNK allocated about 500 million rubles for these purposes. This made it possible to quickly put into operation some 113 district-affiliated enterprises and a number of central plants which manufactured structural elements and parts.⁽¹⁰⁾ The UOS in 1938-1939 began construction on 8 fortified areas along the old frontier: Ostrov, Sebezh, Slutsk, Shepetovo, Izyaslav, Starokonstantinov, Ostropol and Kamanets-Podolskiy. By the end of 1939, some 1,028 structures had been erected in them. In 1940, when the Soviet-Finnish War had ended and when the Baltic republics had been incorporated in the USSR, construction of fortifications along the old frontier ended. A new construction program was outlined initially for 11 fortified areas and in 1941, there were an additional 9 fortified areas on the new frontier: Murmansk, Sortavala, Keksgolm, Vyborg, Khanko, Telshay, Kovel, Verkhne-Prutskiy and Nizhne-Prutskiy. In addition, after the liberation of Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina, preparations were commenced for building the Danube, Odessa and Chernovtsy fortified areas.⁽¹¹⁾

In February-March 1941, at a session of the Main Military Council of the NKO [People's Commissariat of Defense], they twice discussed the task of the rapid

completion of construction on the fortified areas.(12) The people's commissar of defense in the Order "On the Course of Defense Construction in the Fortified Areas" demanded that every measure be taken to complete the main defensive structures in 1941. However, it was not possible to promptly complete the entire amount of work. MSU M.V. Zakharov has pointed out that the surprise attack by Nazi Germany on the USSR thwarted the plans for reinforcing our frontiers and the engineer organization of the possible theater of operations.(13)

In line with the establishing of an independent People's Commissariat of the Navy in February 1939, all types of construction in the fleets were turned over to the fleet construction departments. In the People's Commissariat of the Navy they began organizing a construction directorate (SU VMF). The SU VMF included the military construction directorates of the fleets, the Construction Corps of the Pacific Fleet and 3 special construction directorates in the Baltic and under which were 33 separate construction battalions and 11 airfield engineer battalions. The activity of this directorate was constantly at the center of attention of the Main Military Council of the People's Commissariat of the Navy.

During the prewar years, the party and government devoted great attention to the development of the Air Forces. Construction of the main and field airfield network was widely developed. Over-all leadership over airfield construction was provided by the Air Forces construction organizations. These included the Air Forces construction departments of the districts and under these were a total of 26 airfield engineer battalions. According to the approved airfield construction plan in 1940 they were to complete 654 airfields, and in 1941, 560. In February 1941, the VKP(b) [All-Union Communist Party (Bolshevik)] Central Committee and the USSR SNK approved an additional airfield construction plan. In particular, provision was made to build 190 airfields in the western areas. By the start of the war, airfield construction was in full swing, but a majority of them had not been completed.(14)

The increased scope of military construction required the training of highly skilled personnel. Prior to 1939, highly skilled engineers for working in the military construction bodies were trained at the faculties of fortification, industrial and naval construction in the Military Engineer Academy.(15) On 10 June 1939, the Higher Naval Construction Engineer School (VVMISU) of the People's Commissariat of the Navy was established. It graduated its first military construction engineers in April 1941.

On the eve of the Great Patriotic War, the party and the government carried out extensive work to build up the military construction bodies and their subordinate military construction units which had made a major contribution to preparing the nation for defense. However, not everything had been done by the moment of the treacherous attack of Nazi Germany on the USSR. For this

reason in July-September 1941, the State Defense Committee [GKO] and the USSR SNK adopted a series of decrees in accord with which defense projects were considered to be priority tasks. The technical engineer and administrative-managerial employees mobilized for the construction of defensive perimeters were released from mobilization into the Soviet Army. The General Staff received instructions to work out plans for building defensive structures down to the battalion area, inclusively. The military construction units were provided with the necessary equipment and mechanisms. They were given the right to carry out unlimited felling of forests, and give orders to any lumber milling enterprises regardless of their departmental affiliation. The military councils of the fronts and the secretaries of the VKP(b) obkoms were given the duty of mobilizing the local population with the required transport and tools for construction and supplying them with food and housing at the work projects.(16) For building defensive lines by a decision of the GKO of 22 August 1941, on the basis of the UOS, Glavspetsgidrostroy [Main Directorate for Special Hydraulic Engineer Construction] and the construction organizations of the People's Commissariat of Construction, the Main Directorate of Defensive Projects of the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs (GUOBR) was organized. This included five directorates of defensive projects (UOBR): Northern, Northwestern, Western, Southwestern and Southern. Subsequently, the number of UOBR was increased to ten.(17) The construction of defensive structures was carried out by them using the forces of the military construction battalions and the mobilized local population which during the period of the work was organized as worker battalions headed by workers from the party raykoms or the rayispolkoms. Special leadership of the worker battalions was provided by engineering and technical specialists from the directorate of military field construction making up the UOBR.

All in all in the summer and autumn of 1941, about 10 million persons were mobilized for defensive construction. For example, in August 1941, around 23,000 construction troops and 120,000 persons from the local population comprising two UOBR were sent to build the defensive lines of the Bryansk Front. Examples of truly heroic labor were demonstrated here by the construction troops of the 51st Directorate of Military Field Construction under the leadership of the military engineer M.M. Maltsev and the commissar A.S. Antonenkov.

As a whole during the first months of the war the military construction bodies carried out an enormous amount of work. However, the experience of their activities clearly showed the need for concentrating all defensive construction in the NKO and for the establishing of additional mobile construction organizations capable of quickly and independently training the necessary contingent of specialists for performing complex construction jobs on particularly dangerous sectors.

On 13 October 1941, in accord with the requirements of combat practice, the GKO adopted a decree on the

organizing of the Main Directorate for Defensive Construction of the People's Commissariat of Defense (GUOS NKO)(18) and this was entrusted with the tasks of building defensive lines according to the General Staff plans from the Berents to the Black Sea. On the basis of the organizations of the GUOBR NKVD, in the GUOS NKO they established 10 directorates of defensive construction (UOS) and each of these had under it 3-7 directorates of military-field construction with their constituent military construction battalions and sectors. In December 1941, the number of UOS was increased to 17.

Since the defensive projects for protracted periods required a large amount of women and males not subject to induction into the operational army because of age, construction columns were organized in the UOS. Their personnel, on the basis of the regulation governing construction columns, was put on barracks status and provided with communal messing. The number of personnel for each column was set at 1,000 persons. These were divided into 4 construction detachments of 250 men each and these in turn were made up of production brigades. Officers commanded the columns.

In October 1941, the GKO issued a decree on the constituting of 6 combat engineer armies which would include 15 combat engineer brigades of 19 battalions each (including 2 training ones). At various times these were commanded by I.N. Brynbzov, L.Ye. Vladimirskiy, M.P. Vorobyev, A.S. Gundorov, V.A. Kvyatkovskiy, A.S. Kornev, V.V. Kosarev, V.S. Kosenko, S.N. Kruglov, M.M. Maltsev, K.S. Nazarov, D.G. Onika, Ya.D. Rapoport, I.Ye. Pruss, D.I. Suslin, I.Ye. Salashchenko, M.M. Tserevskiy and M.I. Chernykh.

The combat engineer armies were assigned two main tasks: the construction of the strategic rear defensive lines and the rapid training of skilled specialists for the new formations of engineer troops. The armies were manned primarily by contingents of called-up reservists with a construction specialty and under the age of 45. The combat engineer armies were initially under the Main Directorate of Defensive Construction and from 28 November 1941, in accord with the orders of Headquarters Supreme High Command [Hq SHC], they were put under the chief of the Soviet Army Engineer Troops.(19)

With the going over of the Soviet Army to the offensive, there was no longer the need for such a large amount of combat engineer armies. In February 1942, the GKO adopted a decision to disband 5 armies and subordinate the remainder to the fronts, while in the autumn the decision was taken to abolish them. On the basis of the headquarters of the combat engineer armies they organized directorates of defensive construction for the reserve of the Supreme High Command (UOS RVGK). Front directorates of defensive construction (FUOS) were also organized. The UOS RVGK and the FUOS

were reinforced by mine-clearing, heavy equipment and motor transport detachments. The required transport and construction equipment were also made available to them.(20)

In accord with the GKO Decree of 13 April 1942 "On Construction and Reconstruction of Ferrous Metallurgy Enterprises," the glavvoenstroy under the USSR SNK was reconstituted as the Main Directorate for Military Industrial Construction under the USSR SNK (Glavvovenpromstroy under the USSR SNK). A.N. Prokovyev was appointed its chief. Within the Glavvovenpromstroy under the USSR SNK, they established installation trusts which were special construction-installation units for rebuilding industry in the areas liberated from the Nazis. The efforts of the military construction organizations of Glavpromstroy of the NKVD and the construction-installation organizations of the People's Commissariat of Construction were focused on rebuilding the ferrous metallurgy enterprises. In 1942 alone, they had to rebuild or restore 23 blast furnaces with a total capacity of 5,355,000 tons of iron a year, 67 open-hearth furnaces and 22 electric furnaces, 7 Bessemer converters with a capacity of 6,336,000 tons of steel a year, 25 rolling mills with a capacity of 6,059,000 tons a year, 5 pipe-rolling mills with a capacity of 200,000 tons a year, 30 coking batteries with a capacity of 7.43 million tons of coke a year as well as increase the capacity for fire-clay articles by 535,000 tons.(22)

A large amount of repair and construction work was carried out by the specialized military construction detachments organized in a number of fronts and armies and subordinate to their barracks maintenance bodies [KEO]. Thus, the repair-construction organization under the KEO of the First Belorussian Front under the leadership of Col G.D. Kosoglyad on Belorussian territory rebuilt the buildings of 115 hospitals, 400 bathhouses, the Gomel Power Plant, a bridge across the Sozh River and industrial and utility buildings with a total area of 25,000 m².

The military construction units and subunits of the Main Directorate of Defensive Construction made a major contribution to rebuilding bridges and roads and clearing mines from the field. For example, during the summer and autumn of 1943, in the area of the Kursk Salient, the construction troops together with the mobilized population rebuilt roads over 3,000 km long as well as 250 major bridges. In February 1943, the personnel of the 24th UOS RVGK participated in rebuilding Leningrad's industrial enterprises. In a short period of time the construction troops carried out a large amount of work in clearing in Stalingrad, clearing away rubble and rebuilding the shops of the Barrikady, Stalingrad Tractor and Krasnyy Oktyabr Plants as well as thousands of residential buildings.(23)

The men of the 23d UOS RVGK who carried out construction projects in the zone of the First Ukrainian Front in 1945 repaired and built on territory outside the

USSR but which had been freed from the Nazis: 27 major bridges over the Vistula and Oder, 4 across the Danube, 8 across the Danube Canal and 29 complex hydraulic engineering structures.(24)

As a total during the years of the Great Patriotic War, the construction troops together with the mobilized population built 562 defensive lines about 50,000 km long, over 1 million weapons emplacements, they erected around 22,000 km of fortification obstacles and dug 71,000 km of trenches.(25)

The Communist Party and the Soviet government had high regard for the contribution of the construction troops to the great victory. For heroic labor in building the defensive structures, orders and medals were presented to around 150,000 men, while the Order of the Red Star was presented to 23 military construction battalions, 9 airfield construction detachments and 24 separate mine-clearing detachments.(26)

Immediately after the war, the Soviet nation was confronted with the acute problem of rebuilding the war-devastated national economy. However, the return of the Soviet people to a peacetime existence was complicated by the new preparations of the imperialist states for war against the USSR. This forced a reorganization of the military construction bodies along with other measures. In 1946, a new directorate was constituted and this successively was headed by Gens V.F. Zotov, M.G. Grigorenko, K.M. Vertelov and N.V. Chekov. During the difficult postwar years, its personnel carried out a number of very complex projects involving the testing of new equipment and weapons.

On 19 January 1946, on the basis of Glavvoenpromstroy under the USSR SNK, they organized the People's Commissariat for the Construction of Military and Naval Enterprises and this was headed by S.Z. Ginzburg. Experienced leaders of military construction projects such as I.V. Komzin, G.P. Komarov, D.I. Surovov, S.D. Itskovich, B.L. Livshits and others were invited to work at the people's commissariat.

In 1946, on the basis of the Directorate of Airfield Construction for the Rear Services of the Air Forces, for rebuilding and building the airfield network the Central Directorate of Capital Airfield Construction (TsUKAS) was established and the chief of this from 1946 through 1949 was Gen B.V. Bychevskiy. In a short period of time, the airfield construction organizations had introduced advanced methods for concreting the runways and making it possible to provide standardized construction of the airfields on a basis of employing highly productive machines and units and series production was organized for the arch elements for airfield structures.

In 1948, the Main Military Construction Directorate of the Navy was organized and this was headed by Maj Gen A.F. Labaydin. For the first time in the navy there was the position of deputy people's commissar of the navy for construction and Lt Gen G.P. Komarov was appointed to this.

Even during the course of the Great Patriotic War, the VKP(b) Central Committee and the GKO had repeatedly raised the question of the need to organize a military construction organization in the NKO which would provide defensive, nondefense and special construction, however this was resolved only at the end of 1945. On 2 December of the same year, the Main Barracks Construction Directorate (Glavvoenstroy) of the USSR NKO was established.

A major contribution to rebuilding the national economy was made by the military construction organizations of the districts and fleets. Their personnel required and rebuilt millions of m² of housing, thousands of structures in Sevastopol, Stalingrad, Kiev, Minsk, Moscow, Leningrad, Odessa and Orel and participated in the reconstruction of the monuments of Petergof, Palace Square and a number of others. For the work results in 1948, 639 construction troops were awarded governmental decorations.(27) The best results were achieved by the collectives headed by A.G. Karaoglanov, V.I. Dyenko, M.L. Shtern and I.N. Kaplunov.

The carrying out of the tasks confronting Glavvoenstroy would have been impossible without providing a high level of party political work. In 1946, upon the decision of the Main Political Directorate of the Armed Forces, a political department of Glavvoenstroy was organized. In the military construction directorates of the districts they organized political departments. During the same month they founded a monthly periodical *Voyenno-stroitelnyy byulleten* [Military Construction Bulletin], and in 1947, the newspaper *Na stroyke* [On the Site]. The well organized party political work helped to strengthen military and labor discipline, to unite the collectives and ultimately to fulfill and overfulfill the plan quotas.

For exercising unified leadership over all defensive, nondefense and special construction on a scale of the Armed Forces in 1955, they introduced the position of deputy minister of defense for construction and troop billeting and in the districts, a deputy commander. The deputy ministers for defense for construction and troop billeting successively were Col Gen V.Ye. Belokoskov, Col Gen A.I. Shebunin, Army Gen A.N. Komarovskiy and Mar Engr Trps A.V. Gelovani.

The headquarters bodies subordinate to the deputy minister of defense for construction and troop billeting have carried out a large amount of work to set up a system of central and district design institutes, affiliates of these, scientific research institutes and laboratories. Over a short period of time these have been able to work out designs for new types of structures and ensure their introduction. In accord with the requirements of scientific and technical progress, work has been reorganized in the senior design organizations of the Ministry of Defense, the central and state design institutes.

There has been further development of the organization of the training of personnel for the military construction units, their headquarters bodies and scientific institutions. During the postwar years, specialists in the area of military construction have begun to be trained at the Leningrad Red Banner Higher Military Construction Engineer School imeni Army Gen A.N. Komarovskiy, in the Pushkino Higher Military Construction Engineer School, in the Togliatti Higher Military Construction Command School as well as in the Simferopol and Tallinn Higher Military Political Construction Schools. The training of middle-level specialists has been provided by technical schools, training centers and schools.

In 1975, in the aim of more effective leadership over party political work in the military construction units, a political directorate was organized and this was headed by Col Gen V.I. Bychenko.

In conclusion, I would like to point out that the Soviet construction troops during the postwar times have carried out a number of important party and government assignments. They have built enterprises and housing as well as launching pads at space centers. The construction troops have also erected various modern projects for the Strategic Rocket Troops, the Ground Troops, the Navy, the Air Forces and the Air Defense Troops. They have shown high skill in the course of eliminating the consequences of the disaster at the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant. For the courage and heroism shown here, many construction troops were awarded government decorations.

The present-day construction troops are not only soldiers of different specialties but also a many-thousand collective of engineers and technicians, scientists, designers of the highest skill, workers and employees of the Soviet Army.

The profession of a construction worker inculcates courage, industriousness and firmness of character in a man. A modern member of the construction troops is not only able to build but also at any moment with weapons in hand is ready to come to the defense of our motherland.

Footnotes

1. See: "Inzhenernyye voyska v boyakh za Sovetskuyu Rodiny" [Engineer Troops in the Battles for the Soviet Motherland], Moscow, Voenizdat, 1970, p 22.
2. *Voyenno-stroitelnyy byulleten*, No 2, 1981, p 9.
3. Ibid.
4. For more detail see: "Inzhenernyye voyska v boyakh....," pp 39-41.
5. TsGASA [Central State Archives of the Soviet Army], folio 23, inv. 2, stor. unit 309, sheet 90.

6. Ibid., inv. 1, stor. unit 35a, sheet 10.
7. See: *Voyenno-stroitelnyy byulleten*, No 2, 1981, p 11.
8. Ibid., No 3, 1980, p 14.
9. TsGANKh [Central State Archives of the National Economy], folio 8516, inv. 4, stor. unit 28, sheets 58, 66.
10. Ibid., sheet 58.
11. *Voprosy istorii*, No 5, 1970, p 31.
12. G.K. Zhukov, "Vospominaniya i razmyshleniya" [Remembrances and Reflections], Moscow, Izd-vo APN, Vol 1, 1986, p 271.
13. *Voprosy istorii*, No 5, 1970, p 32.
14. See: G.K. Zhukov, op. cit., Vol 1, p 261.
15. "Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya" [Soviet Military Encyclopedia], Moscow, Voenizdat, Vol 2, 1976, p 220.
16. TsAMO SSSR [Central Archives of the USSR Ministry of Defense], folio 30017, inv. 1, file 133, sheets 90-96, 100.
17. Ibid., folio 24 UOS, inv. 1, file 140, sheet 3; folio 30017, inv. 1, file 133, sheet 10.
18. "Inzhenernyye voyska Sovetskoye Armii 1918-1945" [Engineer Troops of the Soviet Army 1918-1945], Moscow, Voenizdat, 1985, p 278.
19. *Voyenno-istoricheskiy zhurnal*, No 12, 1978, pp 39-40.
20. TsAMO, folio 2, inv. 12, file 121, sheet 311.
21. "Kommunisticheskaya partiya v period Velikoy Otechestvennoy voyny" [The Communist Party During the Period of the Great Patriotic War], Moscow, Gospolitizdat, 1961, pp 113-115.
22. Ibid., p 114.
23. TsAMO, folio 17, inv. 18, file 30, sheet 130.
24. "Rubezhi muzhestva" [Boundaries of Courage], Moscow, Izd-vo DOSAAF, 1978, p 154.
25. *Sovetskoye voyennoye obozreniye*, No 8, 1983, p 4.
26. "Rubezhi muzhestva," pp 156-157.
27. *Voyenno-stroitelnyy byulleten*, No 10, 1948, p 14.

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Lessons of Two Operations

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[Article, published under the heading "Soviet Military Art," by Lt Gen (Ret) M.I. Golovnin: "The Lessons of Two Operations"]

[Text] One of the important requirements of military art is to take the best decisions on a basis of an objective assessment of the enemy's forces and the probable nature of its actions and the capabilities of one's own troops at one or another stage of an operation. A disregarding of this demand can lead not only to the loss of initiative but also to a loss of what has been won. It is very important to promptly guess the enemy's plan, particularly in the concluding stage of an offensive operation, when the combat capabilities of the advancing side are depleted and the defending side could bring up new forces.

The Great Patriotic War has provided us with many lessons in this regard. Let us take up just two which, in our view, are the most instructive.

The First Lesson. The troops of the Voronezh, Southwestern and Southern Fronts, in the course of the strategic offensive in the winter of 1943, had dealt a major defeat to the enemy, they had advanced to a depth of 150-300 km and had liberated a significant portion of the territory in the south of the nation, including the cities of Kursk, Belgorod, Kharkov and Rostov-na-Donu. By mid-February, the armies on the left flank of the Voronezh Front (commander, Col Gen F.I. Golikov) were fighting to the west of Kharkov, those of the right wing of the Southwestern Front (commander, Col Gen, from 13 February 1943, Army Gen N.F. Vatutin) on the approaches to Dnepropetrovsk and Zaporozhye, while the Southern Front (commander, Lt Gen, from 12 February 1943, Col Gen R.Ya. Malinovskiy) had reached the Mius River.

The Nazi Command, in considering the extremely difficult situation of its troops on the southern wing of the front and which were actually threatened with being cut off and defeated in the Donbass and as a result of this the Soviet troops could reach the Dnieper, was seeking a way out of the situation. Considering this, it took a decision on the basis of Army Group Don to form Army Group South and by maneuvering the panzer and motorized formations to establish strong assault groupings and go over to the counteroffensive against the far ahead but weakened armies of the Southwestern and Voronezh Fronts, to defeat them and seize the initiative. For this purpose during the first 10 days of February, by pulling back troops from the Don and partially from the Severskiy Donets to prepared positions along the Mius River, the enemy had been able to reduce the width of the front, to free several panzer and motorized divisions as well as the headquarters of the 4th Panzer Army and begin to regroup them in an area where the formations of the

right wing of the Southwestern Front were advancing. Simultaneously, the enemy was moving up reserves into the area of Dnepropetrovsk and Zaporozhye from the west.

Our air reconnaissance was constantly observing the movements of the enemy troops and reported promptly about this. However, the command and staffs of the Southwestern and Voronezh Fronts viewed the regroupings of enemy troops as their withdrawal from the Donbass behind the Dnieper while the arriving divisions from the west were seen as the cover of this retreat.(1)

The Soviet Supreme High Command, in also assuming that the enemy was retreating behind the *Dnieper, decided to continue to the offensive. The fronts were given rather deep tasks. The Southwestern and Southern Fronts were to complete the defeat of the Donbass enemy grouping and reach the Dnieper in the zone from Kremenchug to Dnepropetrovsk while the Voronezh Front was to continue the offensive on the general axis of Kiev and reach it prior to the start of the breaking up of the ice on the Dnieper.(2)

In carrying out the set tasks, the Southwestern Front, with weakened forces continued its offensive to the west and southwest and by the end of 18 February had reached a line: with the right wing—Zmiyev, Krasnograd, Novo-Moskovsk, Kramatorsk, Slavyansk; with the left—Rodakovo, Dyakovo. Here the troops on the right wing had advanced along diverging axes against Krasnograd, Dnepropetrovsk, Krasnoarmeyskoye, they had moved far ahead and were spread out along a front of up to 400 km. The 6th Army, in having just 29,000 men and 149 tanks, was advancing along a front of over 200 km. The 1st Guards Army of even weaker strength was fighting in a zone up to 60 km. The front's mobile group (III, IV, X and XVIII Tank Corps) was fighting in a zone 80 km wide, having just 137 operating tanks.

The rear bases had fallen up to 300 km behind the troops. The railroads and bridges had been destroyed in the enemy's retreat and their repair was being carried out extremely slowly. The armies were short of motor transport. The troops were experiencing major difficulties in logistic support, having just 0.3-0.5 of a unit of fire of ammunition for the guns and mortars and 0.5-0.75 of a fuel load.

For conducting the counteroffensive, by 18 February the enemy had established its assault groupings. The 4th Panzer Army with the SS panzer corps was to attack from the Krasnograd area against the right flank of the 6th Army of the Southwestern Front. Its XLVIII Panzer Corps, because of its incomplete readiness, was to join the counteroffensive several days later and advance against Pavlograd from the South. The 1st Panzer Army was to attack with the forces of the XL Panzer Corps

(four divisions) from an area to the south of Krasnoarmeyskoye against Barvenkovo in the aim of defeating the formations from the mobile group of the Southwestern Front. Two infantry divisions—one from the Poltava area and the other from Dnepropetrovsk—were hurriedly shifted from the west to establish operational reserves available for the commander of Army Group South.

The entire counteroffensive involved seven panzer divisions, a motorized division and three infantry divisions with over 800 tanks and supported by a strong air grouping (around 750 aircraft). Having concentrated large forces, the enemy had achieved a significant superiority over the troops on the right wing of the Southwestern Front and against which the counterstrike was being prepared.

On 19 February, the enemy went over to the counteroffensive, attacking with a SS panzer corps from the area of Krasnograd toward Pavlograd into the flank and rear of the 6th Army, while the XL Panzer Corps on 20 February from the Krasnoarmeyskoye area attacked the mobile group of the Southwestern Front. On 22 February, the XLVIII Panzer Corps went over to the offensive from the area of Pokrovskoye to Pavlograd to meet up with the SS panzer corps.

The front's command judged the active nature of enemy operations as a desire to cover the retreat of the main forces from the Donbass behind the Dnieper using panzer corps and demanded that the Soviet troops continue the offensive.(3)

During the night of 21 February, the commander of the front's mobile group and deputy commander of the front, Lt Gen M.M. Popov, requested from the front's commander that the weakened formations of the front be permitted to pull back to a line 40-50 km to the north of Krasnoarmeyskoye. Army Gen Vatutin did not permit the withdrawal of the mobile group, feeling that if this were done the way would be open for the enemy to withdraw to Dnepropetrovsk and the flank and rear of the 6th Army would be exposed. Lt Gen Popov was told that his proposal "contradicts the task entrusted to the group and the developing situation, when the enemy in every possible way will hurry to pull its troops from the Donbass behind the Dnieper."(4)

In the meanwhile the enemy was continuing its active operations. On 23 February, the SS panzer corps in the Pavlograd area had linked up with units of the XLVIII Panzer Corps and as a result of this the 6th Army was in a difficult situation. The IV Rifle Corps and the I Guards Tank Corps were fighting to the north and east of Pavlograd, the XV Rifle Corps was continuing to retreat to the east. The XXV Tank Corps having advanced successfully to the southwest was some 100 km away

from the main forces of the army, it was cut off from its troops and was fighting on the approaches to Zaporozhye, consuming the remnants of ammunition and fuel.(5)

The 6th Army was to be helped by a portion of the forces from the left wing of the Voronezh Front which was continuing to advance to the west. In the evening of 21 February, the front's commander, with permission from Headquarters, took a decision to attack the enemy advancing against the 6th Army using the 69th Army and the 3d Tank Army. However, the thrust by these armies which had been previously weakened in fighting was not continued, since the enemy fighting on the boundary of our two fronts had reinforced its troops, moving up additional forces there.

On the right wing of the Southwestern Front, by 22-23 February there were neither army nor front reserves available and the situation there was constantly deteriorating. In the zone of the 6th Army where a portion of the forces was fighting in an encirclement, the enemy had advanced significantly to the east. The front's mobile group, under the pressure of superior enemy forces, was retreating to Barvenkovo.

On 23 February, Army Gen N.F. Vatutin reported to Headquarters that the enemy in front of the front's right wing had gone over to the offensive with significant forces and had broken into the zones of the 6th Army and the mobile group. However, a decision to pull back the troops did not come either on that day or the next. Only on 25 February did Headquarters permit the pulling back of the front's right wing to the line of the Severskiy Donets River. The troops retreated under the continuous attacks of superior enemy forces. In suffering heavy losses, they abandoned the cities of Barvenkovo, Lozovaya, Slavyansk, and by 3 March had taken up the defensive along the left bank of the river on the sector of Andreyevka (20 km to the northwest of Balakleya), Krasnyy Liman.

As a result of the retreat of the Southwestern Front to the Severskiy Donets, the left wing of the Voronezh Front was exposed and this greatly worsened its operational situation.

The enemy command on 28 February had ordered the troops to carry out a partial regrouping and move on to the second stage of the counteroffensive involving a thrust directly against Kharkov. By the start of March there were ten infantry divisions, six panzer divisions and a motorized division fighting against the left wing of the Voronezh Front. The capture of Kharkov was to involve: the panzer corps SS, the XLVIII Panzer Corps and Army Corps Raus totaling five panzer divisions.(6)

The formations of the Voronezh Front in almost 2 months of continuous offensive fighting had suffered heavy casualties and were extremely weakened. The size of many rifle divisions did not exceed 3,500-4,000 men

and the tank units of the front had just 70 tanks, including 50 in the 3d Tank Army. As a result of the drawing out of the rear, the troops were experiencing great difficulties in ammunition, fuel and other materiel. There were no operational reserves.(7)

On 4 March, the enemy launched a powerful thrust against the left wing of the Voronezh Front the troops of which, in suffering heavy losses, began to fight their way back and on 16 March abandoned Kharkov.

The setbacks of the Soviet troops forced Hq SHC to bring major forces to the Kharkov axis in order to halt the enemy. The Voronezh Front was reinforced with the 21st Army from the Central Front, with the 64th Army from the Headquarters Reserve and these forces were deployed on the axes of the enemy advance; the 1st Tank Army was shifted into the area of Oboyan. As a result of the measures taken, the offensive by the enemy grouping was halted. It was unable to advance to Kursk toward which the 2d Nazi Panzer Army was preparing an offensive from the north from the Orel area in the aim of surrounding and defeating our troops on the formed Kursk salient. On 25 March, the front on the Belgorod-Kharkov axis was stabilized.

Thus, the fighting which developed in the second half of February and in March on the Zaporozhye and Poltava axes in the aim of defeating the enemy Donbass grouping ended by the Southwestern and Voronezh Fronts retreating some 100-150 km to the east instead of their reaching the Dnieper. The basic reasons for the failures of the Soviet troops were the underestimating of the enemy forces by the command of the fronts, the mistaken conclusion of the nature and intentions of enemy actions as well as the overestimating of the capabilities of our troops and the ongoing advance without reinforcing the achieved results. Hq SHC and the General Staff were also partially to blame for the defeat. They agreed with the command of the fronts in the assessment of the enemy, they knew what the state of our troops was and demanded that they continue the offensive toward the Dnieper, without reinforcing them with reserves.

The Second Lesson. The First Belorussian Front (commander, MSU G.K. Zhukov) in the Vistula-Oder Operation was given the task of defeating the Warsaw-Radom enemy grouping and by no later than the 11th-12th day of the operation to capture the line of Petruwek, Zychlin, Lodz. Subsequently, it was to continue the objective on the general axis of Poznan.(8) As for subsequent operations, Hq SHC was to take a decision later depending upon the situation.

The operation developed successfully and the Warsaw-Radom enemy grouping and its nearby operational reserves were defeated. The front was advancing rapidly with the rifle formations advancing an average of 25 km while the tank and mechanized ones were advancing 30-45 km a day. The immediate task was carried out in

5-6 days. In continuing the offensive, the armies crossed the Warta River, they reached the Poznan defensive line and on 26 January, reached the line of Kreutz, Unrustadt.

The adjacent unit to the left, the First Ukrainian Front (commander, MSU I.S. Konev) which was advancing on the Breslau axis, by 23 January, had reached the Oder from Koben to Oppeln and at a number of sectors had crossed it without a pause.

With the reaching of the designated lines by the fronts, the tasks set by Hq SHC for the operation had been carried out but the offensive continued.

In the estimate of the command of the First Belorussian Front, the enemy in the zone of operations by this time did not have a continuous defensive front and no major reserves, it was covering individual axes and on a number of sectors was trying to carry out defensive tasks by active operations. Considering this, the front's commander on 26 January reported his decision to Hq SHC for further actions. The essence of this came down to the following. Prior to 30 January the troops of the front were to reach a line of Berlinchen, Landsberg, Grodzisk, to move up troops and the rears, replenish supplies, put the materiel in order and on the morning of 1-2 February, resume the offensive with the immediate task of crossing the Oder without a pause and continuing a rapid thrust toward Berlin.(9)

The commander of the First Ukrainian Front reported his plan to Headquarters on 28 January. This came down to, having defeated the Breslau enemy grouping, continuing the offensive and by 25-28 February, to reach the Elbe, while the front's right wing in cooperation with the First Belorussian Front would take Berlin.

As can be seen, the command of both fronts had the same view of the situation, considering that there were no major reserves on their path and the enemy would be unable to establish a strong defense on the approaches to Berlin and there was the possibility of quickly capturing the enemy capital by a rapid offensive. This was an enticing, long-awaited goal. Headquarters approved the decision of the commanders.

In accord with the decision, the commander of the First Belorussian Front gave his troops the following tasks: over the next 6 days by active operations to reinforce the achieved success, to bring up the rear, to replenish supplies up to two fuel loads and two units of fire of ammunition and by a rapid rush to take Berlin on 15-16 February.(10)

During the period from 26 January through 3 February, the troops of the front, in continuing the offensive, reached the Oder with the main forces and captured bridgeheads on its left bank. However, by this time the situation on the right wing of the front had taken a sharp turn for the worse.

At the time that the First Belorussian Front was reaching the Oder and was fighting to widen the captured bridge-heads on its western bank, the forces to the right, the Second Belorussian Front, which had been entrusted by Hq SHC with destroying the East Pomeranian enemy grouping, in advancing slowly, was heavily engaged on the line of Elbing, Mewe, Chersk, Szluchow. A gap of over 100 km had formed between its troops and the main forces of the First Belorussian Front.(11)

The Nazi Command decided to take advantage of this gap and from 16 through 20 February, with forces of up to six divisions, launched a counterstrike against the right wing of the First Belorussian Front and in the course of this succeeded in squeezing the Soviet troops back some 8-12 km. The troops of the front repulsed the enemy counterstrike and caused its significant losses. However, the enemy did not abandon its intention to attack the flank and rear of the First Belorussian Front. It regrouped its forces, without ceasing to reinforce its Army Group Vistula with formations from its reserve, and began to prepare for active fighting. Formations from the 3d Panzer Army were fighting against the troops on the right wing of the First Belorussian Front. By the beginning of March this army had 11 infantry divisions, a panzer division and 2 motorized divisions, an infantry brigade as well as several separate units and subunits. The army had a total of around 200,000 soldiers and officers, 2,500 guns and mortars, over 700 tanks and assault guns and over 100 guns of shore and permanent antiaircraft artillery adapted for firing at ground targets. From the air the formations of Army Group Vistula were covered by 300 combat aircraft.(12)

Our intelligence had established that the Nazi Command was gathering forces and intended to attack the flank and rear of the First Belorussian Front in order to press it to the Oder and defeat it. "The Supreme Commander-in-Chief drew attention," wrote G.K. Zhukov, "to the developing situation and proposed, having dug in on the Oder, to immediately defeat the enemy Pomeranian grouping and for this the necessary forces would be shifted laterally to the north from the front's main forces."(13) For this reason, the Soviet Command had to abandon the previously taken decision to advance on Berlin and to use the First Belorussian Front for conducting the East Pomeranian Operation.

Hq SHC ordered the Second and First Belorussian Fronts with powerful splitting strikes to defeat the East Pomeranian enemy grouping and clear the enemy out of Pomeranian territory from the Vistula to the Oder.

The Second Belorussian Front was given the task of launching the main thrust from the area of Seimpulno on the Koslin axis, reaching the Baltic Seacoast and in cooperation with the First Belorussian Front destroying the enemy East Pomeranian grouping.(14)

The First Belorussian Front was ordered to launch the main thrust using the troops of the right wing from the area of Arnswalde to Kolberg, to split and in cooperation with the Second Belorussian Front to destroy the enemy East Pomeranian grouping.

As a result of the East Pomeranian Operation, the First and Second Belorussian Fronts defeated the Nazi Army Grouping Vistula, they cleared the enemy out of the entire territory of East Pomerania and created good conditions for preparing the offensive against Berlin.

Thus, the command of the First Belorussian Front and Hq SHC promptly and correctly guessed the enemy's plan to attack the flank and rear of the First Belorussian Front and abandoned the previously taken decision to advance against Berlin, a seemingly very close and enticing goal. Initially the decision was taken to defeat the large East Pomeranian enemy grouping which was hanging over the flank of the front and ready for a counteroffensive and only then would the operation be prepared and conducted on the Berlin axis. All of this was successfully carried out.

After the war, certain comrades came out against such a decision, feeling that the First Belorussian Front at that time possessed sufficient forces and could have advanced against Berlin without a pause. On this question, MSU G.K. Zhukov at a military scientific conference of the Group of Soviet Troops in Germany to study the experience of the Vistula-Oder Operation in 1945 stated: "I wish to reply to the statement of Comrade Yenyukov....(16) He said that with the forces which the front had it would have been possible to reach Berlin. Of course, during this period Berlin did not have a strong cover. On the western bank of the Oder River, the enemy had only individual companies, battalions, individual tanks and, consequently, there was no real defense along the Oder. This was well known. It would have been possible to send the tank armies of Bogdanov (commander of the 2d Guards Tank Army and Mar Armored Trps.—Editors) and Katukov (commander of the 1st Guards Tank Army, Col Gen Tank Trps.—Editors) straight toward Berlin and they could have reached it. The question, of course, of whether they could have taken it would be hard to answer. But we had to be able to resist temptation and this was a difficult matter. A commander should not lose his head, even in success. Do you think that Comrade Chuykov (commander of the 8th Guards Army, Col Gen.—Editors) did not wish to jump on Berlin or that Zhukov did not want to take Berlin? It would have been possible to move against Berlin, it would have been possible to commit the mobile troops and approach Berlin. But, Comrade Yenyukov, it would have been impossible to turn back, as the enemy could easily close off the escape routes. The enemy easily, by an attack from the north, could have broken through our infantry, reached the crossings on the Oder River and put the troops of the front in a difficult situation.

"Let me reemphasize that one must be able to control oneself and not be tempted and in no instance fall victim to adventure. A commander in his decisions should never lose his common sense."(17)

Under present-day conditions, when the assault force and mobility of troops have increased greatly, such a situation as in the above-given examples could arise more frequently than in the previous war. This is caused by the greater capability of the troops not only to advance but also conduct an active defensive in the course of which the advancing side can be caused great losses. Now the defending side is capable of quickly moving up reserves from the interior and from other sectors of the front against the advancing side, alter the balance of forces, halt the offensive, and under favorable conditions go over to a counteroffensive and defeat the advancing side.

The commanders and the staffs must not only plan well and support completely an offensive operation but also conduct it with great art. For this it is essential first of all to have continuous reconnaissance of the enemy, to objectively assess the forces and combat capability, the nature of its actions, be able to promptly and precisely determine the enemy's plan, to realistically assess one's own forces and prevent hurried actions, reinforce the achieved successes, promptly bring up the rear, have mobile reserves capable of quickly moving up to the required axis, localize the enemy's attacks, reinforce the advancing troops and successfully complete the operation. If the situation has changed and there is no possibility of defeating the enemy in the course of the offensive, one must temporarily go over to the defensive and then, having moved up the necessary forces, resume the offensive.

One must not overestimate the enemy's forces, not go over to the defensive without having employed one's capabilities or cede the initiative to the enemy. In order to avoid this, in assessing the situation, it is essential to consider not only the enemy's strength but also its battleworthiness, operational position, the terrain conditions, the preparedness of the command personnel and other factors.

Footnotes

1. "Istoriya vtoroy mirovoy voyny 1939-1945" [History of World War II of 1939-1945], Moscow, Voenizdat, Vol 6, 1976, p 134.
2. Ibid., pp 134, 135.
3. TsAMO SSSR [Central Archives of the USSR Ministry of Defense], folio 229, inv. 590, file 294, sheet 259.
4. Ibid., inv. 260, file 294, sheets 251-252, 259.
5. "Istoriya vtoroy mirovoy...", Vol 6, pp 136-137.

6. Ibid., p 137.

7. Ibid., p 138.

8. TsAMO, folio 132-A, inv. 2642, file 1, sheets 274-276, 279.

9. Ibid., folio 233, inv. 2307, file 193, sheets 1-8.

10. Ibid., file 194, sheets 111-113.

11. Ibid., folio 132-A, inv. 2642, file 39, sheet 25.

12. "Istoriya vtoroy mirovoy...", Vol 10, 1979, p 142.

13. TsAMO, folio 19-A, inv. 949, file 7, sheet 19.

14. Ibid., folio 132-A, inv. 2642, file 39, sheet 25.

15. Ibid., folio 48-A, inv. 2120, file 938, sheet 400.

16. Representative of the General Staff, Major General.

17. TsAMO, folio 19-A, inv. 949, file 2, sheet 34.

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Cooperation of Tank Armies With Combined-Arms Field Forces

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[Article by Lt Col V.A. Vavenko, candidate of military sciences: "Cooperation of Tank Armies With Combined-Arms Field Forces]

[Text] During the years of the Great Patriotic War, a major role in resolving the problem of continuing an offensive deep in the enemy defenses was played by the tank armies of uniform composition and which operated in a majority of the offensive operations as the mobile groups of fronts. Most often a front included one or two and more rarely three tank armies (the First Ukrainian Front in the Proskurov-Chernovtsy and Lwow-Sandomierz Operations and the Second Ukrainian Front in the Uman- Botosani Operation).

The coordinating of efforts of the tank field forces with the combined- arms armies and aviation was one of the most important tasks in preparing for an operation and the main component in the activities of the commanders of the fronts and armies and their staffs in the area of troop control. Carefully organized and continuously maintained cooperation between the tank and combined-arms armies(1) made it possible to make fullest use of their combat capabilities and significantly increase the degree of damaging action against the enemy. In possessing great strike force and mobility, the

tank armies shifted the fighting in depth and, in operating 10-30 km and at times 50-80 km and more away from the combined-arms armies,(2) they gave the front offensive operations a moving and decisive nature from their very outset. The combined-arms armies by active operations created the necessary conditions for the successful commitment of the tank armies to battle and for their rapid coming out in the operational depth of the enemy defenses, they destroyed in the course of the offensive the centers of resistance bypassed by the tank and mechanized formations of the tank field forces and reinforced the lines taken by the mobile group.

The organization of cooperation of the tank armies with the combined-arms ones consisted in coordinating efforts of both in terms of target (tasks), place (lines) and time. The basis of this was the over-all plan of Hq SHC for the operation and the decision of the front commander.(3)

The procedure for the cooperation of the tank armies with the combined-arms ones was set by the front commander simultaneously with the setting of battle tasks for the troops using a map as well as in the field. Subsequently, in the course of organizing the combat, the procedure was adjusted and worked out in detail. After acquainting the army commanders with the over-all plan for the operation, the front commander usually indicated to the tank army commander the sector and starting line, the tasks for the tank army and the combined-arms army where the mobile group was to be committed, the tasks of the adjacent combined-arms field forces and the dates of their execution. Moreover, he informed the tank army commander of what forces were to be involved in supporting its commitment to battle as well as the time they were to be ready for the offensive. The commander of the combined-arms army where the mobile group was to be committed was given a line by the front commander and this was to be captured by the field force in order to support the commitment of the mobile group. Also given were the measures to support its flanks, the procedure for artillery and engineer support for the commitment, the sequence and times for freeing the routes of advance for the tank army to the start line. In addition to this, he informed the commander of the combined-arms army as to which air formations supporting the combined-arms army were to be switched to the mobile group or were to support its actions.(4)

In a number of operations the commitment of the tank armies to battle was planned along two axes. Thus, in preparing for the Belorussian Offensive Operation in the decision of the commander of the Third Belorussian Front, Army Gen I.D. Chernyakhovskiy, there were provisions for two versions of committing the 5th Guards Tank Army (commander, Mar Armored Trps P.A. Rotmistrov) to battle. Depending upon the situation which developed in the course of the operation, this field force was to enter the breach in the boundary of the 11th Guards and 31st Armies and advance toward Borisov or in the zone of the 5th Army in order to

advance on Bogushevsk, Tolochin and then on Borisov.(5) The 2d Guards Tank Army (commander, Col Gen Tank Trps S.I. Bogdanov) of the First Belorussian Front in preparing for the Vistula-Oder Operation was given the task of being ready to enter the breach in the zone of the 5th Assault or 61st Armies, depending upon where the enemy defenses would be breached before.(6) Here, naturally, there was a greater amount of work to do to coordinate the efforts of the armies and more time to be spent in organizing cooperation and a larger number of planning documents. At the same time, such planning of the commitment ensured the rapid and organized reaching of the operational expanse for the tank army on any of the designated axes.

In setting tasks for the tank armies which they were to carry out in the operational depth, the front commander, considering the probable enemy actions, established the possible nature of maneuvering for assisting the offensive of the front's main forces. For example, in setting the task for the 2d Guards Tank Army in the Vistula-Oder Operation, the commander of the First Belorussian Front, MSU G.K. Zhukov, in the event of stubborn resistance by the Warsaw enemy grouping ordered the advancing troops of the 61st Army and the 1st Polish Army, when the tank field force had reached the area of Zyrardow, Sochaczew, to turn one or two corps for attacking the enemy rear and helping the combined-arms armies in carrying out their tasks.(7)

The cooperation procedures were set in more detail in the course of joint reconnaissance involving the commanders and staff officers of the tank and combined-arms armies, the commanders of the tank and mechanized corps and brigades and those of the rifle divisions. In particular, the following were coordinated and set: the line when reached by the rifle formations would put the mobile group into motion from the forming-up area to the start line; the line for bypassing the infantry battle formations, the procedure and time that the routes would be freed by the infantry, artillery and their rears from the forming-up place to the start line for the battle; the forces to be involved and the procedure for supporting the commitment of the mobile group to battle; the procedure and forces for supporting the flanks of the mobile group in its commitment; the tasks for the artillery of the mobile group in the artillery softening up for the assault; the procedure for organizing liaison communications between the mobile group and those units and formations which were to support its commitment; the methods of joint actions in the event of involving the mobile group in completing the breakthrough of the enemy tactical defensive zone; cooperation signals.(8)

All of these questions were subsequently reflected in the plan for the cooperation of the tank army with the combined-arms one and the plan was worked out by the staffs of the field forces and approved by their commanders and military council members. This document

also dealt with the questions of cooperation on the first 3 or 4 days of the operation and set the basis for cooperation to the entire depth of the mobile group's battle task.(9)

If the tank army was to be committed to battle in the zones of two combined-arms armies, then two separate cooperation plans were worked out. These usually indicated: the goal of cooperation; the tasks for which the efforts of the troops were to be coordinated; the composition of the forces to be involved in carrying out each task and the methods of their execution; the procedure for controlling cooperating troops (control posts, their location and movement by days of the operation, control and target designation signals).(10)

In a number of instances, in addition to the cooperation plan, the tank army staff also worked out as an appendix to the battle order the operational planning tables for commitment to the breach. These specifically scheduled the actions of the tank and mechanized corps, the artillery, the engineer troops of the tank army and the rifle corps of the combined-arms armies during the move-up and taking up of the forming-up place by the mobile group, the reaching by its formations and units of the start line and during the period of making the commitment up to the point of reaching the operational expanse.

During the preparatory period, such an important question was resolved as the artillery and engineer support for the commitment of the tank army to battle. The detailed planning and organization of this was carried out by the artillery commanders, by the chiefs of the engineer troops of the tank and combined-arms armies and by their staffs.

In organizing cooperation with the artillery of the combined-arms armies supporting the commitment of the tank army to battle, the artillery staffs of the tank and combined-arms field forces usually set the amount of artillery to be assigned to supporting the commitment, the areas of its firing positions, firing tasks were set for the artillery of the mobile group and the combined-arms armies, and the points of the artillery observation posts were designated. Moreover, the staffs set which of the artillery officers, from which units and with what communications and transport would be sent to the forward units of the tank army in its commitment to battle. They also worked out in detail the signals for calling in, shifting and ceasing fire for the involved artillery up to the point where the tank army reached the operational depth. The main documents worked out by the artillery staffs of the field forces were instructions on organizing artillery support and the plan of artillery support for committing the mobile group to the breach with the appending of a map or diagram of the targets.(11)

The staffs of the engineer troops in the tank and combined-arms armies coordinated the procedure for the engineer organization of the assembly and forming-up

areas, the routes of moving up to them and the start line for the battle, and they resolved the questions of reinforcing existing bridge crossings and building new ones. The procedures were set for making passages through our own and enemy mixed minefields and for laying mixed minefields to protect the flanks of the commitment zone against enemy counterattacks. As a rule, the staff of the engineer troops worked out a plan of engineer support for the operation. Sometimes in addition to it a plan was drawn up for the passing of the tank army formations over crossings and minefields and escorting them to the infantry bypass line (3d Guards Tank Army in the Lwow-Sandomierz Operation).(12)

The engineer support plan reflected the tasks to be carried out by the engineer troops of the tank and combined-arms armies during the preparatory period, during the move-up of the tank field force to the start line, in the course of commitment and in fighting in the operational depth, as well as the scope of the engineer work and the composition of the engineer units and subunits assigned to carry it out.

After the planning, they began working out the questions of cooperation on maps, mock-ups and directly in the field in the course of command-staff exercises and games. We should note the experience of conducting an operational game by the commander of the First Belorussian Front using maps on 8-10 December 1944 in preparing for the Vistula-Oder Operation. Involved in the game were the commanders, chiefs of staff, military council members and artillery commanders of the 61st, 5th Assault, 8th Guards, 69th and 33d Armies, the 1st and 2d Guards Tank Armies, the commander and chief of staff of the 16th Air Army and the commanders of the II and VII Guards Cavalry Corps.(13) In the course of the game they worked through the questions of cooperation in breaching the enemy defenses, in committing the tank armies to battle and their actions in the operational depth with air support. The main method of work in organizing cooperation was the working out of situational inputs created by the game leader. The front commander, MSU G.K. Zhukov, heard the decisions of the army commanders and, if required, made his own corrections. He then issued final instructions of organizing cooperation considering the most probable course of the fighting by days and stages of the operation.

After the working through of cooperation questions on a front level, similar exercises were also conducted in the combined-arms and tank armies. Here, along with the command-staff exercises and games using maps, cooperation was organized directly in the field or on terrain mock-ups. Often the commanders of the fronts and the representatives of Headquarters participated in the exercises held with the army commanders and staffs.

With the start of an offensive operation, the observance of the cooperation procedures worked out during the preparatory period was a most important duty for all levels of commanders and staffs. One of the main and

most complicated moments in implementing the cooperation plans was the commitment of the mobile group to battle as the proper organization of this largely determined the successful completion of the breaching of the enemy defenses and the rapid shifting of efforts into the operational depth. For increasing the stability of command the front's commander directed the commitment of the mobile group either from the front observation post or from the observation post of the combined-arms armies where the commitment was being made. The commander of the tank army with his operations group was either at the observation post of the commander of the combined-arms armies or set up his own observation post next to this. The commanders of the tank (mechanized) corps of the tank field force with their own operations groups usually were positioned at the observation posts of the commanders of the rifle corps where the mobile formations were to be committed. For example, before the start of the Vistula-Oder Operation an operations group headed by the commander of the field force was assigned from the staff of the 3d Guards Tank Army (commander, Col Gen P.S. Rybalko). This included the deputy chief of staff, the chief of the political section, the artillery commander and the chief of the engineer troops with the basic personnel of their staffs, the chiefs of the operations and intelligence sections as well as their subordinate officers and the liaison officers with the necessary communications, observation and reconnaissance equipment. The operations group from the tank army staff was positioned at the observation post of the 52d Army while the corps commanders were at the observation posts of the LXXIII and LXXVIII Rifle Corps.(14) The combined positioning of the observation posts created good conditions for quickly coordinating the actions of the mobile group and the rifle troops in the event of a sudden change in the situation.

Since the situation in breaching the enemy defenses frequently changed, certain coordination questions which had been agreed upon were adjusted in the course of the fighting. In particular, the tank armies at times had to adjust or even set new lines and times for commitment to battle. For example, in the preparations for the Lwow-Sandomierz Operation, the 1st Guards Tank Army (commander, Col Gen Tank Trps M.Ye. Katukov) received the task of joining battle on the morning of the second day of the operation after the rifle troops had breached the second enemy defensive line and on the same day to cross the Western Bug. However, in the course of overcoming the Nazi defenses, good conditions for the commitment of the mobile group to battle arose only on the fifth day. In line with this, they changed the routes, the infantry outflanking line and the tasks for the first day of fighting; the questions of artillery and engineer support for the commitment and the procedure for covering the flanks of the mobile group on the new line were adjusted.(15)

With the start of the commitment of the mobile group to battle, for supporting its flanks the commander of the

combined-arms army took measures to widen the breakthrough area to the right and left of the start line and to suppress the enemy artillery; he moved up to the flanks strong mobile obstacle construction detachments and antitank artillery.

The preparation of passages through our own and enemy minefields was of great importance for ensuring the deployment and entry of the mobile group formations into battle. For example, in the course of the Lwow-Sandomierz Operation, for supporting the commitment of the 1st Guards Tank Army to battle, the combat engineers of the 3d Guards Army prepared three or four passages some 35-100 m wide for each brigade. Our own minefields were completely cleared.(16)

The artillery supporting the commitment of the mobile group to battle neutralized the enemy weapons ahead of the front and on the flanks of the commitment area, it provided fire bracketing for the breakthrough sector in the aim of preventing the maneuvering of the enemy for a counterattack and neutralized enemy artillery in depth and on the flanks of the breakthrough sector. Here in the aim of maintaining continuous cooperation with the tank army being committed to the breach, they assigned to the battle formations of the forward units of the mobile group artillery observers with radio-equipped tanks and they called in and corrected the artillery fire.(17)

With the coming out in the operational expanse and the pulling away of the tank armies from the front's main forces, cooperation between them was of an operational nature(18) and was realized by the prompt and systematic exchange of information between the commanders and staffs of the tank and combined-arms field forces concerning the location of the cooperating troops, the measures taken and the orders issued. The front commander usually informed the commanders of the cooperating armies about the over-all operational situation in the zone of advance of the front. Thus, the commander of the First Belorussian Front, MSU G.K. Zhukov, in the course of the Vistula-Oder Operation informed the commanders of the tank and combined-arms armies of changes in the situation and shared with them his own proposals on the further development of the operation.(19)

A knowledge of the over-all situation and the providing of reciprocal information provided an opportunity for the army commanders to take correct decisions under the developing situations and to effectively organize combat.

Of important significance for maintaining uninterrupted cooperation of the tank armies with the combined-arms ones was the organizing of dependable communications and uninterrupted operation of this was achieved by employing all types (radio, wire and mobile). Radio communications was the basic means of communications in the course of an operation. The front staff

usually organized a cooperation radio net and connected to this were the radios of the commanders of the combined-arms, tank and air armies. Frequently, its liaison officers were sent out with radios to the staffs of the tank armies and sometimes from the latter to the combined-arms field forces. An equally important channel for radio communications of the combined-arms army with the mobile group was the connecting of the radios of the tank army commanders to the net of the personal radios of the combined-arms army commanders while the receiver of the staff or the commander of the combined-arms armies would be connected to the radio net of the mobile group.(20) Due to this, the staffs of the cooperating field forces without additional requests received the necessary information for maintaining cooperation.

With operations in the operational depth, in the maintaining of cooperation between the front mobile groups and the combined-arms armies, an essential role was played by the forward detachments sent out from the rifle divisions and the corps. Frequently, particularly in the third period of the war, these included rifle regiments mounted on motor transport, separate tank brigades reinforced with self-propelled artillery mounts [SAU], rocket artillery and combat engineers. The forward detachments of such strength operated away from the main forces of the combined-arms armies at a distance of up to 30 km, they backed up the success of the mobile groups and ensured the security of their rears, being a sort of connecting link between the combined-arms and tank field forces.

In the course of continuing the offensive in the operational depth, the mobile groups frequently had to cross intermediate defensive lines and get over water obstacles. They usually broke through the intermediate defensive line without a pause and independently. In the instance where they were unable to do this, the breakthrough was made after quick preparations in close cooperation with the arriving formations of the combined-arms armies. For example, the enemy defenses were breached on a previously prepared line running through the suburban fortifications of Stettin by the 2d Guards Tank Army and formations from the 47th Army in the course of the East Pomeranian Operation. The breakthrough was prepared over a period of 2 days. Here in the course of personal meetings between the army commanders Col Gen Tank Trps S.I. Bogdanov and Lt Gen F.I. Perkhovich and by joint reconnaissance by the officer personnel of the mobile group and the combined-arms army directly in the field, the zones of advance were set, the tasks were clarified for the tank and rifle subunits, units and formations and they were able to establish the sequence of their implementation, the starting lines, directions and objects of attack for the infantry and tanks, the procedure for fire damage to the enemy and the cooperation signals.(21) Detailed cooperation plans were not worked out. The questions of coordinating the efforts were reflected only in the decisions, battle orders and instructions by the commanders of the cooperating armies. But since it was impossible in

these documents to set out in detail the procedure for joint actions, great responsibility rested on the corps, brigade, division and regimental commanders who directly organized cooperation in the field.

Upon reaching water obstacles, the mobile groups of fronts, as a rule, did not wait for the infantry, they crossed them without a pause, they captured, widened and held bridgeheads, supporting the crossing by the combined-arms armies. Thus, in the course of the Vistula-Oder Operation, the 4th Tank Army (commander, Col Gen D.D. Lelyushenko) on 25 January 1945 crossed the Oder without a pause with its forward detachments and by the morning of the next day had captured bridgeheads in the Koban and Steinau area. By the end of 26 January, the forward units of the 13th Army had arrived and the troops began crossing the river at the captured bridgeheads. By the joint efforts of the corps of the tank and combined-arms armies, by the end of the day of 31 January, both bridgeheads had been connected into a single operational bridgehead some 30 km long along the front and 15 km in depth.

Cooperation between the tank and combined-arms armies in operations to encircle enemy groupings was expressed chiefly in the fact that the combined-arms field forces, in advancing behind the mobile groups, deployed and compacted the inner perimeter of encirclement while the commanders of the tank armies reassigned their formations to the external perimeter and pushed it back as far as possible in order to deprive the enemy reserves being moved up from in depth of any opportunity to relieve the surrounded troops.

Thus, during the years of the Great Patriotic War significance experience was gained in organizing and maintaining stable cooperation between different combat arms. This is also being successfully employed in training the personnel under present-day conditions. In particular, of lasting significance are: the careful elaboration of all the questions of cooperation and the planning documents, the work methods of coordinating efforts in the course of the command-staff exercises using maps, mock-ups and directly in the field, the experience of assigning artillery observers to the battle formations of the tank units and subunits, the methods of organizing dependable liaison communications and the constant exchange of information about received tasks, taken decisions and orders issued to the troops.

Footnotes

1. For the cooperation of tank armies with aviation, see: *Voyenno-istoricheskiy zhurnal*, No 5, 1974, pp 21-27; No 9, 1977, pp 89-96; No 8, 1986, pp 14-21.

2. "Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya" [Soviet Military Encyclopedia], Moscow, Voenizdat, Vol 7, 1979, p 660.

3. "Voyennoye iskusstvo vo vtoroy mirovoy voyne: Strategiya i operativnoye iskusstvo" [Military Art in World War II: Strategy and Operational Art], Moscow, Izd. Voennoy Akademii Generalnogo Shtaba, 1973, p 310.

4. TsAMO SSSR [Central Archives of the USSR Ministry of Defense], folio 233, inv. 2356, file 425, sheets 121-125; file 26, sheet 127.

5. "Operatsii Sovetskikh Vooruzhennykh Sil v Velikoy Otechestvennoy voyne 1941-1945" [Operations of the Soviet Armed Forces in the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945], Moscow, Voenizdat, Vol 3, 1958, p 296.

6. TsAMO, folio 307, inv. 4148, file 316, sheets 11-17.

7. Ibid., file 410, sheet 18.

8. A.I. Radziyevskiy, "Tankovyy udar" [Tank Attack], Moscow, Voenizdat, 1977, pp 85, 86.

9. "Sbornik boyevykh dokumentov Velikoy Otechestvennoy voyny" [Collection of Combat Documents of the Great Patriotic War], Moscow, Voenizdat, No 15, 1952, p 44.

10. TsAMO, folio 307, inv. 4148, file 296, sheets 110-112, 124, 125; folio 315, inv. 4440, file 650, sheets 125-128.

11. "Boyevoy opyt artillerii v Otechestvennoy voyne" [Artillery Combat Experience in the Patriotic War], Collection No 8, Moscow, Voenizdat, 1944, pp 80-81; TsAMO, folio 307, inv. 4146, file 46, sheet 9; folio 332, inv. 4948, file 440, sheets 133, 134.

12. TsAMO, folio 236, inv. 48532, file 11, sheet 72.

13. Ibid., folio 233, inv. 2356, file 425, sheets 107-108.

14. Ibid., folio 315, inv. 4440, file 650, sheets 32-33.

15. Ibid., folio 299, inv. 3070, file 244, sheets 158-167.

16. Ibid., folio 236, inv. 2673, file 312, sheet 328.

17. A.I. Radziyevskiy, op. cit., p 126.

18. "Stroitelstvo i boyevoy primeneniye sovetskikh tankovykh voysk v gody Velikoy Otechestvennoy voyny" [Organizational Development and Combat Employment of Soviet Tank Troops During the Years of the Great Patriotic War], Moscow, Voenizdat, 1979, p 141.

19. TsAMO, folio 307, inv. 4156, file 37, sheet 163.

20. Ibid., folio 233, inv. 2356, file 402, sheets 61-63; file 397, sheet 81; folio 310, file 207, sheets 37-39; folio 3208, inv. 4852, file 255, sheets 36-41.

21. Ibid., folio 307, inv. 4148, file 333, sheet 68.

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Ground Attack Air Operations in Mountains
18010116e Moscow VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL in Russian No 1, Jan 88 (signed to press 22 Dec 87) pp 33-37

[Article by Maj Gen Avn (Res) L.M. Shishov, Hero of the Soviet Union, candidate of military sciences; Col L.N. Pakhnin, candidate of military sciences: "Ground Attack Air Operations in Mountains"; the article was written from the experience of the Great Patriotic War]

[Text] In the course of the war against Nazi Germany and militaristic Japan, the Soviet Army gained rich experience in conducting operations in mountainous terrain. The Battle of the Caucasus, the engagements in the Crimea, Carpathians, the Arctic, on the territory of Yugoslavia, Austria, Czechoslovakia and the Far East became confirmation of the possibility of successful wide-scale operations in the mountains for both the ground troops as well as aviation. The number of aircraft sorties made by Soviet pilots under specific mountain conditions ran into the hundreds of thousands.

Here diverse missions were carried out by the ground attack aviation. Of particular difficulty for the ground attack planes were flights in alpine areas (mountain elevation of 2,000 m and more), since the similarity of the ranges, the snow-covered mountain peaks and the limited number of characteristic landmarks substantially impeded visual orientation and the search for the designated objectives. Medium-high mountains (up to 2,000 m) and low mountains (500-1,000 m) also had rugged terrain and were covered by forests and brush. This made it possible for the enemy to camouflage its troops and combat equipment well and this impeded their rapid detection. The enemy provided engineer fortifications for the sparse settlements located at road junctions, in valleys and by water sources and covered these with a large amount of air defense weapons. Such strongpoints as well as troops and equipment on roads, fuel and ammunition dumps, bridges and artillery positions were the main targets for the ground attack planes, as artillery was not always able to fire at them due to the complexity of the terrain.

Mountain ground attack air operations were also impeded by the lack of advanced navigation equipment on the IL-2 and the reduced effective areas of the ground aircraft navigation radio equipment. Under such conditions, the flight personnel gave prime attention to studying the area of the flights employing relief maps, large-scale maps and aerial photographs of the mountain ranges, valleys, road junctions, population points and

other markers. In group exercises those who had previously flown over the mountains shared their observations with the others. For reinforcing their knowledge each pilot by memory in a special sandbox reproduced the relief of the combat area with all the characteristic markers. In addition, in the course of the training the leadership of the aviation units and the leaders of the assault groups drove out to the forward edge where they became acquainted with the terrain and studied the targets and enemy fire plan and the cooperation signals with the ground troops.

A number of additional measures was also carried out for the ground attack aviation. Guidance radios were set up for directing the aircraft into the combat area near the front line. In the aim of rapidly and dependably recognizing population points from the air on friendly territory, a majority of these made conditional markers on the ground (the first letters of the names of the points in a size of 20x40 m). The routes for the assault groups to come out over target were designated by signal sheets or by colored smoke. Air spotters with radios were sent out to the forward ground units and they provided target designation and guidance and endeavored to prevent attacks from being made against our own troops.

It must be pointed out that the mountainous terrain not only created difficulties but also favored ground attack operations. The skillful use of the terrain by the pilots ensured covertness of the flight and surprise of the attack. For this reason prior to each combat sortie the group leaders together with their wingman made a detailed study of the terrain and the characteristic markers, carefully selecting the route of flight and determining the procedure for maneuvering over the target and the return after the attack to their own territory.

At the same time, very frequently the meteorological conditions made their own additions to ground attack operations. Weather in the mountains to a significant degree depends upon their altitude, geographic position, the proximity of sea basins, deserts and other factors. Mountain ranges are powerful barriers which hold up the horizontal movement of warm and cold air masses and force them to rise upwards. As a consequence of these movements, fog and clouds are formed, there is unexpected precipitation and so forth. Morning hours in the valleys and ravines usually provide fog and dense haze and in the second half of the day at an altitude of 1,000-2,000 m, cumulus clouds develop. For this reason the pilots had to have the ability to fly by instruments and make ground attack strikes from behind the clouds relying on guidance commands from the ground. For example, in the autumn of 1944, in the Carpathians six crews of IL-2 from the 8th Air Army headed by Sr Lt Makarov reached the designated target which was covered by clouds. Then control of the group was assumed by the air spotter Maj Kazakov who was visually observing the enemy from his position. The leader carried out

his instructions precisely and the ground attack planes successfully dropped their loads, having neutralized the fire of several artillery batteries.(1)

In preparing for the combat sorties, the flight personnel also took into account fluctuations in temperature (hot in the day with frequent frosts at night and in the morning), the variability of the wind, the presence of strong ascending and descending air currents and stark weather contrasts (cloudless in the foothills and rain and even snow in the mountains). In turn, the commanders and staffs of the ground attack units, in the air of assembling data for a thorough assessment of the situation and consideration of the designated factors, increased the number of crews carrying out reconnaissance and final weather reconnaissance, they trained only the most experienced pilots to carry out individual tasks and carefully set the composition of the assault groupings, the routes and profile of the flight (due to the distant basing the depth of actions of the ground attack aircraft was reduced).

On level terrain the ground attack planes were usually based 30-50 km from the front line. In mountainous areas the command could not achieve such a positioning and this was explained by the difficulty of selecting and setting up airfields there. Thus, during the period of the defense of the Caucasus, the airfields of the ground attack aircraft were located 100-150 km from the line of combat contact of the troops and in the offensive in the Carpathians, some 60-250 km. Only during the operations in the Arctic were they closer (at a distance of around 50 km). The designated circumstance repeatedly led to the clustered basing of aviation. For example, in April 1944, in the liberation of the Crimea, two or three air regiments were based at all the airfields of the 4th Air Army (commander, Gen K.A. Vershinin).(2)

The question of airfield maneuvering assumed particular urgency in the course of the offensive operations. Under the conditions of level terrain the ground attack planes were redeployed on the third-fourth day with the advance of the ground troops of 50-80 km. But in the mountains, regardless of the fact that the rate of advance slowed down, their lag was significant. Thus, in the Debrecen Offensive Operation (October 1944), the commander of the 4th Air Army, Gen S.K. Goryunov, due to the lack of airfields was able to make only one redeployment of his formations and units, including the ground attack ones, and only then when the troops of the Second Ukrainian Front had already crossed the Main Carpathian Range and had come out on the plain, that is, they had advanced 120-160 km.(3) Such complexities increased the response time of the ground attack planes to troop requests and reduced the time they were over the target by 1.6-1.7-fold (two 20-25 minutes).

The effectiveness of the ground attack strikes in the mountains depended largely upon the organizing of cooperation with the ground troops. The combined-arms formations basically operated on separate axes and for

this reason cooperation was carried out within the limits of army operations. The commanders of the combined-arms armies in their decisions determined, in particular, the tasks, objectives and time of operations for the ground attack formations and units. Their instructions were reflected in a liaison planning table which subsequently was adjusted in accord with the developing situation and the arising battle tasks of the troops.

In a number of instances special instructions were even worked out on cooperation of the aviation with the ground troops. For example, the order of the commander of the Fourth Ukrainian Front, Army Gen I.Ye. Petrov, of 16 October 1944, demanded:

"1. The officers and generals of all the combat arms are to study the 'Instructions on Cooperation of Aviation With Ground Troops in the Mountains,' as well as the instructions determining the cooperation procedures and work for the effective use of the results of our aviation's actions.

"2. The commander of the 8th Air Army, Lt Gen Avn V.N. Zhdanov, is to:

"a) Organize 3-day assemblies with specially assigned officers who after this are to be returned to the troops for providing practical aid in organizing target designation from the ground and supervising the designating of our position;

"b) Conduct assemblies with the regular air spotters in the aim of improving the skills of guiding the ground attack aviation to the ground targets...."(4)

Individual questions of cooperation (clarifying the objectives of the attacks, the procedure for marking the forward edge, mutual identification, target designation, signals and so forth) were worked out directly in the field. If it was impossible to do this, then large-scale maps, terrain diagrams or photographic mosaics were employed. For example, instructive was the experience of the ground attack formations of the 8th Air Army where in preparing for the flights in the Carpathians they made special relief mock-up maps and diagrams of the characteristic markers and objectives of the attack. In the concluding stage, the group leaders flew over the area of forthcoming operations in the aim of reinforcing their knowledge of the terrain, the markers and for adjusting the routes.

The situation often developed in such a manner that the ground attack aviation became the only means capable of supporting the ground troops. In carrying out the given task, the ground attack planes had to operate in direct proximity to the forward edge. This required great accuracy in bringing them to the designated area, dependable recognition and identification of the objectives, the organizing of the maneuvers for the attack so as to exclude an attack on our own positions.

The ground attack units conducted predominantly echeloned operations in groups of up to 10-12 aircraft. Ahead, as a rule, at a time distance of 10-15 minutes flew the pilot making the final reconnaissance under the cover of fighters which also cleared the airspace and neutralized the air defenses at the object of the attack. After flying over the designated area, the scout returned, rendezvoused with the assault group and, making the flight as its leader, led the group to the target. Because of the complicated conditions of the flight, the groups approached at an altitude of 1,500-1,600 m in flight (pairs) column formations which were dispersed in depth and they then reformed into an echelon formation and dropped to 500-600 m.(5) The ground attack planes were greatly aided by the air spotters who over the radio informed the leaders of the air, ground and meteorological situation and provided target designation, guidance and, when necessary, retargeting.

The pilots attacked the targets straight in, individually or in pairs, from a gentle dive at an angle of 15-20°, firing on them initially with the cannons and machine guns and then dropping high explosive or fragmentation-high explosive bombs armed with instantaneous-action fuzes. The crews of the IL-2 pulled out of the attack along the valleys and gorges and, having formed a "circle" formation, made several other runs at the target. For an extended effect on the enemy, they alternated battle runs with empty passes. Having completed the attack, the aircraft climbed and returned to their territory. The group was assembled in a "serpentine" or on a straight line by having the leaders reduce their speed.

Under mountain conditions concentrated strikes were also made by large groups of ground attack planes against strongpoints on elevations, against enemy troop accumulations on roads and in broad valleys as well as against counterattacking and counterstrike groups. For example, on Romanian territory, on 22 September 1944, the Nazis, in frequently going over to counterattacks, were putting up stubborn resistance to the troops of the 27th Army (commander, Col Gen S.G. Trofimenko) which were advancing on the Cluj axis. Upon orders of the commander of the Second Ukrainian Front, MSU R.Ya. Malinovskiy, the ground attack units of the 5th Air Army in groups of 16-24 IL-2, made several concentrated strikes against the Curila area, elev. 722 and Redic. The pilots made 230 aircraft sorties and by their effective actions ensured the further advance of our troops.(6) In the course of the Petsamo-Kirkenes Operation, 63 ground attack planes from the 7th Air Army (commander, Gen I.M. Sokolov) on 7 October 1944 made a massed strike against the positions of the 137th Mountain Rifle Regiment located on the hills along the sector of the road from Mount B. Karanvayvish to the population point of Luostari. As a result, the defensive system was destroyed, the enemy was demoralized and units of the 14th Army rapidly captured its strongpoints.(7)

During actions in the interests of the ground troops, under mountainous conditions, evasive maneuvers by

the ground attack planes were difficult to execute and often impossible. For this reason, the pilots combated the enemy air defenses with active methods. The air spotters provided them with great help. They ahead of time discovered the positions of the antiaircraft artillery and transmitted the coordinates to the leaders of the assault groups. Depending upon the situation, before launching the strike at the designated targets, all the crews of the groups or only the specially trained ones participated in neutralizing the air defenses. In the course of the attack, the air gunners fired at the slopes of the surrounding mountains from whence the aircraft could be shelled from guns and machine guns.

In mountainous terrain the ground attack aviation was also entrusted with carrying out the tasks of pursuing the retreating enemy, thwarting transport movements, sealing off the combat area and conducting air reconnaissance. The ground attack planes struck troop groupings endeavoring to get away or which had gotten away from our forward units, railroad stations, trains and enemy motor columns. Target designation for the assault groups was provided by final reconnaissance crews which flew ahead with a certain time lead. However, in a number of instances, this did not ensure surprise actions. This is why the routes of flight frequently were chosen in such a manner that the assault groups would reach a characteristic marker located 15-20 km away from the designated objective. Having spotted the enemy, the leader executed a turn and the ground attack planes suddenly appeared over the target. For example, in Manchuria, in the area of the population point of Gugengchen, six IL-2 under the command of Sr Lt Chernyshev, in operating in such a manner, from behind hills attacked a Japanese motor column with 50-60 vehicles. Our pilots made their first attack in pairs straight in with a 60° turn along the valley. Subsequent attacks were made from a "circle." After eight runs by the ground attack planes, around a score motor vehicles were burning on the road. Over the 40-50 km of the further route of the column to Fozlin Station, the column was again attacked by several groups. As a result of the six group raids, over one-half of the Japanese vehicles had been destroyed.(8)

For sealing off the combat area, extensive use was also made of such a method as "lone-wolf operations." In making use of the bad meteorological conditions and the terrain, the lone-wolf ground attack planes which operated individually or in pairs, very often made surprise attacks on the targets. Here the objectives of the attack were not only troops on the march, railroad trains and vehicle columns but also individual launches and barges on major rivers, for example, on the Danube.

Air reconnaissance was conducted by the ground attack planes incidentally with the carrying out of other missions. Virtually no special sorties for this purpose were planned, as with rare exceptions the IL-2 aircraft did not carry the appropriate reconnaissance equipment. At the same time, flights were made for visual reconnaissance and these ended, as a rule, by an attack on the enemy.

Thus, the particular features of ground attack operations in mountainous areas were determined basically by the physiogeographic and weather conditions of the latter. These included: the specific features of preparing and carrying out the flights; the limited nature of maneuvering, of the choice of the types and forms of formations, the methods of aiming and bombing, and the weapons to be employed; the significant difficulties in conducting visual orientation and detecting the designated objectives of the attack, in using ground radio equipment; the complexity of organizing complete support for the assault groups, their control and cooperation with the ground troops. Nevertheless, the results of the operations show that the ground attack planes carried out the missions assigned to them with sufficient effectiveness and contributed greatly to the success of the ground troops in the operations. The gained experience is also of value in our days. The study and creative employment of this considering the capabilities of modern aviation equipment and weapons, can help to further improve the combat training of the units of both ground attack and army aviation.

Footnotes

1. *Stalinskiy sokol*, 4 November 1944.
2. TsAMO SSSR [Central Archives of the USSR Ministry of Defense], folio 369, inv. 4798, file 143, sheet 136.
3. *Voyenno-istoricheskiy zhurnal*, No 6, 1975, pp 26, 27.
4. TsAMO, folio 35, inv. 260657, file 18, sheet 92.
5. Ibid., folio 369, inv. 4798, file 143, sheet 136.
6. Ibid., folio 327, inv. 4999, file 223, sheets 31-33.
7. Ibid., folio 342, inv. 5440, file 190, sheets 41, 42.
8. *Stalinskiy sokol*, 6 July 1946.

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Features of Toropets-Kholm Offensive Operation
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22 Dec 87) pp 38-45

[Article by Col M.A. Vilinov, candidate of military sciences: "Features of Toropets-Kholm Offensive Operation"; during the described fighting M.A. Vilinov participated as commander of the 47th Separate Flame-thrower Company]

[Text] The Toropets-Kholm Offensive Operation (9 January-6 February 1942) by the troops on the left wing of the Northwestern (from 22 January, the right wing of the Kalinin) Front was a component part of the Soviet Army

strategic offensive in the winter of 1942 and conducted by a group of fronts in the aim of defeating the large Nazi troop grouping at Moscow.(1) In the course of it rich experience was gained in conducting offensive operations to a great depth along separate axes in the winter and under conditions of a wooded-swampy terrain.

At the beginning of January 1942, Hq SHC, having assessed the results of the successful counteroffensive as Moscow, Tikhvin and Rostov, took a decision to initiate a general offensive by the Soviet Army along the front from Leningrad to the Crimea. Here the main efforts were to be concentrated on the Western Strategic Sector. The Kalinin and Western Fronts which were to make the main thrust in cooperation with the adjacent armies of the neighboring fronts were to encircle and destroy the main forces of the German Army Group Center.(2)

The troops on the left wing of the Northwestern Front, in accord with the over-all plan, had been given the task of defeating the enemy Ostashkov grouping, and having deeply enveloped Army Group Center from the west, to assist in its defeat by the Kalinin and Western Fronts.(3) For carrying out this task, in the Ostashkov area, an assault grouping was established consisting of the 3d and 4th Assault Armies (a total of 8 rifle divisions and 10 rifle brigades) reinforced by 18 ski battalions and 4 separate tank battalions, 4 artillery regiments, 3 rocket artillery battalions and 2 air divisions.(4)

The offensive operation had been prepared in a difficult situation. In order to establish the assault grouping, in a limited time it was essential to concentrate on the front's left wing a significant number of formations and units with reinforcements as well as bring up ammunition, fuel and food. However, the sole Moscow—Gologoye—Ostashkov Railroad could not handle the shipments, as not more than 11 trains could be handled in 24 hours. For this reason, the 4 rifle divisions were to be moved from the Greater Moscow Area by motor transport while the wagons and ski battalions would come on their own power. The heavy frosts and virtually continuous snowfalls significantly reduced the travel speed of the columns.

For these reasons, the concentrating of the troops was drawn out and was completed not on 26 December, as had been planned, but only on 7-8 January. The start of the offensive had to be shifted from 5 to 7 and then to 9 January.(5)

By the start of the offensive, troops from the 3d and 4th Assault Armies had been deployed along the front of Dolmatikha, Selishche, some 100 km long. They were opposed by 3 infantry divisions and a cavalry brigade from the 16th German Army of Army Group North. In considering that the Northwestern Front having been exhausted in previous fighting would be unable in the near future would be able to go over to the offensive, the Nazi Command planned to hold the line occupied in the autumn with comparatively small forces. Moreover, the sector Ostashkov, Toropets which ran basically through

forested terrain under roadless conditions and a heavy show cover, was viewed by them as secondary and unsuitable for conducting broad offensive actions. Because of this the enemy did not have a solid defensive front here.(6)

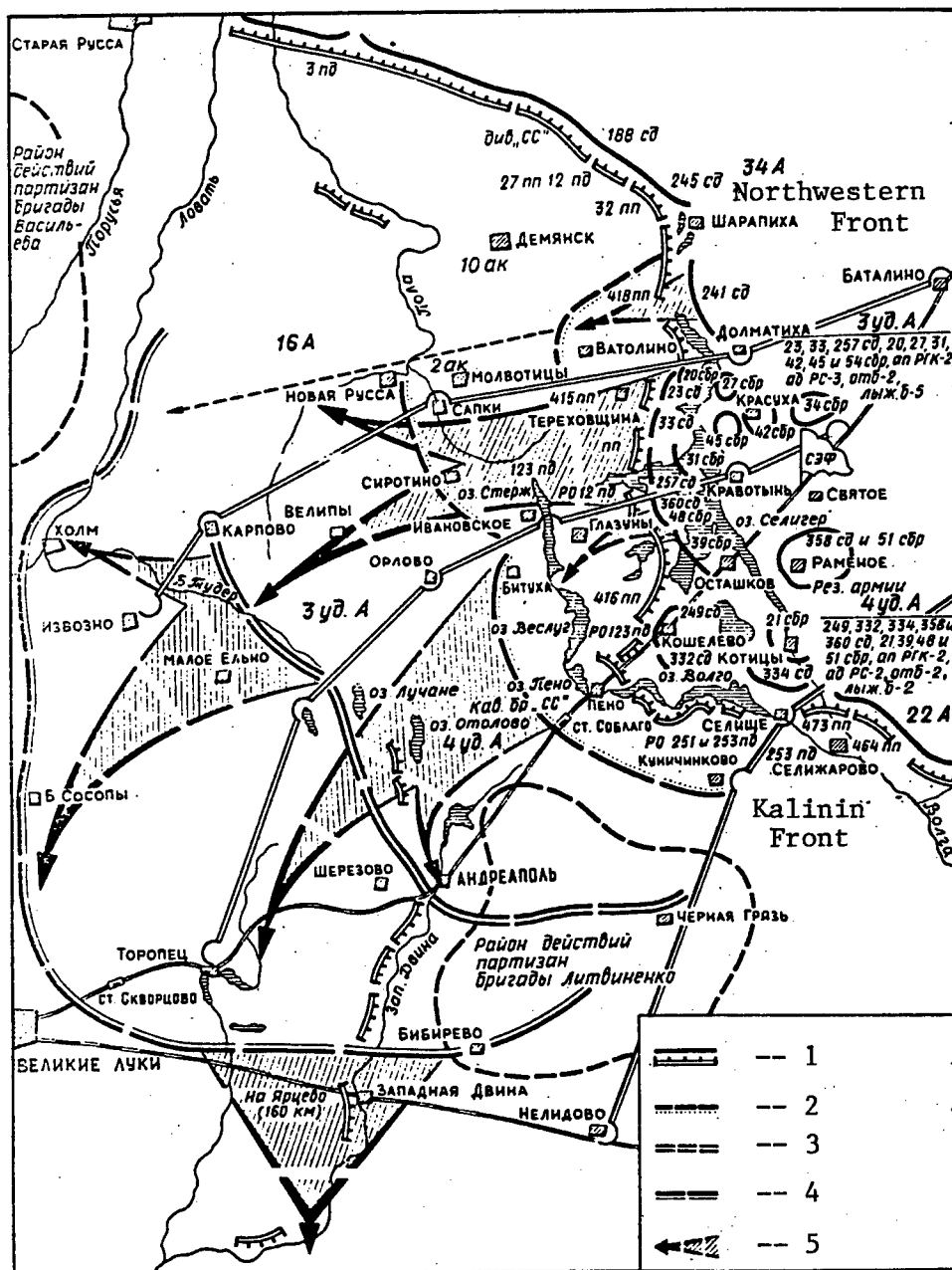
At the end of December 1941, the enemy succeeded in detecting the moving up of our troops into the Ostashkov area. Not having free reserves on this sector, the Nazi Command began to hurriedly shift divisions from Germany and France here but it was already too late. Formations from the 3d and 4th Assault Armies by this time had basically completed their regrouping and concentration, and during the night of 9 January 1942, took up the forming-up position for the offensive. As a result, significant superiority over the enemy was achieved in forces and operational surprise for going over to the offensive was also realized.

According to the instructions of Hq SHC of 7 January 1942, the commander of the Northwestern Front, Lt Gen P.A. Kurochkin, took a decision to launch the main thrust by the adjacent flanks of the 3d and 4th Assault Armies from the Ostashkov area on the axis of Toropets, to defeat the opposing enemy grouping and on the 10th-15th day of the operation, to capture the line of Karpovo, Andreapol, Chernaya Gryaz. Subsequently, in continuing the offensive around the enemy defenses to the northwest to the line of Lake Otolovo, Andreapol, the Western Dvina River, to liberate Toropets, reach the line of Kholm, B. Sosopy, Skvortsovo Station, Bibirevo, and then advance on Yartsevo in the aim of preventing the retreat of the Rzhev-Vyazma enemy grouping to the west and then to defeat it in cooperation with the troops of the Kalinin and Western Fronts (see the diagram).

The main thrust was planned to be made on the boundary of Army Groups North and Center, where the enemy 16th Army was positioned along a wide front and had poorly developed defensive positions. The offensive by the troops of the front's left wing was to be carried out in a 97-km zone breaching the enemy defenses in three sectors with a total width of about 54 km. Due to the shortage of forces the front's operational configuration was single-echelon. At the same time, on the army breakthrough sectors there were plans to establish a significant superiority for that time over the enemy: by 6-fold for infantry and artillery, 10-fold for tanks, 1.5-2-fold for aviation and this would make it possible to launch a powerful initial thrust and continue the offensive in depth.

In the course of the operation, provision was made for the extensive use of small mobile maneuvering groups including ski battalions, tank assault forces, antitank and partisan detachments with the task of seizing population points and communications arteries by rapid actions on the enemy flanks and in the enemy rear and disrupt troop command and their supply.(7)

According to the decision of the front's commander, the 3d Assault Army under the command of Lt Gen M.A. Purkayev, in advancing in a 27-km zone, was to launch



Over-All Plan of Toropets-Kholm Offensive Operation (9 January-6 February 1942)

Key:

- 1—Initial Troop position
- 2—Immediate task of 3d and 4th Assault Armies (4th-5th day)
- 3—Immediate task of front, further task of armies (10th-15th day)
- 4—Further task of front
- 5—Axis of thrusts

the main thrust on the axis of Terekhovshchina, Sirofino, Velily and, outflanking the most fortified enemy strongpoints, on the 4th-5th day of the operation, to capture the line of Novaya Russa, Ivanovskoye, after which, having secured itself to the right, with the main forces to continue the offensive to the southwest and reach the line of the B. Tuder River, Lake Luchane. The depth of the task was around 90-95 km, the duration of the operation was 13-15 days while the average rate of advance was planned at 6-7 km a day.

The 4th Assault Army (commander, Col Gen A.I. Yermenko), in fighting on a front of 70 km, was, in launching the main thrust with the right flank on the axis of Ostashkov, Peno, Andreapol, on the 4th day of the operation to capture the line of Bitukha, Soblago Station, Kunichinkovo. Subsequently, in continuing the offensive to the southwest, it was to reach the line of Lake Luchane, Andreapol, Chernaya Gryaz. The depth of the task was planned for 75-80 km, the duration of the operation was to be 10-12 days and the average rate of advance was 6-7 km a day.

The 34th Army was ordered to attack on the Vatolino axis to support the right flank of the 3d Assault Army employing a portion of the forces of the left flank. The partisan brigade of N.G. Vasilyev was given the task of capturing Kholm with a rapid thrust while the brigade of A.M. Litvinenko was to paralyze the enemy rear in the area of Peno, Andreapol, Bibrevo and prevent the retreat of the enemy to the west.(8)

In considering that a majority of the formations had reached the assault armies from their points of organization deep in the rear, the front military council carried out extensive work to unify the staffs and prepare the troops for the forthcoming actions. For these purposes, all the movements of the formations and units involving a regrouping were carried out in performing tactical assignments. In training the commanders and staffs particular attention was paid to inculcating skills of organizing highly fluid offensive actions, primarily to capture enemy strongpoints. The personnel was instructed in fighting under harsh winter conditions, carrying out a march off the road across rugged terrain, and effectively employing the weapons and combat equipment.(9) Although very little time was assigned to prepare for the operation, the troops and the staffs acquired practical skills in carrying out battle tasks. All of this played a positive role in the course of the offensive, significantly reducing our troop losses.

On the eve of the offensive, the front and army military councils and political bodies appealed to the soldiers, commanders and political workers to carry out their duty to the motherland with honor. The men responded with enthusiasm to the appeal and vowed to carry out the tasks confronting them.

During the night of 9 January, bomber aviation attacked the main enemy centers of resistance. At the same time, antitank detachments and ski subunits infiltrated deep

into the enemy defenses, having cut many roads and disrupted contact between the strongpoints. At 0400 hours, the offensive was commenced by formations launching auxiliary strikes while at dawn after artillery softening up, the main forces of the 3d and 4th Assault Armies went over to the offensive.

Having captured the first German positions comparatively quickly, the advancing units, particularly on the right flank of the 3d Assault Army, encountered stubborn enemy resistance deep in the enemy defenses. The army commander had to commit two rifle brigades (27th and 42d) to battle from the reserve. This weakened the thrust on the main axis and as a result the breakthrough of the enemy tactical defensive zone was completed only on the 4th day of the offensive. By 15 January, the right-flank formations of the army, in approaching Vatolino and Molvotitsy, became engaged in extended fighting against the Nazi grouping on the defensive in this area. The remaining formations continued the offensive, having advanced in the center and on the left flank some 60-70 km.(10)

The 4th Assault Army was more successful. Over a period of 2 days, the enemy defenses were breached on several sectors. Particularly distinguishing itself was the 249th Rifle Division (commander, Maj Gen G.F. Tarasov). In advancing on the main axis, it moved forward 25 km and liberated Peno. In exploiting the success, the formations rapidly approached Andreapol and after a 30-minute artillery softening up attacked the units of the 253d and 81st (shifted at the end of December from France) Infantry Divisions which had dug into the city.(11) As a result of fierce fighting on 16 January, Andreapol was liberated.

The other formations of the 4th Assault Army also advanced successfully. In fighting under the difficult conditions of roadless forests and in a deep snow cover, over a period of 8 days they advanced 60-80 km and widened the breach of the enemy defenses to 100 km. The left-flank formations of the army, in coming out in the flank of the enemy fortified area at Selizharov, forced the defending units to retreat and thereby helped the 22d Army of the Kalinin Front in its successful advance.

At the same time, by the end of the day of 16 January, the army front of advance had substantially broadened. The commander of the Northwestern Front was particularly concerned for the right wing of the 3d Assault Army where the gap was the largest. On 17 January, he requested from Hq SHC that the army be reinforced with three rifle divisions, five rifle brigades, cavalry and tanks. However, the request was not satisfied.(12)

In advancing with limited forces on an extended front, the 3d Assault Army in the second half of January made slow headway. Its right-flank formations were for a long time bogged down in the area of Vatolino, Molvotitsy. In the center, intense fighting was underway against the 218th German Infantry Division which was surrounded

in the Kholm area. On the left flank, the formations, in surmounting enemy resistance, had advanced 60-80 km and by 21 January had reached Maloye Yelno.

The 4th Assault Army, in continuing the offensive, by the same date had taken Toropets and Zapadnaya Dvina. In reaching the Velikiye Luki—Rzhev Railroad, the army troops cut the line of communication for the Rzhev enemy grouping. In capturing Toropets, the troops received great help from the partisans which knocked out the road on the approaches to the city, attacked the enemy from the rear and together with the army formations participated in the street fighting.(13)

By the end of the day of 21 January, the breach in the enemy defenses on the boundary of Army Groups North and Center had reached 150 km, while our troops had advanced 140 km. The formations on the left wing of the front, in reaching the line of Kholm, Toropets, Zapadnaya Dvina, Nelidovo and having taken up an advantageous position for attacking Army Group Center in the rear, contributed to the success of the right wing of the Kalinin Front which during this time had carried out the Sychevka-Vyazma Operation.

Due to the fact that the northwestern Front in January was conducting an offensive along two divergent axes and its southern group was carrying out tasks which were in common with the Kalinin Front, Hq SHC on 22 January transferred the 3d and 4th Assault Armies to the Kalinin Front. In considering the developing situation, the commander of the Kalinin Front, Col Gen I.S. Konev, gave the assault armies the task of continuing an energetic offensive to the southwest and south in the aim of coming out by the end of January deep in the rear of Army Group Center and establishing conditions for defeating it in cooperation with the Western and Bryansk Fronts. Here the 3d Assault Army was to advance on the axis of Kholm, Velikiye Luki, Vitebsk, while the 4th Assault Army was to do the same toward Velizh, Rudnya.

Since the main forces of the 3d Assault Army on the right flank were continuing to fight the Demyansk enemy grouping, on the southwestern sector only the 257th Rifle Division, the 31st Rifle Brigade and three ski battalions went over to the offensive and on 29 January these were approaching Velikiye Luki but were unable to take it without a pause (they had to engage in extended fighting against the enemy reserves arriving here). The army front of advance increased even more. All its formations were deployed in a single echelon and the commander had just two rifle battalions in his reserve.

The 4th Assault Army, from 22 through 29 January, with the formations fighting on the right flank, had advanced 100-110 km, and on the left flank had advanced up to 75 km and was approaching Velizh and Demidov, while the 249th Rifle Division was approaching Vitebsk.

By this time, the front of advance of both armies had reached almost 500 km and the lines of communications were extended some 250-300 km. The army formations worn down by the continuous multi-day fighting on impassable terrain under the conditions of a harsh and snowy winter, were unable to surmount the resistance of the enemy reserves arriving from Western Europe and consisting of four infantry divisions. They needed rest and the bringing up to strength in personnel, ammunition, fuel and food. Considering the developing situation, the commander of the Kalinin Front ordered the 3d and 4th Assault Armies to dig in on the achieved lines ready for subsequent actions on the general axis of Vitebsk. At the start of February 1942, after a number of locally important battles, the Toropets-Kholm Operation ended.

As a result of the operation, the 3d and 4th Assault Armies had pushed up to 250 km into the enemy defenses on the boundary of Army Groups North and Center, they had disrupted operational cooperation between them, and had outflanked the Rzhev-Vyazma enemy grouping to the northwest and the Demyansk grouping to the south, thereby creating good conditions for their defeat.

In the course of the offensive, over 40,000 km² of territory were liberated as well as over a thousand population points, including the towns of Peno, Andrapol, Zap. Dvina, Toropets. The enemy had lost over 12,000 soldiers and officers of killed alone, a great deal of combat equipment and materiel. In order to check the offensive of our troops, the Nazi Command had been forced to shift over 7 divisions to this sector from Western Europe and from other sectors of the front.(14)

The Toropets-Kholm Offensive Operation is also instructive in the skillful choice of the axis of the main thrust on the boundary of Army Groups North and Center, where the enemy had insignificant forces and a poorly prepared defense. Also of important significance was the achieving of surprise when the troops went over from the defensive to the offensive. The surprise was achieved by the covert moving up of the formations and units to the designated areas; by the organizing of an assault grouping on an axis which the enemy considered inaccessible and on which it did not expect active operations by our troops; by the skillful cover of the concentrated troops, by the planning and organization of combat in a short period of time; by the staggered going over to the offensive on the secondary and main axes.

The troops gained rich experience in fighting under conditions of a harsh and snowy winter. In the course of the entire operation, maneuvers were extensively employed. The formations and units pushed into the enemy defenses, fighting frequently with exposed flanks which were supported by ski groups as well as by the

secondary echelons and reserves. As a result, the average daily rate of advance for the troops in individual stages of the operation was rather high and reached 10-12 km a day.

In the course of the fighting, the tactics of capturing population points was improved and under winter conditions these represented important centers of resistance. The first echelon units, having surrounded a population point and having cut off the enemy's escape route using the forward detachments, by a rapid attack drove the enemy out of the point. Deprived of shelter, the enemy lost its combat capability and it was easier to destroy (Peno, Andreapol, Nelidovo). A strongly fortified population point, when the fighting for it assumed an extended nature, was usually sealed off by small subunits while the main forces outflanked it and moved forward. The blockaded garrisons were eliminated by the second echelon units and the reserves. The long winter nights made it possible to widely employ nighttime fighting and with good organization of this was almost always successful.

In the Toropets-Kholm Operation, rich experience was gained in operational cooperation with the partisan detachments fighting in the enemy rear.

The success of the operation to a significant degree was aided by the well organized party political work in the troops. This was aimed primarily at establishing a high offensive drive in the personnel and ensuring the execution of battle tasks; it was conducted in the companies, batteries and squadrons daily. The political workers also provided aid to the command in supplying the troops with ammunition, fuel and food, involving the local population in this work.

With the indisputable significant successes achieved in the course of the Toropets-Kholm Operation, it is impossible not to point out that its results were negatively effected by essential shortcomings in the organization and conduct of the fighting.

Due to the insufficient organization of the troop regrouping, the difficult climatic conditions and the limited lines of communications, the concentration of the assault armies was drawn out. Certain units arrived at the designated areas only on 9 January. Individual subunits and rear facilities arrived even later, catching up with their formations even in the process of the commenced offensive.

Regardless of the great efforts taken by the front and army military councils, many of the formations and units arriving from the nation's rear, due to the limited time for organizing the operation, were poorly trained and organized and this led to unjustified losses in personnel and equipment in the course of the fighting. Logistic support for the troops was also insufficient, primarily due to the difficulty of transporting materiel on the eve and in the course of the operation under

roadless conditions. For example, the 4th Assault Army by the start of the operation had just 2.5 units of fire of ammunition, 1-1.5 daily rations of food and fodder and about 0.15 of a fuel load. The army motor battalions had just 227 motor vehicles and these were not fully used due to the shortage of fuel. A similar situation existed in the 3d Assault Army which had from 0.8 to 1.0 unit of fire of ammunition, 0.5 of a fuel load and 1 daily ration of food.(15)

The efforts of the Northwestern Front at the start of the operation were dispersed on two axes: Toropets and Staraya Russa. This led to a situation where on neither of them did the front's command have sufficient reserves for exploiting the success. The efforts of the 3d Assault Army were also scattered as it launched attacks on its own flanks. This forced a large portion of its forces to be employed in supporting them. The Kalinin Front which on 22 January included the 3d and 4th Assault Armies, in conducting the Sychevka-Vyazma Offensive Operation simultaneously, also did not have the forces to exploit the success achieved by the end of January on its right wing.(16) Such a dispersion of forces was one of the important reasons for the incomplete encirclement of the Rzhev-Vyazma enemy grouping. As the subsequent experience of the war was to show, a crucial condition for the success of encirclement operations was to be the presence of large formations or field forces of armored and mechanized troops. At the beginning of 1942, the Soviet Army as yet did not possess them.

The commanders and staffs of many formations and units did not have sufficient experience in working in a combat situation. This told particularly negatively on the breaching of the enemy defenses by the 3d Assault Army. Certain commanders became tied down in fighting for fortified population points, they engaged small enemy garrisons in extended fighting and thereby tied down their own forces. At the start of January 1942, Hq SHC sent the troops a directive letter on organizing the breaching of enemy defensive lines and on the artillery offensive. However, the requirements and recommendations of this letter still had not become known to all commanders and staffs, and most importantly had not been actually assimilated by them.

All these shortcomings as well as the difficult climatic and natural conditions were the reason that the Toropets-Kholm Offensive Operation was not completely carried out and its ultimate goal—reaching the area of Yartsevo—was not achieved. However, a study of this operation's experience is of important significance for the training of command personnel, as it helps not only disclose the factors and conditions of our victories, but also indicate the circumstances which had an unfavorable impact on the results of the fighting, in addition to warning against mistakes.

Footnotes

1. "Istoriya Velikoy Otechestvennoy voyny Sovetskogo Soyuz 1941-1945" [History of the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union of 1941- 1945], Moscow, Voenizdat, Vol 2, 1963, p 322.
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5. "Na Severo-Zapadnom fronte 1941-1943" [On the Northwestern Front 1941-1943], Moscow, Nauka, 1969, p 23.
6. P.A. Kurochkin, "Izbrannyye stati" [Selected Articles], Moscow, Izd. Voenno Akademii imeni M.V. Frunze, 1970, p 27.
7. "Toropetsko-Kholmskaya operatsiya....," pp 10-11.
8. Ibid., p 12.
9. P.A. Kurochkin, op. cit., p 31.
10. "Istoriya Velikoy Otechestvennoy....," Vol 2, p 321.
11. *Voenno-istoricheskiy zhurnal*, Vol 7, 1971, p 69.
12. "Istoriya Velikoy Otechestvennoy....," Vol 2, p 322.
13. *Pravda*, 26 January 1942.
14. "Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya," Vol 8, 1980, pp 76-77.
15. "Toropetsko-Kholmskaya operatsiya....," pp 28-29.
16. "Na Severo-Zapadnom....," pp 34-35.

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Preparing Trained Reserves for Soviet Army in Prewar Years, Great Patriotic War

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[Article by Col Gen G.F. Krivosheyev: "Preparation of Trained Reserves for the Soviet Army in the Prewar Years and During the Great Patriotic War"]

[Text] The second half of the 1930s was characterized by a further rise in the aggressiveness of the most reactionary imperialist forces. Considering the possibility of the unleashing of a new world war by them, the Communist Party and the Soviet government undertook the necessary measures to strengthen the nation's defense capability and to build up the combat might of the Army and Navy. The size of all the Armed Forces and combat arms was increased and their organization improved. New rifle, tank, mechanized and air formations as well as the artillery reserves of the RGK [Reserve High Command] were constituted and the airborne troops and air defense troops were strengthened. The successes in national economic development made it possible to provide the Soviet Army with new types of weapons and military equipment.(1) In line with this there was the acute question of improving the organization of military instruction for the Soviet citizens and increasing the rate of accumulating trained reserves capable of mastering the weapons and military equipment being received in the troops without protracted retraining.

A series of corresponding laws and decrees was promulgated under the petition of the USSR NKO [People's Commissariat of Defense]. A most important document which determined the procedure for making up a trained reserve was the new Law Governing Universal Military Service adopted by the USSR Supreme Soviet on 1 September 1939 and this reinforced the transition to a professional principle for the organizational development, manning and training of the Armed Forces. Proceeding from the fact that active military service was the main source for acquiring trained reserves, a new induction age of 19 years was set for everyone and 18 years for persons who had completed the secondary school (according to the 1930 Law, this age was 20 years). In addition, the period that the rank-and-file and NCO personnel would remain in the reserves was increased by 10 years (until the age of 50). The number of age groups in the reserve was greater and thus the over- all number of trained reserves rose.(2)

A further improvement in weapons and military equipment required the establishing of longer times of active military service for certain categories of servicemen and a differentiation of these in terms of combat arms. Thus, the period of active military service for junior commanders of the ground troops and junior specialists in the Air Forces was increased from 2 to 3 years. A similar period was provided for all the rank and file of the Air Forces,

the junior commanders of the Interior Troops, the rank-and-file and junior commanders of the Border Troops. In the Navy, the length of service for the rank-and-file and junior command personnel was set at 5 years, and on the ships of the Border Troops 4 years. In 1941, in line with the rapid development of aviation and the commissioning of more complex equipment, the length of service for the Air Forces rank-and-file and junior commanders was increased up to 4 years.

As a whole, the better system of induction for active military service as well as the setting of longer periods of service made it possible before the war to significantly increase the number of rank-and-file and junior command (supervisory) personnel in the ranks and in the reserve as well as improve the quality of their training. The opportunity appeared of dispensing with a majority of reenlisted personnel. These remained only in the positions of company and battery sergeant majors and certain other specialists.

However, the acquiring of a trained contingent in the reserves merely by the annual call-ups for active military service, although being the main source for created trained reserves, could not fully meet the requirements of the Army and Navy in wartime. For this reason a significant portion of the persons liable for military service was to be trained in training courses in the troop units and facilities at the place of registration. In line with this the Law of Universal Military Service increased the periods of the training courses for inductees and for the supervisory personnel, their over-all length increased by 3-fold, for the junior commanders by almost 5-fold, and for the rank-and-file by 3 1/2-fold comprising, respectively, 3, 2 and 1.5 years.

The training of persons liable for military service in the troop units and facilities was viewed as one of the most important directions in the over-all system of preparing trained reserves. However, although great attention was paid to this, it was not always organized on a sufficiently high level. Thus, the logistic support for the training courses involving reservists and draftable individuals was not always satisfactory. Certain commanders of the units and chiefs of the facilities considered the courses an additional burden which had a negative influence on the combat training of subordinates. In sometimes knowing about the dates of inspections, they summoned to the courses for regular personnel only the militarily well-trained reservists and draftable individuals. Frequently, the called-up reservists for a long period of time were employed in various economic jobs not involving their specialty training. All these shortcomings significantly lowered the quality of the training at the reservist courses for rank-and-file and junior command (supervisory) personnel.

Moreover, in the designated period, a majority of the troop units and facilities were still in the stage of organization. Because of the lack of skilled personnel and the poor physical plant, they were unable to involve

in instruction all the reservists and draftable individuals required in manning the troops in the mobilizing of a multimillion-strong army. For this reason a significant portion of these was trained in certain civilian people's commissariats and the organization of Osoaviakhim [Society for Assistance to Defense, Aviation and Chemical Construction] and the Union of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. For example, the organizations of the people's commissariats of communications and railroads trained reserve radio operators, telegraph operators, line inspectors and other communications specialists, while the people's commissariats of agriculture and procurement trained drivers, tractor operators and blacksmiths. The training network of the People's Commissariat of Public Health trained orderlies, medical instructors and disinfection workers. In the civilian people's commissariats, the specialists were trained at special training facilities, as a rule, off the job over a period of 2 or 3 months. For this the military commissariats selected (on a volunteer basis) reservists from among individuals not registered in the troop units. As a whole, instruction in the system of the civilian people's commissariats proved effective although the proportional amount of specialists trained in it was insignificant. In 1939, for example, only 47,600 persons had been trained and in 1940, 67,000 persons.

The training centers of the Osoaviakhim organizations were involved with draftable individuals who had not previously served in the regular or variable personnel of the territorial troops, had not been registered with the troop units, as well as those who had but had not been involved in courses. The training was carried out under a 300-hour program on the job with a subsequent 10-day course in the Osoaviakhim camps.⁽³⁾ The number of untrained draftable individuals who were not involved in training in the Osoaviakhim training organizations under orders of the NKO in 1939 was over 500,000 men. By 1940, this number reached 1 million. However, the training network and physical plant of Osoaviakhim were not designed for training such a number of people and did not provide normal organization of the training process. The Osoaviakhim training centers were basically located in cities. In rural areas, where the basic mass of untrained draftable individuals lived, there were not enough of these and we lacked the necessary equipment and skilled personnel for setting up new ones. The supervisory reserve personnel involved in training the draftable individuals was not always well trained for exercises and at times conducted them on a poor procedural level. Moreover, the training of draftable individuals in rural localities on the job was impeded by the significant distance of the Osoaviakhim training centers from a majority of the villages and hamlets. Because of these factors the quality of training for the draftable individuals in the Osoaviakhim system did not fully meet the needs of the Army and Navy. For example, due to the extremely poor combat skills of the draftable individuals who had undergone training in Osoaviakhim by orders of the NKO in 1940, it was decided to admit them for military registration as poorly trained.

The seriousness of the shortcomings in organizing the training process forced the NKO in July 1940 to submit a report to the Defense Committee Under the USSR SNK [Council of People's Commissars] and this report proposed that in 1941 the training of draftable individuals would not be entrusted to Osoaviakhim but would be carried out off the job in the reserve regiments and other troop units and facilities of the Soviet Army and Navy. On the basis of this document, upon governmental decision, from September 1940, the training of the required contingent from among untrained and poorly trained draftable individuals under the orders of NKO was taken away from Osoaviakhim. It continued to carry out mass defense work and train military personnel under a new set of programs which provided for the training of the "Voroshilov Marksmen," cavalry troops, signal troops, motorcyclists and other specialties.(4)

The organizations of the Union of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies trained nurses and orderlies. Training was carried out both on the job and off the job in month-long courses organized on the basis of the rural hospitals. In 1939, these organizations trained over 29,000 medical specialists, and in 1940, some 16,500.

For 1941, the Communist Party Central Committee, the Soviet government and the NKO had planned a number of measures aimed at further raising the growth rate of trained reserves and most importantly, at improving the quality of their training. It was proposed that the military councils of the districts and fleets institute stricter control over the setting up and execution of the training courses for the registered personnel and other types of reservist training. There were plans to organize an inspection of all the units and formations conducting courses. During this year they were to train the lacking specialists to provide for the full manning of the Armed Forces in the event of wartime. However, these measures were not fully carried out due to the commenced war.

As a whole, the measures carried out in 1939-1941, regardless of their incompleteness and the existing shortcomings, played a positive role in the training of the specialists essential for the fielding of a mass army. The rapid growth of industry, the mechanization of agriculture and the motorization of the army during the last prewar years made it possible to build up a significant number of reservist specialists for the motor vehicle, armored and other troops. The total amount of resources of junior command and supervisory personnel in the reserves by the start of the Great Patriotic War as a whole met the mobilization demand for them in the units of the Soviet Army and Navy.

With the outbreak of the Great Patriotic War, the Communist Party and the Soviet government, in drawing on the trained reserves, were able to rapidly mobilize and deploy strong wartime Armed Forces. Already by 1 July 1941, some 5,300,000 men had been mobilized for the Army and Navy, numerous military formations had been organized as well as units and formations of the

people's militia.(5) Nevertheless, the Soviet Army, in conducting fierce engagements on a front of enormous length, required a further build-up of forces and an on-going and significant replenishment of its ranks with trained personnel. In order to successfully carry out this complicated problem, the Communist Party and the Soviet government again turned to the idea of universal military instruction for the public as had been advanced by V.I. Lenin in March 1918 at the 7th RKP(b) [Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik)] Congress.(6)

On 17 September 1941, the USSR State Defense Committee [GKO] adopted a decree on universal compulsory training in military affairs for Soviet citizens. This stated: "...Each citizen of the USSR capable of bearing arms should be trained in military affairs in order to be ready with weapons in hand to defend his motherland...."(7) For leadership over the military training of the workers, on 18 September 1941, within the NKO they organized the Main Directorate for Universal Military Training (GUVVO), while in the military districts, the oblast, kray and republic military commissariats they organized sections of universal military training (Vsevobuch). In the rayon and city military commissariats they introduced two or three instructor positions. For directing party political work in the bodies and subdivisions of Vsevobuch under the GUVVO, they organized a political section.(8) All the organizational and practical work of setting up the military training centers of Vsevobuch, their material support, the selection of instructor personnel and supervision over the quality of training were entrusted to the military commissariats.

The Communist Party Central Committee demanded that the party and soviet bodies provide for the rapid setting up of the Vsevobuch system, the establishing of the training and technical facilities as well as the recruitment of the appropriate personnel. The Vsevobuch sections and the political sections in the military districts and military commissariats organized all their work in close contact with the local party and Komsomol organizations and the Soviets. Cooperation was also provided with the troop units, the sections of public education, physical education and sports and the labor reserve administrations. With the introduction of Vsevobuch, the Osoaviakhim organizations made instructors available to the military commissariats and provided their shooting ranges and camps for exercises. As a result of the work done, in the second half of September 1941, the Vsevobuch subunits had been basically established, the command and political personnel had been chosen and the military training centers equipped.(9)

The Vsevobuch system provided military instruction for males aged from 16 to 50 years as well as volunteer women. Training was organized by the territorial-production principle and was carried out on the job at the military training centers (VUP) which were organized at

the military commissariats, large factories, plants, sovkhoses and kolkhozes. Depending upon the number of trainees the personnel was organized in separate platoons, companies, battalions and sometimes even regiments.

The training program was planned for 100 hours. It provided for tactical, weapons, combat engineer, drill, chemical, medical and physical training as well as a study of the military regulations. Exercises were held for middle-level and junior command and political reserve personnel who had deferments from mobilization induction as well as the best trained rank-and-file of senior ages who had not been inducted into the army. By orders of the NKO rigid training times were set by rounds. The first rounds involved military training for preinductees 17-18 years of age and draftable individuals from untrained persons up to the age of 45. As a total on 1 October 1941, over 7 million persons were subject to military training, with around 60 percent in the military training centers and the remainder (predominantly student youth from 16 to 20 years) in institutions of learning.

Prior to 1942, training for the public was basically carried out under the rifleman program. In February 1942, in the Vsevobuch system they introduced training for demolition troops, submachine gunners, machine gunners, mortar troops, tank troops, antitank troops and certain other specialists. Thus, when in the course of the war the need arose for antitank snipers, hundreds of thousands of Vsevobuch fighters mastered the art of sharpshooting. With the onset of the winter of 1941-1942, extensive work was carried out to train fighters for the ski subunits and units at the military training centers.

In January-February 1942, the first round of military instruction was complete and this involved 1.15 million men. Subsequently, for improving the specialist fighters in the Vsevobuch system in February 1942, they organized Komsomol-youth subunits of snipers, antitank troops, submachine gunners, mortar troops, medium machine gunners and other specialists from individuals who had undergone training in the 110-hour program. Women volunteers also trained in these subunits under Komsomol appointments. By 1 October 1942, over 12,000 women had been trained in the 110-hour program for the specialty of rifleman, there were 300,000 nurses and medical orderlies, 20,000 radio operators, telegraph operators and telephone operators. In addition, from August 1942, the Komsomol members were mobilized and they were trained for service in the units of the Soviet Army Airborne Troops. In a comparatively short time they assembled 144,000 persons from 19 to 27 years of age who had undergone basic parachute training.

A major drawback impeding the training of reserves within Vsevobuch was the poor training facilities of its local organizations, particularly during the first years of the war. There was a shortage of manuals, training

weapons, equipment and visual aids for tactical, weapons and chemical training. Beginning with the second round of training, the physical plant of the military training centers (as a total during the period of the war some 15,000 of these were organized) began to constantly improve. During this period the local Vsevobuch organizations received a large amount of manuals and regulations, a good number of training and combat weapons, and the training facilities of Osoaviakhim began to be more widely used. By the start of the fifth round, a majority of the Vsevobuch military training centers had everything necessary for high quality training of the fighters.

As a whole, regardless of the existing shortcomings, Vsevobuch was an exceptionally important state measure to organize the nationwide rebuff of the enemy. Over the war years, with the aid of the party, soviet and Komsomol organizations, seven rounds of instruction were carried out within its system and over 9.8 million persons underwent training in them.(10) Tens of thousands of fighters who had been trained in the Vsevobuch subunits were awarded orders and medals and 273 men received the title of Hero of the Soviet Union.

The Osoaviakhim training subunits also underwent changes. Instead of teams and detachments, in its primary organizations, they began establishing squads, platoons, companies and battalions. These were manned, as a rule, by the specialization principle (snipers, machine gunners, antitank troops, demolition troops, drivers, radio operators and so forth) from among individuals who had undergone training in the Vsevobuch program. The task of these formations was to improve and broaden the obtained combined-arms and special knowledge and skills of the workers. In 1944, the Osoaviakhim subunits trained almost 30-fold more machine gunners than in 1941, 16-fold more snipers and over 8-fold more mortar troops.

At the same time, the Vsevobuch and Osoaviakhim system provided chiefly for primary military training of reserves. But the conduct of a fierce and bloody war demanded a large number of militarily well-trained human resources. For this reason with the outbreak of the war, reserve units of all the combat arms were organized and from August 1942, training units with the basic purpose of training personnel to replenish the losses in the troop units.

The situation which developed on the front during the first months of the fighting indicated that the network planned on the eve of the war for reserve and training units and their capacity were clearly insufficient for satisfying the needs of the operational army. For this reason, even in August 1941, measures were worked out and approved by the GKO to increase the intensity of training human reserves and to send the drafts of reinforcements to the fronts. Plans were made for a significant increase in the number and size of the reserve and training units and for a higher level of training and

indoctrination work in them. Responsibility for the state of these units, for the prompt constituting of the draft battalions and the continuous remanning of the operational army was entrusted to Glavupraform [Main Directorate for Formations] of the Red Army and the commanders of the military districts. The task was set for the obkoms, raykoms and central committees of the Union republic communist parties of providing the greatest possible aid to the command of the reserve and training units on the matters of their manning, training facilities and administrative support, quarters, the equipping of winter camps as well as in carrying out political work among the personnel.

In the reserve and training units they set as a minimum a 6-8-week period of instruction for the untrained contingents and 3 months for the junior command personnel. All combat training was organized to inculcate strong willpower, decisiveness, boldness, tenacity and offensive zeal in the fighters and junior commanders. The main goal of the exercises was to train the personnel in what would be needed in war. The main task of the combat training was during the time spent in the reserve training unit to prepare fighters and squad (crew) commanders capable of fighting as part of a platoon. The reserve and training units were manned with commanders and political workers who, as a rule, had combat experience. The logistic and training facilities as well as the quartering of these units, starting in 1943-1944, provided all the necessary conditions for high-quality training of the recruits.

Where the unit commanders maintained a close vital tie with the local party and soviet bodies, the training of the recruits was higher quality. An example of such well organized ties was the cooperation of the command of the 1st and 30th Reserve Rifle Brigades of the Moscow Military District with the party and soviet bodies of Gorkiy and Ivanovo Oblasts. Because of this these brigades even in 1942 had good quarters, good training facilities and in them they effectively resolved the questions of manning and particularly the selection of personnel for the training of guards and crack draft companies. The command of the brigades achieved firm fulfillment of the daily schedule, high discipline, correct planning and conduct of the exercises and this ensured high-quality training for the recruits for the front.

In the aims of strengthening and deepening the ties with the local party and soviet bodies in Gorkiy and Ivanovo Oblasts, the brigades were awarded the designators "1st Gorkiy Reserve Brigade for Replacements in the Guards Rifle Divisions" and the "30th Ivanovo Reserve Rifle Brigade."

As a whole, the reserve and training units, regardless of the difficulties in their organization, support and quartering, handled their task. During the Great Patriotic War, they carried out great work in the military training of youth in the next inductions as well as reservists called up from the reserves and in the training, organizing and

dispatching of drafts of reinforcements for the operational army. This ultimately was one of the important conditions for the outstanding victories of the Soviet Army.

Thus, on the eve of the Great Patriotic War, our nation had organized a rather ordered system of military training for the public. This provided for the creation of trained reserves essential for the deployment and reinforcements of the Armed Forces. During the war years, the methods of training reserves were constantly improved. The Vsevobuch system which made it possible to mobilize enormous human resources proved fully effective. The Soviet Union at that time gained rich experience in organizing and carrying out measures for the mass preparation of trained reserves. A thorough analysis of the acquired experience makes it possible to set the most effective forms and methods of work in this area and avoid repetition of the errors of the past.

Footnotes

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Disrupting Enemy Troop Control

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[Article, published under the heading "Local Wars," by Col R.M. Portugalskiy, doctor of historical sciences, professor: "The Disruption of Enemy Troop Control"; the article was written from materials in the foreign press]

[Text] On the basis of analyzing the experience of local wars in the last decades, foreign military specialists have concluded that at present the commanders and staffs give enormous importance to disrupting enemy troop command in preparing and during the conduct of combat. This is determined by that role which is assigned to troop control in achieving success in an operation and battle as well as by the changes occurring in the troop control systems, in the means of reconnaissance and effective action against the enemy.

Substantial changes have occurred in the troop and weapons control systems as can be seen from the experience of the War of Resistance of the Vietnamese People (1959-1975), the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, the Israeli Aggression Against Lebanon in June 1982, the Anglo-Argentine Armed Conflict in March-June 1982 as well as in other local wars. At present, these are an aggregate of functionally interrelated control bodies and points, communications centers and lines, means for the automation, collection, processing and transmitting of information based on electronic, laser and other very complex equipment. Presently, these are marked by a large amount of all sorts of subsystems (combined-arms, intelligence, artillery, aviation, electronic countermeasures, air defense and so forth).

The network of control points was widened and their quality indicators changed. In the course of the War of Resistance of the Vietnamese People, the Americans created: helicopter airborne command posts in the divisions; and "jumping command posts" using one or two high-speed armored vehicles in the brigades. In this same war there was development of various types of centers and posts established for maintaining close cooperation between the aviation, air defenses and ground troops. From the experience of the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, in a majority of instances the control posts were spread out over a large area and up to 80 percent of their personnel was located in armored vehicles. Stationary, well-protected command posts were widely employed.(1)

There has also been extensive development of equipment for communications, for the collecting, processing and transmitting of information and, in particular, television and phototelegraph equipment, high-frequency telephone and tonal telegraph equipment, ground and air mobile communications equipment. In Vietnam, 100

percent of the communications centers of an operational-tactical level and almost 40 percent of those of the tactical level in the U.S. Army were underground.(2) In the course of the Israeli Aggression Against Lebanon in 1982, fiber optics equipment was employed and this provided, as NATO specialists have pointed out, the transmission of large amounts of information. In this war, as in the Anglo-Argentine Conflict, a satellite communications system was employed.

There has been rapid development of reconnaissance equipment making it possible to detect the main elements in the troop control system of the opposing side. In the final stage of the War of Resistance of the Vietnamese People, the Americans employed infrared and laser reconnaissance equipment, intelligence-signaling facilities and as a result of this, U.S. specialists have pointed out, an opportunity arose to more precisely determine the coordinates of radar stations, radio communications centers and other elements of the enemy control posts. During the Israeli Aggression Against Lebanon, along with radio, radio-technical, radar and television reconnaissance, they also employed laser devices and small-sized radio direction finders. The Israeli side widely employed data of American space reconnaissance, with two American Big Bird satellites constantly orbiting over the Near East. Also very effective in detecting the Argentine troop command posts as well as the air guidance posts was the reconnaissance provided by the English Command in March-June 1982 from helicopters equipped with special devices.(3)

There has been a widening of the range of the equipment influencing the enemy troop and weapons control systems.

The increased aeromobility and maneuverability of the troops have made it possible, as the foreign press has pointed out, to employ more widely than in previous wars airborne parties, raid and outflanking detachments for disrupting troop control of the opposing side. This was particularly characteristic for the 1973 Arab-Israeli War. In the course of the Israeli Aggression in Lebanon, the communications centers were destroyed by special-purpose detachments and groups the personnel of which had undergone special training and was armed with silencer-equipped pistols, rifles with a 20-power optical site, as well as equipment for contaminating the terrain, bodies of water and food products. For carrying out measures of so-called "psychological warfare," these subunits were provided with printing, radio and broadcasting equipment, printing and duplicating equipment, stationary and mobile receivers and transmitters and movie and TV units.(4)

Even during the years of World War II, along with operating against enemy control posts by employing air strikes, artillery fire and the actions of forward units, the belligerents rather widely employed electronic jamming. In this manner they solved the problem of reducing the effective operation of radio communications, radar and

radio navigation. In the mid-1960s, in the course of the war in Vietnam, the American Command for the first time carried out a range of measures to disrupt the operation of the enemy radio electronic systems. In particular, active and passive jamming and decoys were developed and false targets simulated. In the subsequent local wars, not only ground radio jamming devices were employed, but also manned and unmanned ECM aircraft, combat and reconnaissance helicopters and single-use jamming transmitters. Electronic suppression (REP), in the estimate of the NATO specialists, is becoming a component and inseparable part of electronic warfare, as one of the types of operational (battle) support, as an active and effective means for disrupting enemy troop control in an operation and battle.

In the local wars of recent decades, foreign military specialists have concluded, the opportunity has arisen for more effectively carrying out the task of disrupting enemy troop control, in having a direct impact both on the main elements of the enemy control system (control posts and communications centers) as well as on the organizational and creative activities of the commanders and staffs, including the employment of "psychological warfare" devices by means of terror and sabotage. The disrupting of enemy troop control, in holding an ever-larger place in the attaining of the goals of an operation and battle, for this reason has come to be viewed as the partial or complete disorganization of enemy troop (forces) and weapons control.

Having generalized the experience of disrupting enemy troop control in local wars, foreign military specialists have pointed out a number of the most characteristic features in employing forces and equipment to carry out these tasks.

The first of these is the **simultaneous action against the detected elements of the enemy troop control systems with the directing of particular efforts at the most important of these: command posts, air control centers and reconnaissance and electronic warfare centers.** Thus, on 6 October 1973, in the aim of disrupting Israeli troop control, the Egyptian aviation launched a massed raid against the control posts and electronic warfare centers in the Sinai Peninsula, the electronic air control stations located at the airfields of Bir-Gifgaf, El-Arish, Ras-Nusrani and Bir-el-Tamada. As a result the main command post of the Israeli Operational Command in the Sinai was knocked out as well as the forward electronic combat center. The jamming of Egyptian radio communications and radar equipment was temporarily stopped. On the same day, Syrian commando teams captured and destroyed three reconnaissance, jamming and control centers in the areas of the towns of Hermon, Tel-Obunada, Tel-el-Faras, thereby depriving the Egyptians of the possibility of observing and creating interference in the communications system of the Syrian Command. Then around 80 Syrian aircraft attacked the enemy ground troops, control points and airfields.(6)

With the outbreak of the armed conflict in Lebanon, the Arab Command selected as the prime objective the enemy control post for the E 2C Hawkeye aircraft and which provided reconnaissance of the airspace and target designation for the fighters. The Israeli Command gave chief attention to neutralizing the Syrian air defense control systems. For this purpose, on 9 June, they began the massive use of passive jamming which was organized in such a manner that the "clouds" of jamming covered the combat area. Then under the cover of active jamming, an attack was launched against the control systems employing ground-based antiradar missiles and Shrike class missiles from aircraft. Somewhat ahead of the commitment of the main forces in the kill areas of the antiaircraft missile complexes they turned on aviation ECM equipment as well as jammers for the aircraft of the strike and auxiliary groups.(7)

A second feature in employing the forces which carried out the tasks of disrupting troop control, as apparent in a majority of the local wars, was the **integrated employment of reconnaissance equipment as well as the forces assigned to disrupt enemy troop control.** In the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, on the basis of the data of all types of reconnaissance, chiefly radio and electronic, for disrupting troop control both belligerents widely employed airborne assault forces, aviation, artillery, special formations and ECM equipment. The Egyptian artillery and air strikes were preceded by the use of tactical unguided missiles against the Israeli jamming center in the area of Mount Gebel- Umm-Mahasa. At that time, tactical airborne forces were dropped. In the aim of disrupting the control of Arab troops, the Israelis transmitted coded false orders in Arabic. Special batteries of long-range artillery fired at the Egyptian radar posts. During the night of 19 October, when the Israeli troops at a bridgehead to the north of the Great Bitter Lake went over to the offensive, sent out from all the first-echelon brigades were outflanking detachments consisting of tank formations as well as helicopter-mounted reconnaissance and sabotage groups. They were given the tasks of destroying (capturing) the enemy command personnel, disrupting the communications centers and sowing panic.

In the course of the Anglo-Argentine armed conflict, for disrupting Argentine troop control, the English Command virtually simultaneously conducted air reconnaissance, employed dipole radar reflectors, set active electronic jamming, employed antiradar missiles and landed sabotage groups from helicopters. Then English bombers attacked the control posts and communications centers of the units and subunits of the enemy ground troops as well as the Argentine air guidance centers in the area of conflict.

Proof of the comprehensive approach to disrupting enemy troop control is the fact of the extensive employment of "psychological warfare" subunits in close contact with sabotage and terroristic groups (detachments) for carrying out these tasks.

As has been pointed out in the foreign press, in conducting "psychological operations," printed propaganda has been rather widely employed. For example, in Korea over the battle positions of the North Korean troops, they systematically dropped leaflets which slandered their command personnel. Over Vietnamese territory, the Americans dropped around 60 million leaflets of an intimidating, misleading and challenging nature. Moreover, the "psychological warfare" subunits (by the mid-1970s four U.S. special-purpose battalions were here) endeavored by their actions to spread panic and disorder and disrupt the normal operation at the control points of the North Vietnamese troops.(8)

Technical propaganda equipment has been employed even more frequently in local wars. In Vietnam the psychological effect on enemy command personnel was achieved by permanent and mobile radios. The task was carried out in an analogous manner by the Americans in the intervention into the Dominican Republic in April-September 1965. In the invasion of American troops of Grenada in October 1983, the 1st Psychological Operations Battalion of the U.S. Army created an extensive network of temporary radios and using these appeals to the command personnel, rank- and-file and public were broadcast in English and Spanish. They were proposed to put down their weapons. This was justified by the futility of resistance. In the course of the military operations in Cyprus in 1974, the Turkish Command on 20 July on the approaches to Nicosia and on 15 August at Famagusta made a series of radio and TV broadcasts of a disinformation nature and as a result of this many Greek officers abandoned their subunits and the personnel of the National Guard surrendered.

One other feature in disrupting the command of enemy troops in local wars, in the opinion of foreign military specialists, has come to be **the desire of the belligerents to take surprise action against the control systems.**

Characterized by high effectiveness, for example, were the surprise actions of Israeli paratroopers in 1967 in capturing a number of command posts of the Egyptian formations and units. Strikes made by Israeli aviation in the morning of 5 June against the Egyptian airfields and air defense control posts were also a surprise for the Egyptian Command basically due to the fact that the raid was made at low altitudes (50- 150 m). Moreover, the Israeli Command employed radio disinformation.

In the local wars there has been also such a particular feature **in the employment of the forces assigned to disrupt enemy troop control as their dependable and complete support in the operation and battle.** The necessity of carrying out the tasks of disrupting troop control with high effectiveness has meant the carrying out of a range of measures related to operational camouflage, and the providing of engineer, topogeodetic and hydrometeorological support. This has been caused by the employment of various forces for disrupting troop control and by active operations against them by the enemy.

Particular attention has been given to reconnaissance. Equally important have been logistic and special technical support and due to this a real opportunity has been created to promptly and effectively operate against the various elements of the control systems of the belligerents.

In the course of the war in Lebanon in 1982, an important place began to be given to electronic support for the combat operations of both the ground troops and aviation for achieving highly effective employment of the ECM equipment for disrupting enemy troop and weapons control. The Israeli Command carried out this task by reconnoitering the positions of the antiaircraft guided missile complexes and establishing the emission parameters and operating conditions of the Syrian troop radars. On the basis of the intelligence data, they were able to determine the strength of the air strike groups and support groups as well as the location of the jammers of enemy radars. Additional clarification of the objectives of the strikes, including the control posts, was achieved by air and ground radio and electronic intelligence forces. They monitored the emission of the Syrian radars and clarified information about the presence of antiaircraft weapons at the positions. It was also their task to monitor conversations in the enemy radio nets. Several minutes prior to the launching of a strike against the troops, airfields and control systems, reconnaissance was carried out by intelligence drones equipped with television devices.(9)

A characteristic feature in the activities of the operational-level command in organizing the disruption of enemy troop control, in the estimate of foreign specialists, is a tendency toward **centralization of control of the forces** involved in disrupting control.

Thus, the French Military Command in the course of the war in Algeria (1954-1962) and the American Command in fighting in the 1960s in Vietnam entrusted the task of organizing the disruption of enemy troop control (collection and analysis of situational data, the allocating of forces to the objectives of attack, their training and so forth) to an operations group of the field force's staff and headed by the deputy chief of staff. In a number of instances, so-called control centers were organized with the inclusion in them of representatives from the staff, the "psychological warfare" bodies, electronic combat, airborne troops and other forces involved in carrying out the task of operating against the enemy control posts, communications and radar centers. Here, in the opinion of foreign military specialists, it was advisable to have a clear delimitation of functions between commanders and staffs. The commander, in proceeding from the need to disrupt enemy troop control and the existing opportunities, took a decision which set the goals for disrupting control over the troops of the opposing side and the methods of achieving these; the objectives of the action; the schedule of forces; the tasks and the time these should be ready for employment; the principles of organizing control and cooperation. The staff (the created

headquarters body) provided the commander with information and calculations for taking the decision, it organized planning and employment of the allocated forces and supervised their training. This work also involved the chiefs of the combat arms, the special services, as well as the commanders of the special units and subunits.(10)

In the opinion of foreign military specialists, the problem of disrupting enemy troop control assumes particularly important significance in the initial period of a war. The combat in Lebanon and for the Falkland (Malvinas) Islands in 1982 showed that the Israelis and the English from the very outset of the aggression endeavored by massed electronic jamming to "plug up" all the enemy radio channels, to disrupt the main nets of control and cooperation and by giving misleading commands and false reports to confuse the enemy. Under these conditions, the disrupting of troop control operated as one of the methods for winning initiative in the operation and battle and for thwarting the plans, intentions and effective organizational activities taken by the command of the opposing side. The result of disrupting enemy troop control was apparent in the mistimed or incorrect response of the enemy command to the situation and which ultimately led to defeat. A characteristic example of such a dependence was the thwarting by the Israeli Command by radio disinformation of the plan of the Egyptian military leadership to conduct a counterstrike using the forces of the 4th Tank Division on 6 June 1967. As a result of the disinformation broadcast from the American ship "Liberty," the Egyptian troops without resistance abandoned the town of El-Arish.(11)

Thus, in the opinion of foreign military specialists, the disrupting of enemy troop command has become an important component in the content of modern battle and an operation. Their success, they conclude, is largely determined by how effectively the opposing side will resolve the questions of achieving continuous and dependable troop control with abrupt changes in the combat situation, of ascertaining the most effective procedures for increasing the survivability of the control systems and their protection against enemy actions and determining the range of essential measures to restore disrupted control and, under the conditions of mass losses, to organize this anew.

Footnotes

1. N.K. Glazunov, N.S. Nikitin, "Operatsiya i boy" [Operation and Battle], Moscow, Voenizdat, 1983, pp 137-138, 306.
2. *Military Review*, No 3, 1967, pp 92-96.
3. *International Defense Review*, Vol 15, No 8, 1982, p 979.
4. *Zarubezhnoye voyennoye obozreniye*, No 2, 1985, pp 3-5.

5. [Not in text]

6. *Newsweek*, 22 October 1973, pp 10-11.

7. *Military Technology*, No 7, 1984, p 28.

8. *Zarubezhnoye voyennoye obozreniye*, No 2, 1985, pp 5-6.

9. *Military Technology*, No 7, 1984, pp 24-27.

10. *Newsweek*, 22 October 1973, pp 16-17.

11. M. Heikal, "The Cairo Documents," New York, 1973, p 13.

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Results Could Have Been Better...

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[Article by Capt 1st Rank Yu.P. Ushakov, candidate of historical sciences: "The Results Could Have Been Better..."; the article concerns the feint actions of torpedo boats in landing the amphibious force on Cape Tarkhan]

[Text] At the end of 1943, the efforts of the Separate Maritime Army (commander, Col Gen I.Ye. Petrov) which was cooperating with the Azov Naval Flotilla (acting commander, Rear Adm G.N. Kholostyakov) were aimed at broadening the Kerch beachhead. One of the active measures was to be the landing of an amphibious force on Cape Tarkhan (landing commander, Capt 2d Rank N.K. Kirillov). Its success could be supported by the planned feint actions of the torpedo boats (TKA).(1)

The ship group which was headed by Capt-Lt V.Ya. Volchkov, included the 24th, 25th, 34th and 54th TKA. It was given the missions: to patrol in the Kerch-Yenikal Strait; to fire on the Port of Kerch and Cape Mama Russkaya in the aim of feigning a landing; divert enemy attention to itself and thereby support the landing of the amphibious force on the Kerch Peninsula from the side of the Azov Sea. It was essential to create the appearance of the landing of a Soviet amphibious force along a wide front.(2)

During the period from 29 December 1943 through 9 January 1944, the torpedo boats moved from Falshivyy Gelendzhik to Kordon Ilich. Here they were split into two tactical groups. The first (northern) consisting of TKA-24 and TKA-54 were to carry out feint actions in the area of Cape Mama Russkaya—Cape Zyuk employing torpedoes, machine guns and smokescreens. The

second (southern) which included TKA-25 and TKA-34 was to feign an amphibious landing in Kerch Port. The commander of the landing was to be on the patrol boat SKA-0105.

The northern group set to sea at 2230 hours on 9 January. There is received an additional mission: to halt at the turning buoy and using light signals designate the turn during the passage of this point by the vessels carrying the landing force. Since the latter, due to the absence of navigation instruments in poor visibility, were unable to independently reach the landing point, the torpedo boats had to escort them to the coast itself. The escorting of over one-half of the vessels carrying the landing force was carried out by the TKA in 3 hours.(3)

In the course of carrying out this mission, the landing commander moved his command post from SKA-0105 to TKA-24. In holding up the torpedo boats, he thereby actually curtailed the feint actions of the ships off Capes Mama Russkaya and Zyuk. Only by 0515 hours on 10 January did Capt 2d Rank N.K. Kirillov again move to the patrol boat but now only because the TKA was foundering in the heavy waves. The torpedo boats after this continued to remain in the landing area for more than 2 hours. They left at 0730 hours to carry out the main mission which came down to a brief maneuver off Cape Mama Russkaya. Then the northern group returned to Kordon Iliche.(4) It did not achieve the set goal in accord with the landing plan of diverting enemy attention from the area of the main landing, although the crews acted boldly and smoothly.

The southern feint group set to sea at 0015 hours on 10 January. During the move the weather deteriorated sharply. Waves were coming over the boats and the crew was scarcely able to keep up with the bailing. The TKA reached the designated area at 0130 hours and while waiting for the general artillery softening up, maneuvered by varying courses and at slow speed, observing the area of Tuzla Spit and Cape Ak-Burnu.

At 0615 hours, after the opening of artillery fire against Ak-Burnu, Kerch Port and Genuiezskiy Breakwater, they entered Kerch Bay in order to torpedo the breakwater and shell the coastal area of the city. At 0620 hours, TKA-25 fired two torpedoes against the Genuiezskiy Breakwater from a range of 6-8 cable lengths. After this, TKA-34 at a range of 5-6 cable lengths fired torpedoes against the Shirokiy Breakwater.(5)

The enemy, having recovered from the surprise attack, opened up with heavy fire against the boats. The TKA, in returning the fire from machine guns, were able to neutralize several firing positions and searchlights. The

result could have been significantly higher and the effect on the enemy much more tangible if the group of boats had been reinforced in quantitative and qualitative terms.

The raid of the TKA lasted more than 30 minutes. Their personnel acted boldly and decisively, demonstrating high skills under difficult combat, navigation and meteorological conditions. Following the established signal, the boats broke off fire and, having set a smokescreen, retreated.

As a whole, the boat crews under the command of Capt-Lt V.Ya. Volchkov were highly praised by the commander of the Azov Naval Flotilla, Rear Adm G.N. Kholostyakov and the commander of the TKA brigade, Capt 2d Rank V.T. Protsenko.(6)

An analysis of the given tactical example makes it possible to conclude that, regardless of the good training of the ship crews, their endeavor and steadfastness, the feint actions in the landing of the force on Cape Tarkhan did not completely realize the hopes placed on them. For more effectively carrying out the main mission of creating a false impression in the enemy of the employment of significant forces on a broad front, it would have been essential to employ in each ship group three or four torpedo boats and one or two gun boats (with rocket launchers). Moreover, although the command of the landing knew about the difficult weather conditions and the poor seaworthy qualities of the vessels assigned to deliver the subunits to shore, it did not make any early provision to employ special devices for the navigation support of the landing. This required a change in the landing plan directly in a combat situation, a reallocation of forces, a curtailing of the feint actions and a change in the time of the planned measures.

Footnotes

1. TsVMA [Central Naval Archives], folio 2, inv. 1, file 482, sheet 9.
2. Ibid., folio 841, sheet 174.
3. Ibid., folio 782, sheet 2; folio 2092, inv. 1, file 283, sheet 16.
4. Ibid., folio 2, inv. 1, file 841, sheet 167.
5. Ibid., file 782, sheet 3.
6. Ibid., folio 2092, inv. 1, file 283, sheet 16.

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