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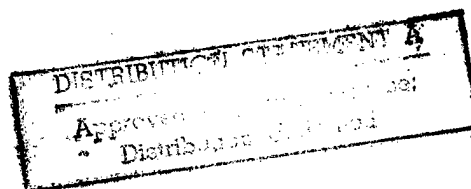
JPRS-UMA-85-022

25 March 1985

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USSR Report

MILITARY AFFAIRS
MILITARY HISTORY JOURNAL
No. 11, November 1984



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25 March 1985

USSR REPORT

MILITARY AFFAIRS

MILITARY HISTORY JOURNAL

No 11, November 1984

Except where indicated otherwise in the table of contents the following is a complete translation of the Russian-language monthly journal VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL.

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MILITARY HISTORY

ARMY GEN IVANOV ON 1944-1945 BUDAPEST OPERATION

Moscow VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL in Russian No 11, Nov 84 (signed to press 25 Oct 84) pp 11-20

[Article by Army Gen S.P. Ivanov, Hero of the Soviet Union, professor: "On the 40th Anniversary of the Budapest Operation"]

[Text] During the second half of September 1944, Soviet Army troops reached the borders of Hungary. Tankmen of the 18th Tank Corps of the Second Ukrainian Front (Marshal of the Soviet Union R.Ya. Malinovskiy, commander; Colonel General of Tank Troops I.Z. Susaykov, member of the military council; and Colonel General M.V. Zakharov, chief of staff) burst onto that nation's territory to the east of Szeged. They were the first.

The victories achieved by Soviet forces in the areas of Uzhgorod, Debrecen and Belgrad and the collapse of the Hitlerite command's plans had created a crisis in the Hungarian government, which was manifested in attempts to withdraw from a war which was obviously lost. In order to prevent Hungary's capitulation, the German fascist leaders arrested Regent Horthy, formed a new government headed by Szalasi, leader of the Hungarian fascists, and continued to take steps to use Hungarian troops to cover their front on the south.

The Hungarian Communist Party, which expressed the true aspirations of the workers, took a position of internationalism. The birth of a partisan movement began in the nation with the approach of Soviet forces. It was headed by communists.

At the same time, fascist forces continued to prepare intensively to repel the Soviet Army's advance. More and more defense lines were set up in Hungary. This was made easier by the existence of numerous water barriers and the mountainous terrain. Reinforced forces of Army Group South (formerly, Southern Ukraine), consisting of the German 8th, 6th, and 2nd Tank Armies, the Hungarian Third Army and a number of battle groups, had concentrated on the nation's borders from the east. Formations of Army Group V were adjacent to them. After that, the Wehrmacht Forces constantly grew. For these reasons, Hungary's liberation was drawn out and was effected by the forces of two fronts. It lasted more than 6 months, from 23 September 1944 to 4 April 1945.

As a result of the Debrecen Offensive Operation, which was concluded on 28 October 1944, the main forces of Army Group South were pushed back to the area of

Nyiregyhaza. The Hungarian 1st Army, which was also a part of that group, withdrew from the Carpathians to the north of there. Right-flank formations of the German 1st Tank Army withdrew to the western border of the Transcarpathian Ukraine, while the left-flank formations continued to defend the Carpathian range.

The Soviet Supreme High Command decided to immediately begin the Budapest Offensive Operation with the forces of the 2nd Ukrainian Front and part of the 3rd Ukrainian Front. This was required by the situation, since Colonel General Friesner, commander of Army Group South, was hastily preparing to transfer troops there from near Miskolc. In view of the fact that the enemy's defense on the southeastern approaches to Budapest was relatively weak, Headquarters, Supreme High Command, ordered Marshal of the Soviet Union R.Ya. Malinovskiy to begin an offensive on 29 October between the Tisza and Dunay rivers toward Budapest with forces of the 46th Army and the 2nd Guards Mechanized Corps, with the objective of breaking up the enemy's defense on the right bank of the Tisza, thereby providing a crossing over that river for the 7th Guards Army. Subsequently, with the approach of the 4th Guards Mechanized Corps, a determined attack was to be made against the enemy's grouping which was defending Budapest (see diagram).

The 3rd Ukrainian Front (Marshal of the Soviet Union F.I. Tolbukhin, commander; Colonel General A.S. Zheltov, member of the military council; Lieutenant General S.P. Ivanov, chief of staff) completed the Belgrad Operation victoriously, liberating Belgrad, together with the People's Liberation Army of Yugoslavia. In accordance with instructions from General Headquarters, the front regrouped the forces in the southern parts of Hungary, in order to force the Dunay and subsequently conduct combat operations in Transdunay Hungary.

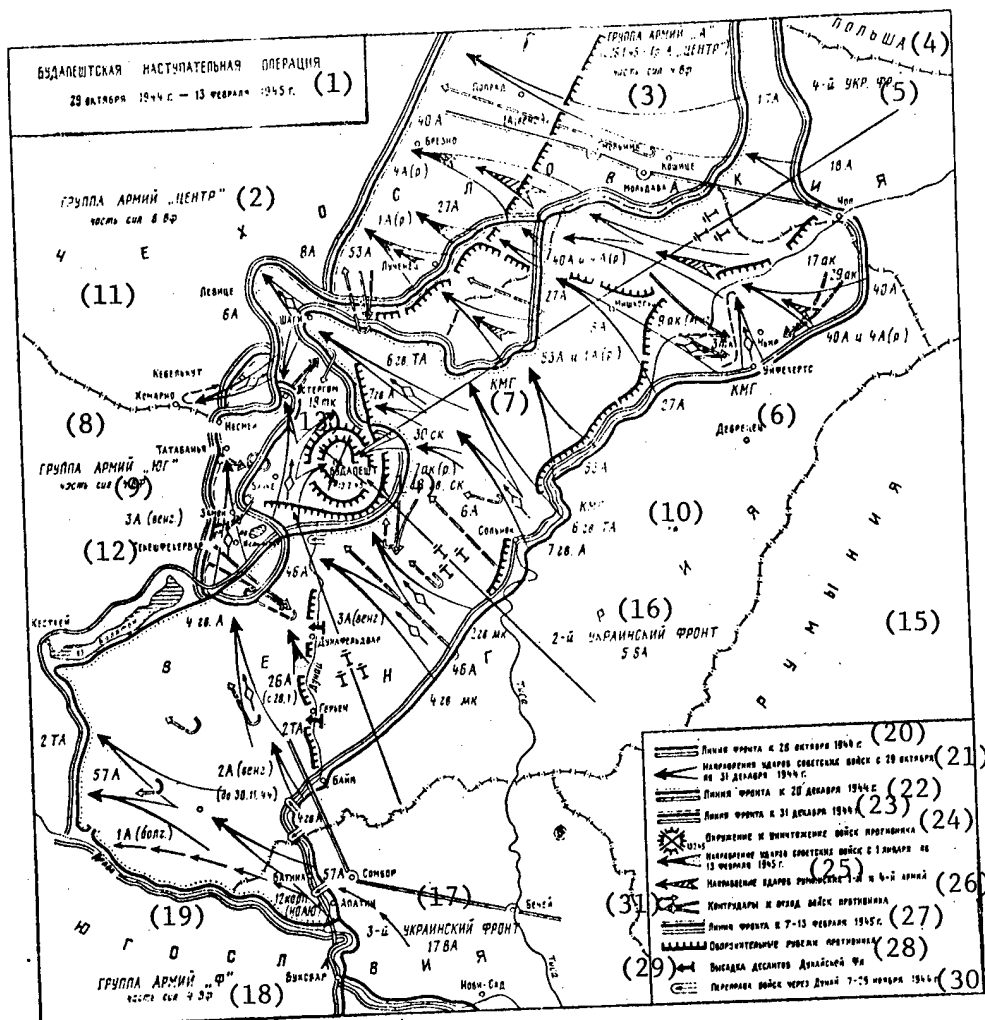
Forces of the 4th Ukrainian Front (Army General I.Ye. Petrov, commander) were to facilitate the achievement of the operation's objective with an offensive into the interior of Czechoslovakia.

The commander of the 2nd Ukrainian Front decided to use forces of the 46th Army (Lieutenant General I.T. Shlemin, commander), reinforced with the 2nd Guards Mechanized Corps, to make the main thrust with the army's right flank on 29 October in the general direction of Budapest and to move the left flank to the Dunay to support the thrust.

The 7th Guards Army (Colonel General M.S. Shumilov, commander) was to switch to an offensive with the left flank on the morning of 30 October from an area southeast of Szolnok, to force the Tisza and reach a line between Toszeg and Nagykoros by the end of the day.

The 5th Air Army (Colonel General of Aviation S.K. Goryunov, commander) was ordered to use its main forces to support the offensive by the 46th Army and part of its forces to support the offensive by the 7th Guards Army.

Forces of the front's right wing--the 40th, 27th and 53rd armies and General I.A. Pliyev's Mechanized Cavalry Group--continued the offensive against Nyiregyhaza and Miskolc for purposes of pinning down the enemy's opposing forces and preventing them from being moved to the area of Budapest.



The Budapest Offensive Operation (October 1944 to February 1945)

- Key:
1. Budapest Offensive Operation
 2. Army Group Center
 3. Army Group A
 4. Poland
 5. 4th Ukrainian Front
 6. Drebecen
 7. Mechanized Cavalry Group
 8. Army Group South
 9. 3rd Hungarian Army
 10. Hungary
 11. Czechoslovakia
 12. Szekesfehervar
 13. Esztergom
 14. Budapest
 15. Romania
 16. 2nd Ukrainian Front
 17. 3rd Ukrainian Front
 18. Army Group V
 19. Yugoslavia
 20. Front line, 28 October 1944
 21. Axes of Soviet thrusts between 29 October and 31 December 1944
 22. Front line on 20 December 1944
 23. Front line on 31 December 1944
 24. Encirclement and destruction of enemy forces
 25. Axis of Soviet thrusts between 1 January and 13 February 1945
 26. Axis of thrusts by Romanian 1st and 4th Armies
 27. Front line, 7-13 February 1945
 28. Enemy defense lines
 29. Danay Flotolla's landing operations
 30. Dunay crossing, 7-29 November 1944
 31. Enemy counterattacks and withdrawal

The 6th Guards Tank Army (Colonel General of Tank Troops A.G. Kravchenko, commander), which was in the front's reserve, put itself in order and prepared to develop the success in the direction of Budapest, in the zone of the 7th Guards Army.

The enemy's defense system in Hungary included several defense lines stretching from north to south. It was especially strong in the area of Budapest. In order to hold Hungary's capital from the east, the fascists had created a fairly strong and deep defense consisting of three horseshoe-shaped defense perimeters, the flanks of which rested against the Dunay to the north and south of the city. They had prepared a strong defense zone, the so-called "Margarita" line, along a line from lakes Balaton and Velence to the bend in the Dunay near the city of Vas and on along the Czechoslovak-Hungarian border.

The general balance of power favored the Soviet side. Forces of the 2nd Ukrainian Front, for example, had a two-fold superiority in infantry over Army Group South, a 4- to 4.5-fold superiority in guns and mortars, a 1.9-fold superiority in tanks and self-propelled artillery pieces, and 2.6-fold in aircraft.¹ One should take into account, however, the fact that the front's troops were exhausted, most of the combat equipment was in need of repair, and it was extremely difficult to bring up ammunition and fuel. Naturally, all of this plus the fall slush held up offensive operations.

Beginning the offensive on the second half of 29 October 1944, the 46th Army penetrated the enemy's defense during the first 3 days, introduced the 2nd Guards Mechanized Corps into the breach and advanced a distance of 20 to 50 kilometers. With the introduction of the 4th Guards Mechanized Corps into the breach, front forces reached a position 15 kilometers from the Hungarian capital on 2 November. This turn of events was not expected by Szalasi and Friesner.² Tippelskirch states the following: "In rapid pursuit, Russian tanks reached the area south-east of Budapest... panic broke out in the city. It was suggested that the diplomatic corps abandon the city within 24 hours."³ It was later learned that this thrust had frustrated a counterattack prepared by the enemy command against Szeged.

Our forces were unable to develop their success, however. Tanks in the mechanized corps encountered powerful antitank barriers, and in the meantime, Friesner had transferred three tank divisions and one motorized division from Miskolc to that sector. Relying upon a previously prepared defense, he succeeded in halting our advance.⁴

Significant changes had to be made immediately in the subsequent operations of the 2nd Ukrainian Front, and General Headquarters did so. The forces which had moved ahead were under a flank attack from the northeast, and on 4 November General Headquarters ordered forces of the 27th, 40th, 53rd and 7th Guards Armies to be hastily moved to an area west of the Tisza in order to conduct an offensive on a broad front and defeat the enemy's Budapest grouping with a strike from the north and northeast by the front's right wing and from the south, by the left wing. The troops were unable to begin carrying out this directive until 11 November.⁵ After a 16-day advance on the axis of the main thrust, front forces reached the approaches to Budapest from the east, and on the right wing, they advanced a distance of up to 100 kilometers on the northwest axis and reached

an area east of Miskolc. They were unable to do more than that. In view of the enemy's strong resistance, the fatigue of the personnel and the fact that communication lines were greatly extended, General Headquarters decided to call a temporary halt in order to regroup, to replenish ammunition and fuel and to prepare for a new offensive.

Troops of the 2nd Ukrainian Front renewed the offensive against Budapest at 10:15 hours on 5 December, following 45 minutes of artillery preparation. For 5 days they attempted unsuccessfully to encircle and destroy the enemy's grouping by enveloping it from the north and southwest.

On the night of 4 December the 46th Army began successfully forcing the Dunay southeast of Budapest with the help of the Dunay Military Flotilla. The crossing of this river, second largest in Europe after the Volga, was carried out so secretly and unexpectedly that the enemy did not detect the crossing operation until the army's forward subdivisions had landed on the western bank. It was unable to develop the offensive from the bridgehead, however, due to stiff enemy resistance from a previously prepared defense line southwest of Budapest. The attempt to take the city with forces of the 2nd Ukrainian Front was therefore unsuccessful. The front forces did liberate the area between the Tisza and the Dunay, however, and cut off the route of withdrawal to the north for the enemy's Budapest grouping.

The Third Ukrainian Front made an assault crossing over the Dunay with forces of the 57th Army and captured bridgeheads on the western banks near Batina and Apatin. By 5 December army forces had reached an area south of Lake Balaton. By that time the 4th Guards Army, committed to the battle from the General Headquarters's reserve on the western bank of the Dunay back during the second half of November, had joined forces with the 2nd Ukrainian Front's 46th Army near Lake Velence. It had become realistically possible for Soviet forces to attack the enemy's Budapest grouping from the rear.

On 12 December the supreme commander signed a directive assigning the following mission to the two fronts. The 2nd Ukrainian Front was to make a thrust in the general direction of Kébeľkut), reach the Dunay between (Nesmey) and Esztergom, and prevent the Budapest grouping from withdrawing to the northwest. The front was to simultaneously attack Budapest from the east with part of its forces. The 3rd Ukrainian Front was assigned the mission of making a thrust from the area of Lake Velence toward Bicske, reach the bank of the Dunay in the area of Esztergom and Neszmely and cut off the Budapest grouping's withdrawal routes to the west. It was to advance from Bicske toward Budapest with part of its forces and capture the latter, interacting with the 2nd Ukrainian Front. The 3rd Ukrainian Front was also assigned the mission of establishing an outer front 50-60 kilometers west and southwest of Budapest.

Naturally, the plan was defined more specifically by the front commanders. They foresaw the inevitability of powerful counterattacks on the outer perimeter of envelopment. Marshal R.Ya. Malinovskiy decided not to commit the 6th Guards Tank Army on the axis of the main thrust, for example. He sent it toward Levice, where the terrain was more convenient for tank operations and the tank formations could independently penetrate the enemy's not very powerful defense and then envelop the large grouping of forces rapidly and deeply, preventing it from carrying

out a counterattack on the outer perimeter from the north. The main thrust was made by the 7th Guards Army, taking the shortest route through the region of forests and mountains, where it was difficult for the tanks to operate.

Also extremely original was Marshal F.I. Tolbukhin's decision to penetrate the enemy's defense on the "Margarita" line on two narrow sectors east and west of Lake Velence, which were then merged into one. For this purpose, the 46th Army was sent to the northeast and east to conduct an offensive jointly with mobile formations along the Dunay toward Budapest and form an inner perimeter of envelopment. The 4th Guards Army's main forces deployed toward the north-west and west for purposes of forming an outer perimeter of envelopment. Two Guards Mechanized Corps and one Cavalry Corps operated as mobile army groups, and the 18th Tank Corps was committed to the engagement to the east or west of Lake Velence, depending upon the situation, but in either case it was to move to the area of Esztergom. All of this made it possible to create a decisive superiority in personnel and equipment on the breakthrough sectors. The assault grouping of the 3rd Ukrainian Front, for example, had a 3.3-fold superiority over the opposing forces in personnel, 4.8-fold in artillery, and 3.5-fold in tanks and self-propelled artillery pieces. The only thing not achieved was the necessary artillery density. It did not exceed 99 guns per kilometer of front in the 46th Army's zone or 160 guns in the sector of the 4th Guards Army.⁶ That is, it was lower than in most of the preceding offensive operations. Because of this, infantry and tank support for the attack was provided by concentrating fire in sequential moves to a depth of up to 2 kilometers. It was planned to conduct the offensive simultaneously into the defensive depth and toward the flanks of the enemy. It was preceded by a preliminary maneuver to move the troops to the most advantageous sectors for the attacks.

The fronts went over to an offensive on the morning of 20 December. Troops of the 2nd Ukrainian Front penetrated the enemy's defense, advanced 15-32 kilometers by evening, captured the Levice road junction, went around the Barzsony Mountains on the north and south, and reached the valley of the Ipel River. The enemy was deprived of yet another intermediate defensive line. The Hitlerite command made an attempt to stop a further offensive by forces under the command of R.Ya. Malinovskiy and carried out two counterthrusts toward Sahy from the south and north with the forces of three tank divisions with up to 200 tanks and assault guns.⁷ Fierce fighting, primarily tank battles, developed. They continued for more than a week and ended in victory for our troops. On 26 December formations of the 6th Guards Tank Army and the 7th Guards Army penetrated to the Dunay north of Esztergom, met up with Marshal F.I. Tolbukhin's troops and captured Esztergom that same day.

On 20-22 December forces of the 3rd Ukrainian Front engaged in a determined battle in the enemy's first and second defensive zones. By the end of the first day, when formations of the 46th and 4th Guards Armies had advanced only 5-7 kilometers, the enemy was already beginning to switch to counterattacks, which became even more frequent on the second day, especially from the area of Szekesfehervar. In order to complete the breakthrough of the tactical defensive zone, Marshal F.I. Tolbukhin ordered the 2nd Guards Corps and the 7th Mechanized Corps to be committed to the battle on 24 December, and the 18th Tank Corps the following day. The breakthrough to the entire defensive depth was completed on the 4th day of the operation. By that time front forces had advanced up to 27 kilometers and

captured Szekesfehervar. The fighting on the approaches to it was exceptionally fierce. Marshal Tolbukhin deliberately held up the forces for a time when they reached the forward defense area, however. Taking this as a sign of weakness, Friesner undertook a counterattack. Antitank army artillery groups readied in advance, however, and tanks buried in the ground greeted the enemy with devastating fire. Convinced of the hopelessness of continuing the battle, the German fascist command was forced to hastily abandon Szekesfehervar under the threat of encirclement. This combat incident is a model of foresight by the commander and his staff.

Following the fall of Szekesfehervar, forces of the front's right wing stepped up the pace of their advance and joined up with the 2nd Ukrainian Front near Esztergom by the end of 26 December, encircling the enemy's Budapest grouping. Reaching the Dunay north of Budapest, forces of the 3rd Ukrainian Front pinned down considerable enemy forces cut off from the city, in a bend in the river. That grouping was completely destroyed between 27 and 31 December.

The 46th Army created an inner front of envelopment of the Budapest grouping. The 4th Guards Army and the 5th Guards Cavalry Corps reached a line southwest of Szekesfehervar by 26 December and formed an outer front of envelopment a considerable distance (50-60 kilometers) from the inner front.

The grouping encircled in Budapest numbered 188,000 soldiers and officers.⁸ The development of the encirclement operation involved diverse combat operations. Forces of the 2nd and 3rd Ukrainian Fronts broke through powerfully fortified defense lines (the "Margarita" line was penetrated by the 3rd Ukrainian Front, for example), crossed such deep rivers as the Tisza and Dunay from the march, rapidly developed the offensive into the depth and took out the enemy's defenses with flank attacks. Battles developed on the extremely rough terrain with numerous mountain ranges, rivers, lakes and canals. Offensive operations were complicated by the need to fight for cities which had actually been turned into fortresses. Frequent and rapid switching from offensive operations to a steadfast defense required a great effort. The front's forces did not always have adequate densities of personnel and equipment, and were forced to operate in broad zones.

The final phase of the Budapest Operation--the destruction of encircled enemy forces--was also distinguished by numerous, instructive features in the conduct of the combat operations. Budapest was powerfully fortified, and the fascists had prepared many streets, entire blocks and buildings for a prolonged defense. In order to avoid casualties, the command elements of both fronts issued an ultimatum on 29 December calling for the encircled garrison's capitulation. Our truce envoys were killed, however. The German fascist command thus took on complete responsibility for the casualties and for the damage to the Hungarian capital.

The battle for Budapest was extremely fierce and determined. The uniqueness and the difficulty of the mission of eliminating the encircled forces was not due just to the fact that a powerful grouping was blocked inside a large city. It also resulted from the fact that the enemy undertook three desperate attempts to lift the blockade. The offensive by forces of the 2nd Ukrainian Front's left wing (the 7th Guards Army and the 6th Guards Tank Army) on the left bank of the Dunay toward Komarno had a large role in the frustration of the first counter-

thrust. The German fascist command wasted considerable forces designated for lifting the blockade of the encircled grouping, warding off the offensive. The enemy carried out a second counterattack for the same purpose against Zamoly in the zone of the 3rd Ukrainian Front, where the 4th Guards Army's 20th Guards Rifle Corps was defending. It was carried out by three tank divisions, a cavalry brigade and reinforcement units. Fierce fighting broke out. Marshal F.I. Tolbukhin sent General F.G. Katkov's 7th Guards Mechanized Corps to the breakthrough sector and created a powerful artillery strike force there. The skillfully executed maneuver by the mechanized units and artillery frustrated the enemy's plans. The plan for the third and most powerful counterattack was to penetrate the defense between Lakes Velence and Balaton, reach the Dunay and then develop an offensive along its right bank to the north and join up with the encircled grouping. A meeting strike from the city by the forces of up to two tank divisions was simultaneously prepared.

In the course of the counterattacks the enemy managed to advance 25 kilometers from the south toward Hungary's capital. After reporting to General Headquarters and receiving reinforcements for the front, Marshal F.I. Tolbukhin decided to route the enemy which had broken through with a simultaneous attack from the north and south against Sarosd with forces of the 4th Guards Army and the 26th Army (General N.A. Gagen, commander). After 6 days of fierce fighting, they cleared the right bank of the Dunay of the Hitlerites, joined forces and developed the offensive to the west. The threat of encirclement now hung over the counterattacking enemy grouping, which had begun withdrawing.

Not just the 3rd Ukrainian Front's 17th Air Army, but also part of the 2nd Ukrainian Front's 5th Air Army, were involved in the combat operations at instructions from General Headquarters. They interacted smoothly with the ground forces. Operating jointly, the two air armies made 1,034 sorties and shot down 36 enemy aircraft on 22 January alone.⁹ A maneuver skillfully executed by the 3rd Ukrainian Front with the forces of two combined-arms armies, especially their artillery and tanks, our air supremacy, the selflessness and good combat training of the troops, and their close interaction frustrated the third counterattack as well. Overall, the fighting on the outer perimeter of envelopment ended in defeat for the enemy.

There was equally fierce fighting to eliminate the fascist grouping encircled in Budapest. It was conducted successively, in the eastern part of the city of Pest from 27 December 1944 to 18 January 1945, and in the western part of Buda from 20 January to 13 February 1945. Pest was liberated by the 40th Rifle Corps and the 7th Romanian Army Corps of the 7th Guards Army, and the 18th Guards Rifle Corps. Those forces were combined on 11 January into the Budapest Group of Forces under Major General I.M. Afonin, commander of the 18th Guards Corps. The enemy resistance became increasingly fierce as our forces advanced toward the edge of the city. Deep trenches, wire obstacles and antitank ditches covered by powerful fire from all types of weapons barred the way to the advancing forces. Soldiers of the 2nd Ukrainian Front were forced to storm almost every building, to cross barriers and barricades on the streets. It was incredibly difficult to get one's bearings in the labyrinth of streets and alleys, and the radio sets were operating with extensive interference. This made control extremely difficult.

On 18 January, after 23 days of extremely intense fighting, enemy troops in Pest began to surrender. During the fighting for the eastern part of the capital, almost 36,000 enemy soldiers and officers were killed and as many as 63,000 were taken as prisoners, and around 300 tanks and assault guns, 1,044 guns and mortars, and many other types of weapons and combat equipment were destroyed or captured.¹⁰

Before the fighting in Pest ended, forces of the Budapest Group began destroying the enemy in Buda. The offensive there began on 20 January.¹¹ Building up the effort as units were transferred from Pest, the group battled its way forward. The enemy resisted stubbornly. In 11 days of fighting the group's formations captured only 114 of 608 blocks. Continuing to press the enemy, its troops captured another 109 blocks and took more than 26,000 men as prisoners by 11 February.¹² The situation of the Hitlerites and Szalasi forces in the city was deteriorating by the day. Hunger had set in among their troops, and they were now eager to break out of the city. On the night of 11 February the enemy command made a last desperate attempt to break through the perimeter of envelopment in Buda. Concentrating considerable forces on a narrow sector, the enemy broke through it and removed more than 12,000 of the 26,000 soldiers and officers in Buda through the narrow corridor which was formed. They were soon destroyed by forces of the 3rd Ukrainian Front. The isolated enemy groups remaining in Buda were also destroyed or captured. SS General K. Pfeffer-Wildenbruch, commander of the Budapest grouping of forces, and his staff were also captured.

Budapest had been totally cleared of the enemy by 10:00 hours on 13 February 1945. The battle for the Hungarian capital had ended. The far-sighted leadership of General Headquarters, Supreme High Command, had played a large role. Proceeding from missions on a strategic scale, it had directed the operations of the fronts specifically and efficiently, reinforced them with reserves in good time, maneuvered them and provided smoothly organized material support for the troops. Marshal of the Soviet Union S.K. Timoshenko, who had coordinated the combat operations of the two fronts at the assignment of General Headquarters, had boldly assumed responsibility for resolving current, extremely frequently, urgent problems of an operational scale, and had always operated in close contact with the Supreme High Command, the General Staff, the front commanders and their staffs.

Romanian formations and the Hungarian Volunteer Buda Regiment took part in the fighting to liberate Budapest, along with the Soviet forces.

The most extensively used operations in the battles on Budapest streets were strikes by our troops on converging axis for purposes of breaking up the enemy's defensive front in the city, encircling and destroying isolated enemy groupings in the separate areas, blocks and large buildings converted into strongpoints. Their attacks were carried out by assault groups, and the elimination of remaining enemy subunits in our forces' rear area was accomplished by "purge" groups. The attack by almost every assault group was preceded by 15-20 minutes of artillery softening up of the object of attack. In the subsequent battle, the artillery conducted fire to suppress individual targets. The fierceness of the street fighting made it necessary to mark off narrow zones of advance. A 600-700 meter zone of advance was designated for a rifle division, for example.

The rifle regiments formed their battle orders into a single echelon, with a rifle company or battalion in reserve.

The artillery which took part in the storming of Budapest, except for that operating as part of the assault groups, was made into corps, division and regiment artillery groups. Large mortar groups were formed in addition to this. Most of the artillery was fired by direct laying. As a rule, artillery control was decentralized, the exception being the Guards mortar and individual artillery battalions firing from concealment. If the artillery designated for direct laying was not deployed on narrow streets, it was temporarily placed under the command of the corps artillery and used for firing from concealment. The gun artillery (from two battalions up to a brigade) was ordinarily a part of the corps artillery group operating on the axis of the corps' main thrust.

Tanks were assigned directly to the assault groups and used for supporting the infantry. It was impossible to use them in mass due to the tight maneuvering conditions.

Aircraft of the 5th and 17th Air Armies (Generals S.K. Goryunov and V.A. Sudets, commanders) played an important role in the battle for Budapest. Ground-attack aircraft provided direct support for the ground troops in the street fighting, attacking pinpointed targets. The ground-attack aircraft and sniper aircraft performed their combat operations in small groups of four to eight aircraft. They destroyed exposed targets with guns and small bombs, and sheltered targets with FAB-250 and FAB-100 bombs with delayed-action fuses. Bombers carried out strikes in the enemy's defensive depth. They operated in groups of up to 50 aircraft in good visibility, as single units in poor visibility. The fighters engaged in aerial reconnaissance and in active combat with enemy aircraft, patrolled continuously over the city, reliably covered their own ground troops and supported the operations of bombers and ground-attack aircraft.

Budapest is on the Dunay, Europe's second largest river. The ground forces therefore interacted in the closest possible manner with the Dunay Military Flotilla (commanded until 12 December by Rear Admiral S.G. Gorshkov and then by Rear Admiral G.N. Kholostyakov), and with extremely good results. During preparations and in the course of the Budapest Operation, the flotilla transported a half-million soldiers and an enormous quantity of military cargo across the Dunay on combat ships and auxiliary vessels. The Dunay seamen helped the Soviet and Yugoslav troops enlarge the bridgehead on the right bank of the Dunay, north of the Drava River and in the area between the Sava and Dunay, by successfully setting landing groups ashore at Iloka and Opatovace, above Vukovar and at (Ger'yene). Providing artillery support for the landing groups and ground forces in the offensive and in the defense, artillery men of the Dunay military flotilla killed more than 1800 enemy soldiers and officers, destroyed more than 40 artillery and mortar batteries and 48 firing points, put 25 tanks out of action and inflicted other damage upon the enemy.¹³

The party-political work performed by political organs, party and Komsomol organizations during both preparations for the combat operations and the fighting itself was of enormous importance in the battle to liberate Hungary. The communists and Komsomol members indoctrinated the fightingmen in a spirit of infinite love for the homeland, built up their confidence that the enemy would be routed and set examples of heroism and combat skill. They served as an example for all the personnel. Along with motivating the troops to combat the

enemy, the front military councils and political directorates devoted a great deal of attention to explaining the liberation mission of the Soviet forces. Special stress was layed on the fact that the Red Army had come to Hungary not as a conqueror, but as the liberator of the Hungarian people from German fascist oppression.

The military and political results of the Soviet Army's battle for Hungary were of historic significance. Hitler's plans to hold out in Hungary were completely destroyed. The large Wehrmacht grouping suffered a devastating defeat and lost the possibility of halting Soviet forces in East Austria, in the so-called "Alpine Fortress."

The offensive by Soviet forces in Hungary created conditions conducive to the development of a popular democratic revolution in the nation. At the initiative of the communists, a vigorous struggle was launched to eliminate fascism and restore the devastated economy, a struggle for democratic reforms. Hungary's Interim Government declared war against German on 28 December 1944. A truce was concluded in Moscow on 20 January 1945, which layed the foundation for the establishment of an independent, democratic Hungary. Frustration of the plan by Anglo-American circles to retain the bourgeois system in Hungary and hitch it to the vehicle of international imperialism was an important political result of the Budapest Operation.

FOOTNOTES

1. "Istoriya vtoroy mirovoy voyny 1939-1945" [History of World War II, 1939-1945], Moscow, Voenizdat, 1978, Vol 9, p 195.
2. H. Friesner, "Proigrannyye srazheniya" [Lost Battles], Moscow, Voenizdat, 1962, p 166.
3. K. Tippelskirch, "Istoriya vtory mirovoy voyny" [History of World War II], Moscow, Izd-vo inostrannoy literatury, 1956, p 474.
4. "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, 1958, Vol 3, p 601.
5. This was due to the fact that on 5 and 6 November forces of the 46th Army, together with mechanized corps, were repelling counterattacks by enemy tanks and infantry which had broken out of the area near Pilis into an area near Orkeny ("Operatsii Sovetskikh Vooruzhennykh Sil v Velikoy Otechestvennoy voyne 1941-1945," Vol 3, p 602).
6. "Istoriya..." op. cit., Vol 9, p 199-200.
7. TsAMO [Central Archives of the Ministry of Defense] of the USSR, fund 240, inventory 2779, file 1781, sheet 51.
8. "Sovetskaya Voyennaya Entsiklopediya" [Soviet Military Encyclopedia], Moscow, Voenizdat, 1976, Vol 1, p 614.

9. "Istoriya..." op. cit., 1979, Vol 10, p 172.
10. "Istoriya..." op. cit., Vol 10, p 174.
11. By that time the Budapest Group of Forces had been reinforced with the 75th and 37th Rifle Corps (the 7th Romanian Corps had been transferred to another sector of the front). General Afonin was wounded, and command of the group was assumed by Lieutenant General I.M. Managarov, commander of the 53rd Army, who had experience in fighting for large cities ("Istoriya..." op. cit., Vol 10, p 175).
12. "Istoriya..." op. cit, Vol 10, p 175.
13. I.I. Loktionov, "Dunayskaya flotiliya v Velikoy Otechestvennoy voyne (1941-1945 gg.) "[The Dunay Flotilla in the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945], Moscow, Voenizdat, 1962, p 212.

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MILITARY HISTORY

1943: ZAPOROZH'YE, 6TH ARMY FORCING OF DNEPR

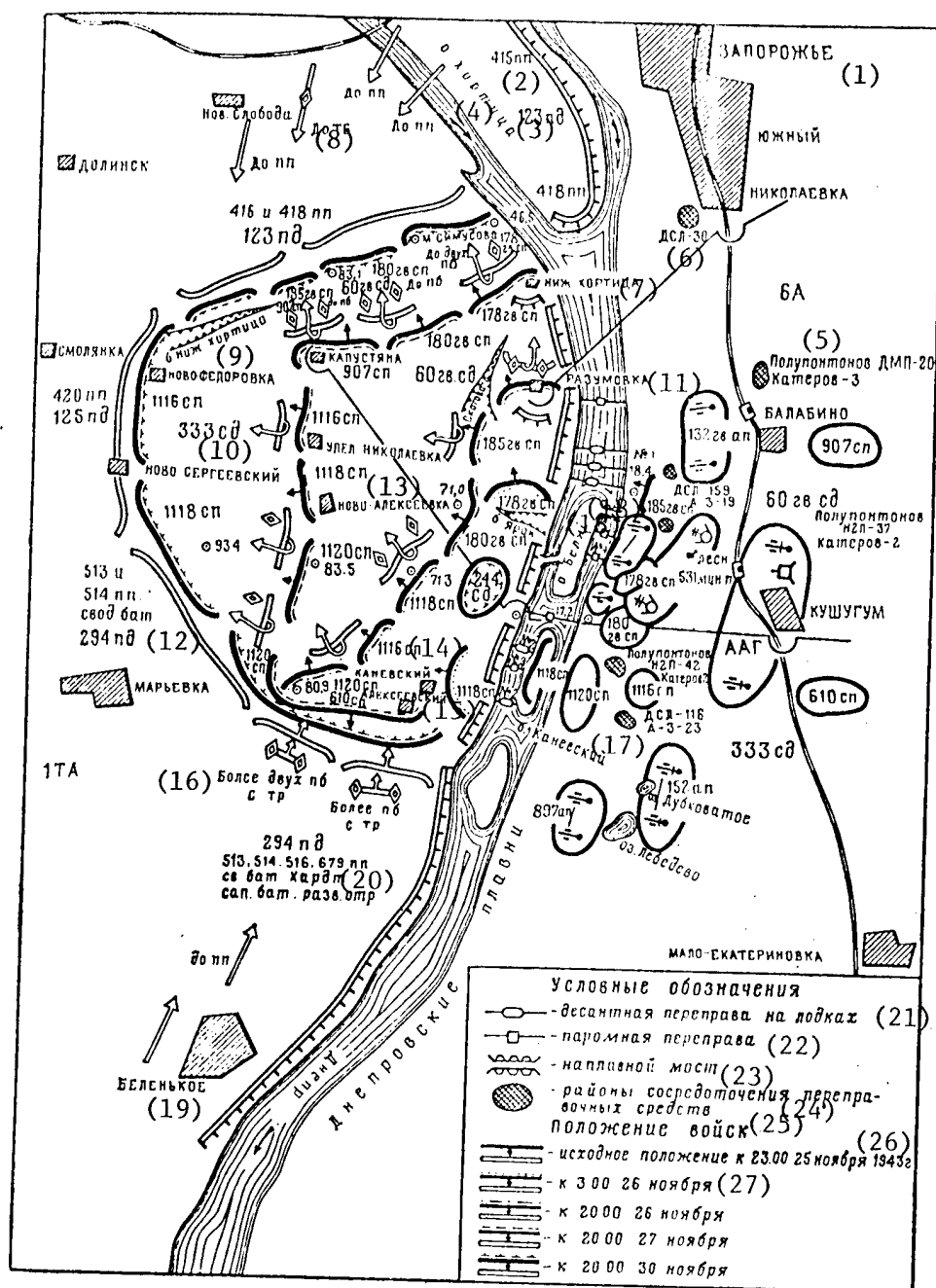
Moscow VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL in Russian No 11, Nov 84 (signed to press 25 Oct 84) pp 21-28

[Article by Lt Col A. Sokolov, candidate of historical sciences, and Lt Col (Res) I. Rublev, chairman of the Military History Society at the Central Museum of the Armed Forces of the USSR: "The Capturing of the Razumovka Bridgehead"]

[Text] In October and November of 1943 forces of the 3rd Ukrainian Front continued fighting to the north and south of Zaporozhye to expand a bridgehead captured in the area of Dnepropetrovsk. Their objective was to pin down the enemy forces and create a threat to the German fascist grouping defending at the Nikopol bridgehead. The forcing of the Dnepr south of Zaporozhye by the 6th Army was an integral part of the combat operations (see diagram). The experience in the operation is instructive from the standpoint of the art of forcing a wide water barrier after brief preparations.

The 12th Army headquarters and a number of its formations which had been defending north of Zaporozhye had departed, and the 6th Army headquarters was therefore moved to that sector from the front reserve. It included the following forces there: the 66th Rifle Corps (the 203rd and 244th Rifle Divisions), the 60th Guards Rifle Division and the 333rd Rifle Division, units and formations of branches of troops and special forces which had occupied a defense on the left bank of the Dnepr in a zone 57 kilometers wide from Ulyanovka (30 kilometers north of Razumovka) to Chagarnyka (8 kilometers southwest of Belenkoye). The army was assigned the mission of forcing the Dnepr, capturing a bridgehead on its right bank, moving to a line from Kapustyana through Novo-Fedorovka to Novo-Sergeyevskiy (more than 10 kilometers in depth) and then developing the offensive toward Tomakovka (20 kilometers northwest of Novo-Fedorovka), interacting with the 8th Guards Army advancing from the north and destroying the German fascist grouping west of Zaporozhe. The Dnepr was from 600 to 1500 meters wide in the area of the assault crossing.

Over a lengthy period of time the Hitlerites had created an adequately strong defense with good engineering development in the area of Zaporozhye. The hills and communities located on the right bank of the river permitted the enemy to outfit a number of powerful strongpoints and centers of resistance. The forward edge passed directly along the high right bank of the Dnepr. Combat security, reinforced by the Hitlerites at night with patrols and listening posts,



The Capture of the Razumovka Bridgehead

Key:

1. Zaporozhye
2. Infantry Regiment
3. Infantry Division
4. Khortitsa Island
5. DMP-20 ponton units, boats
6. DSL-30 collapsible boats
7. Lower Khortitsa
8. Up to a tank battalion
9. Novo-Fedorovka
10. Rifle division
11. Razumovka
12. Composite battery
13. Novo-Alekseyevak
14. Kanevakiy
15. Alekseyevskiy
16. More than 2 infantry bats., tank comp.
17. Kanevskiy
18. Belyay
19. Belenkoye
20. (Hardt) composite bat., combat-eng. bat., reconnaissance detachment
21. Assault crossing on boats
22. Ferry crossing
23. Floating bridge
24. Crossing equip. concentration areas
25. Location of troops
26. Starting position, 23:00, 25 Nov 43
27. November

was set up on the sandy shoals leading up to the riverbank. Wire obstacles with one or two rows of coils, and with four in some places, were set up right at the waterline in front of the forward edge. They were covered by anti-personnel mines and equipped with signaling devices. The defense on the right bank of the Dnepr was supplemented with a system of fortifications and defense installations created by the enemy on the island of Khortitsa.

The grouping of enemy forces facing the 6th Army included three infantry divisions of the 1st Tank Army. All of the formations were in the first echelon. The 123rd and 125th Infantry Divisions were defending north of Zaporozhye and on the island of Khortitsa, where the Hitlerites had concentrated their main effort. As many as 50 tanks, which formed the enemy's reserve, were concentrated in the rear of those formations, in the area of Kantserovka (12 kilometers north of Novo-Fedorovka). The 294th Infantry Division and several separate battalions (around 5,000 men, 45 mortars and 40 guns) were defending south of Zaporozhye, in the Razumovka, Belenkoye sector.¹

Forces of the 6th Army numbered around 25,000 men with over 470 guns and mortars and 37 antiaircraft guns by the beginning of the assault crossing.²

The operation mission was received on 22 November. In view of the limited amount of time allocated for preparations (around 3 days), the army's command element focused its main attention on the organization of the crossing operation and the regrouping of personnel and equipment. Selection of the crossing area and the axis of concentration of the main effort was the main element in the decision made by the 6th Army commander. The 66th Rifle Corps was holding a small bridgehead north of Zaporozhye, near Kichkas, but the exposed left bank was clearly visible to the enemy, which had succeeded in setting up a powerful defense on the right bank of the Dnepr. There was a fairly large number of islands (Khortitsa, Belyay, Kanevskiy and others) in the river south of Zaporozhye. This simplified the assault crossing. The left bank in that area was covered with sparse woods and bushes, which created a good situation for concealing the troops and moving them up to the river undetected. After a careful assessment was made of the situation, the decision was made to force the Dnepr south of Zaporozhye on the Razumovka, Belenkoye sector, which was more than 15 kilometers wide.

A great deal of attention was devoted to reconnoitering the crossing sector. The main effort was focused on locating convenient sites for setting up the crossing points and approach routes to them. The entire river, from Razumovka to Belenkoye, was divided up into eight sectors. An equal number of reconnaissance groups were set up. Eight points were rapidly located as a result for setting up the landing and ferry crossings and three for erecting floating bridges. The absence of approach roads to the points designated for the crossings made it necessary to build cross-country roads and prepare descents to the water line.³

General I.T. Shlemin, the army commander, conducted reconnaissance, in the course of which he refined his decision and assigned the missions to the forces. The forcing of the Dnepr was to be carried out near the islands of Belyay and Kanevskiy by troops of the 60th Guards Rifle Division and the 333rd Rifle

Division. Forces of the 66th Rifle Corps were to simultaneously simulate an assault crossing of the river north of Zaporozhye. It was planned to have all of the rifle divisions in the first eshelon. Two rifle regiments from the 66th Rifle Corps (one each from the 203rd and 244th Rifle Divisions) were assigned to the army reserve for purposes of building up the effort.

Advancing in a zone 5 kilometers wide, the 60th Guards Rifle Division (the 178th, 180th and 185th Guards Rifle Regiments) were to force the Dnepr near the island of Belyay on a sector 2.5 kilometers wide and capture a bridgehead extending to a line between Razumovka and Kapustyana. The left-flank 333rd Rifle Division (the 1116th, 1118th and 1120th Rifle Regiments) was assigned the mission of advancing in a zone around 10 kilometers wide, forcing the Dnepr near the island of Kanevskiy on a sector up to 2 kilometers wide, and capturing a bridgehead extending to the Kapustyana, Novo-Fedorovka, Novo-Sergeyevskiy line. The general depth of the mission assigned the divisions was as great as 10 kilometers.⁴

The battle orders of the formations in the assault grouping were in two echelons, with one rifle regiment in a division's first echelon and two in the second. Regiments in the first echelon were to force the Dnepr, penetrate the enemy's defense and capture bridgeheads 2-3 kilometers deep. Regiments in the second echelon were ordered to develop the success achieved after the crossing and capture a line assuring the completion of the combat mission. The rifle divisions were set up this way because the available organic crossing equipment permitted only one rifle regiment from each division to be taken across on a single trip. In view of the fact that the army was not adequately reinforced with artillery, the army's command element boldly camouflaged it on the crossing sectors of formations in the assault grouping. In addition, most of the artillery and mortars were attached to the 60th Guards Rifle Division and the 333rd Rifle Division. The 60th Guards Rifle Division, for example, was reinforced with the 531st Mortar Regiment and the 536th Antitank Artillery Regiment (44 guns and mortars), and the 333rd Rifle Division was reinforced with the 352nd Howitzer Regiment and the 1248th Antitank Artillery Regiment (38 guns). In addition, they were supported by a Guards mortar regiment of the multiple rocket launcher artillery. The 60th Guards Division had 144 guns and mortars; the 333rd Rifle Division had 131.⁵

An artillery group consisting of the 103rd Gun Artillery Regiment and the 2nd Battalion of the 113th Heavy Artillery Brigade (a total of 25 guns) was formed in the army for combatting enemy artillery and supporting divisions in the first echelon. The artillery density in the army's crossing zone (not counting the army reserve) was only 20 guns and mortars per kilometer of front. It was less than 58 and 65 respectively in the crossing sectors of the 60th Guards Rifle Division and the 333rd Rifle Division. This was unquestionably inadequate for reliably suppressing the enemy's defense, and the army's command element counted on compensating for the deficiency by crossing the river unexpectedly at night without artillery preparations.

At the beginning of the operation the army had more than 310 boats of various kinds, and N2P ponton pool and a DMP wooden bridge pool.

The vast majority of the engineer forces and crossing equipment was concentrated on the forcing sectors of formations in the assault grouping. Each division was

reinforced with two engineer or combat engineer battalions. The 60th Guards Rifle Division had more than 170 boats of various kinds; the 333rd had around 140. In addition, it was planned for forces of the 26th and 28th Ponton Bridging Battalions to set up three 16-ton ferries on the crossing sector of each division.

Questions of interaction and support for the river crossing were worked out in detail during the reconnaissance. The operations of the forward regiments, the artillery and the main forces of the divisions, as well as interaction with formations and units simulating a crossing north of Zaporozhye, were coordinated in the process. The procedure for the operations of the engineer troops supporting the crossing was worked out, and control and communication were organized. Unified interaction signals were defined for the forthcoming night operations.

Because of the limited amount of time available for preparing for the crossing, only planning schedules were worked out for crossing the Dnepr in the armies and divisions.⁶ The army planning schedule indicated for each division, the crossing sectors, the composition of the formations and the units to be taken across, the crossing schedules, the number of trips, the crossing equipment and engineer troops allocated for each formation, the army crossings, the deadlines for preparing them, and the composition of the forces to be taken across.

It was planned to take the divisions across the Dnepr in ten trips. The forward regiments and regimental artillery were to be transported on the first trip; the remaining rifle regiments and part of the reinforcement artillery were to be moved on the second and third; and the reinforcement artillery for the regiments, divisions and special subunits was to be taken across on the fourth through tenth trips. It was planned to complete the crossing within a period of 15-20 hours.

The planning schedules for the divisions defined in detail the composition of crossing equipment for each trip and the crossing points for the rifle regiments, and indicated the sequence in which the subunits were to cross and the crossing equipment allocated for that purpose. It was planned to have two or three ferry crossing and landing points in each division's crossing sectors.⁷ The army crossings (16-ton ferries) in the crossing sectors for the 60th Guards Rifle Division and the 333rd Rifle Division were to begin operating 4 hours after the operation began.

The engineer units and crossing equipment began to be concentrated in the departure areas for the crossing, and the approach routes began to be built on 23 November. The crossing equipment was unloaded 4-5 kilometers from the bank and then hauled in by animal-drawn transport. The absence of approach roads and suitable areas for deploying the motor vehicles carrying the pontons made it necessary to unload them in the column and then drag them by hand 200-300 meters to the water line. Each division put a rifle battalion at the disposal of the chief of the army's engineer troops for the period 24 to 26 November for this purpose, which made it possible to concentrate and prepare the crossing equipment at the designated crossing points in good time.⁸

The condition of each boat and ferry was checked by launching them into the water in the departure areas. The personnel practiced rowing noiselessly, boarding and leaving the crossing equipment for several days in those areas.

Guides were trained in each subunit for crossing the river at night. All of the crossing equipment was concentrated 8 hours before the beginning of the crossing in areas previously prepared 150-200 meters from the water line.⁹

In order to keep the operations undetected, the personnel and equipment were concentrated in the area designated for the crossing at night, observing extremely strict camouflage measures. After making the night march, the equipment and personnel were carefully camouflaged by morning. Along with the regrouping, the concentration of personnel and equipment was simulated in the area north of Zaporozhye. Reconnaissance, including aerial reconnaissance, was conducted there for purposes of deception.¹⁰ It was planned to create three smoke screens in the zones of the 203rd and 244th Rifle Divisions on the day of the crossing over the Dnepr.

Purposeful party-political work was conducted. Party organizations were formed in all of the companies and equivalent subunits, especially in the forward regiments. Meetings were held in all of the party and Komsomol organizations on the eve of the crossing. Every communist was given a specific party assignment. The army's political section issued the pamphlets "Soldier's Guide for Crossing the River" and "The Section and Platoon Commander's Guide for Crossing a Water Barrier in Night Combat." The army and division newspapers carried articles describing the most informative incidents in previous battles. They summarized the experience acquired by the forces in assault crossings and provided the commanders and soldiers with practical suggestions for crossing the Dnepr.

The army troops had completed the departure to the starting area by the end of the day on 25 November. The forward regiment of the 60th Guards Rifle Division was located 200-300 meters from the river, that of the 333rd was on the island of Kanevskiy. The remaining units and subunits of those divisions were located 300-500 meters east of the river. The artillery took up firing positions 1-2 kilometers from the river in a state of readiness to open fire. Thanks to the camouflage and deception steps which were taken, the command element of the enemy's 1st Tank Army was unable to establish either the time for the beginning of the crossing or the area.

Rocket launchers fired a volley at the enemy defending on the southern part of Khortitsa Island at a prearranged signal at 24:00 hours on 25 November. The teams which came up at that time carried landing boats to the dump line, onto which rifle subunits of the 178th Guards Rifle Regiment and the 1118th Rifle Regiment were rapidly loaded. The subunits crossed silently, without opening fire. The crossing of the river by the forward regiments near the islands of Belyay and Kanevskiy took the enemy by complete surprise. The enemy command understood that Soviet forces had begun crossing only after most of the rifle battalions in the first echelon had been landed on the right bank and driven the Hitlerites from fortifications on the bank with a determined attack. It was too late, however. The forward regiments began enlarging the captured bridgehead under the cover of artillery fire from the left bank and guns which had been taken across. By 03:00 hours on 26 November the 178th Guards Rifle Regiment was fighting to the north of Yarok Ravine, and the 1118th Regiment was driving the enemy off Kanevskiy.

The crossing equipment was efficiently used. When they had returned to the left bank, the rifle regiments in the divisions' second echelon immediately began the

crossing. By 04:00 the combat engineers had assembled four ferries out of the pontoons used for the assault crossings, on which the regimental and division artillery began to cross the river. Two regiments from each division were attacking at captured bridgeheads by 10:00

A feinting crossing of the river on a broad front was carried out in order to divert the enemy's attention away from the bridgehead captured near Razumovka. Between 07:00 and 07:30 the artillery struck at the enemy's defense north of Zaporozhye in the zones of the 203rd and 244th Rifle Divisions, and specially designated subunits began simulating a crossing of the Dnepr in several areas.¹¹

In addition to this, smoke screens were layed along five lines in the army's zone between 07:45 and 11:30, three of which were north of Zaporozhye. The special line of smoke screens was created to blind the enemy defending the southern part of Khortitsa Island.

The feinting actions and the laying of smoke screens achieved their purpose. The attention of the Hitlerites was diverted from the real crossing sector.

Overcoming enemy resistance, units of the 60th Guards Rifle Division and the 333rd Rifle Division continued to enlarge the captured bridgeheads. All three rifle regiments of the 60th Guards Rifle Division were operating on the right bank of the Dnepr by 14:00. They repelled eight enemy counterattacks during the day. The enemy also offered determined resistance to subunits of the 333rd Rifle Division.

Enemy aircraft became more active during the second half of the day, carrying out bombing and ground attacks against the battle orders of the formations, especially in the areas of Kanevskiy and Alekseyevskiy. Demonstrating mass heroism, the Soviet fightingmen continued to advance. By 15:00 they had liberated Razumovka, Kanevskiy and Alekseyevskiy, and by the end of the day the divisions had penetrated the first position of the enemy's main defense zone and linked the captured bridgeheads into one bridgehead with a depth of 2 kilometers and a front extending around 8 kilometers. As many as 700 Hitlerites, a mortar battery, two guns and two tanks were destroyed or put out of action in the process.¹²

After a bridgehead was captured on the right bank of the Dnepr, the army commander decided to reinforce the position held with units of the 60th Guards Rifle Division and the 333rd Rifle Division on the night of 26 November, to complete the crossing to the bridgehead by regiments from the army reserve and the division artillery, and to continue the offensive in the direction of Kapustyana and Novo-Fedorovka on the morning of 27 November by committing the army reserve to the battle. For this purpose, immediate steps were taken to move the maximum quantity of personnel and equipment to the bridgehead. By the end of 26 November the engineer troops had placed another two 16-ton ferries into operation. There were now six ferries operating in each division's zone. All of the crossings operated at full capacity on the night of 27 November, transporting reserves and artillery. The crossing by division artillery and the 907th and 610th Rifle Regiments from the army reserve was completed during the night.

The German fascist command took every possible step to prevent troops of the 6th Army from advancing further and to drive them back from the right bank of the river. The command element of the enemy's 1st Tank Army removed two infantry regiments from Khortitsa Island for this purpose during the night of 26 November and began transferring them to the area of Nizhnyaya Khortitsa and Kapustyana. An infantry regiment and a reconnaissance detachment of the 125th Infantry Division were simultaneously regrouping to that area. The enemy was unable to carry out its plans, however.

The army renewed the offensive at the captured bridgehead with forces of the 60th Guards Rifle Division and the 333rd Rifle Division at 05:00 on 27 November, following brief artillery preparation. The 907th and 610th Rifle Regiments were committed to the battle from the army reserve to build up the thrust. The army's formations advanced, repelling numerous attacks by enemy infantry and tanks. Especially fierce fighting flared up for Novo-Alekseyevka. It continued 6 hours. The enemy launched desperate counterattacks, but also abandoned that community under the onslaught of our troops.

The German fascist command continued to take steps to eliminate the bridgehead captured by our troops, however. For that purpose, the enemy attempted to cut off and destroy the crossing formations with an attack in the direction of Alekseyevskiy and Kanevskiy along the right bank of the Dnepr.

Aircraft of the 17th Air Army provided the army units with a great deal of assistance in repelling the enemy counterattacks. They carried out bombing and ground attacks in groups of six-ten aircraft against the advancing enemy reserves. During the day of 27 November Soviet pilots destroyed two tanks, 90 motor vehicles, six guns and more than 300 people, and shot down ten aircraft.¹³

The engineer troops worked hard and selflessly. The ferries continued to transport the troops, mainly artillery. Three combat engineer battalions and two road construction battalions were transported to the right bank for the engineer organization of the bridgehead and control posts, and for building cross-country roads.

Summing up the first days of the Dnepr crossing and the fighting to capture and enlarge the bridgehead, the army's military council expressed its gratitude in a special message to all the personnel who had participated in the operation. It also spoke of the need to continue tirelessly and persistently to build up personnel and equipment on the captured bridgehead and to expand it boldly and resolutely. This appeal was received in all the units and subunits with great enthusiasm and helped to evoke a great aggressive outpouring on the part of the fightingmen, who prepared to give their all to accomplish the missions facing them. The influx into the VKP(b) [All-Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik)] and Komsomol increased during the period of assault crossing. A total of 182 requests for acceptance into the party and 57 requests for acceptance into the Komsomol were submitted in the 60th Guards Rifle Division alone.¹⁴ During the days which followed, from 28 to 30 November, the army's formations continued fighting to enlarge the bridgehead. The army's right-flank divisions also began active combat operations.

In 5 days of intense fighting, the army's formations had completed the assault crossing of the Dnepr south of Zaporozhye, penetrated the Hitlerites' defense

on the right bank and captured a bridgehead, which went down in history as the "Razumovskiy". The bridgehead which was captured (more than 10 kilometers along the front and in depth) made it possible to deploy the necessary personnel and equipment there to develop the subsequent offensive. The enemy was faced with the danger that Soviet forces would reach the rear area of its grouping defending at the Nikopol bridgehead.

A 30-ton ferry was launched into the water 1 kilometer south of Razumovka during the second half of 29 November, and heavy artillery began to be transported across. By the end of 30 November, formations of the 6th Army were completing the crossing by the last subunits to the bridgehead. A ferry crossing was set up near Belyay Island for taking across the bulk of the freight (ammunition, food and technical military equipment).

Army forces subsequently withstood numerous attacks by the enemy, which was taking every possible step to eliminate the Razumovka bridgehead. The Soviet troops steadfastly defended their positions, however. Beating back all of the enemy attacks, they not only held the bridgehead, but actually enlarged it. The captured bridgehead opened up the possibility of carrying out a strike to the north against the flank of the enemy's Zaporozhye grouping and to the south against the rear area of the enemy formations defending at the Nikopol bridgehead.

The experience in the forcing of the Dnepr by troops of the 6th Army showed that success in the assault crossing of a wide water barrier is assured, first of all, by creating superiority over the enemy in personnel and equipment on the main axis, by thorough organization, skillful selection of the time and the sectors for the crossing, the achievement of supplies, the skillful distribution and efficient use of the crossing equipment, and by a timely and rapid build-up of the effort at the bridgehead.

FOOTNOTES

1. TsAMO SSSR [Central Archives of the USSR Ministry of Defense], fund 334, inventory 5252, file 227, sheet 10.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., inventory 5265, file 52, sheet 16.
4. Ibid., fund 334, inventory 5265, file 52, sheets 83-84; inventory 5252, file 227, sheet 18.
5. Ibid., fund 334, inventory 5265, file 52, sheets 30-33, 86; inventory 5297, file 35, sheet 58; inventory 5252, file 227, sheets 10-11, 63, 68.
6. Ibid., inventory 5252, file 227, sheet 68; inventory 5265, file 52, sheets 30-33.
7. Ibid., fund 334, inventory 5265, file 52, sheets 6-7.
8. Ibid.

9. Ibid., inventory 5252, file 227, sheet 16.
10. Ibid., sheets 65-66; file 306, sheets 40-41.
11. Ibid., fund 334, inventory 5252, file 306, sheet 39.
12. Ibid., fund 334, inventory 5252, file 227, sheet 27.
13. Ibid., fund 334, inventory 5252, file 227, sheet 32.
14. Ibid., sheet 51.

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MILITARY HISTORY

MSU PETROV: ON CH MAR ARTY TOLUBKO'S 70TH BIRTHDAY

Moscow VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL in Russian No 11, Nov 84 (signed to press 25 Oct 84) pp 49-52

[Article by Mar SU V.I. Petrov, Hero of the Soviet Union: "Chief Marshal of Artillery V.F. Tolubko--on His 70th Birthday"]

[Text] The life of Chief Marshal of Artillery Valdimir Fedorovich Tolubko, Commander in Chief of Strategic Rocket Forces and Deputy USSR Minister of Defense, has been linked with the Soviet Armed Forces for more than a half-century now.

V.F. Tolubko was born on 25 November 1914 in the city of Krasnograd, Kharkov Oblast. After completing a 7-year school, he enrolled in teaching courses and upon completing the training, was sent to teach at the Krestyshchenskaya Rural School. From May to November, 1932, he served as an instructor in the Krasnogradskiy Rayon Komsomol Committee.

Valdimir Fedorovich began his military career in November 1932 as a student at the school for junior command staff in a separate combat engineer squadron of a cavalry division. After completing the school, he was appointed assistant commander of a platoon in the same squadron and then became a tank commander. He liked the active army life. This is what determined his future.

In 1937 V.F. Tolubko graduated from the Ulyanovsk Armored Military School and was assigned to the Kiev Military District. While commanding a tank platoon and a reconnaissance platoon, he skillfully and persistently passed on to his subordinates the knowledge he had acquired at the school and developed in them a love for the combat equipment and a sense of constant readiness to come to the socialist homeland's defense with weapon in hand.

The aggressive aspirations of German fascism and Japanese militarism during the second half of the 30's forced the Communist Party and the Soviet government to tirelessly strengthen the Soviet Nation's defense capability. The army and navy needed command cadres with a good military and political education. The best commanders were sent to higher military educational institutions for training. V.F. Tolubko became a student at the Military Academy of Mechanization and Motorization of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army in 1938. An exciting event occurred in Valdimir Fedorovich's life in 1939--he was accepted into the party.

The Great Patriotic War found Senior Lieutenant V.F. Tolubko in the Leningrad Military District, where he was assistant chief of the operations department at the headquarters of the 21st Tank Division. That formation took an active part in the fighting against the German fascist invaders from the very first days of Leningrad's defense. V.F. Tolubko was appointed chief of the division operations section in August 1941 and chief of staff in October.

V.F. Tolubko was sent to the Kalinin Front to serve as chief of staff of the 104th Tank Brigade in February 1944. He was already in command of that formation in July. Tolubko was seriously wounded in the fierce fighting against the Hitlerites. Following a lengthy period of treatment in a hospital, he was appointed to a teaching position at the Military Academy of Armored and Mechanized Troops in March of 1943. The work of a teacher at a VUZ for the training of officer cadres for the operational army is one of honor and responsibility, but the front line fighter's spirit did not want to accept the assignment. He submitted requests to be sent to the front, one after the other. Finally, in February 1944, his request was satisfied. Vladimir Fedorovich was sent to the 3rd Ukrainian Front as chief of the operations section of headquarters, 4th Guards Mechanized Corps. He took an active part in the planning of the corps' combat operations in the Iasi-Kishinev, Belgrad and Budapest operations. During the fighting, V.F. Tolubko demonstrated creative initiative, good organizing abilities, boldness and determination.

Following the Great Patriotic War, between 1945 and 1948, Vladimir Fedorovich served as commander of a mechanized regiment and a brigade, as chief of the operations section and deputy chief of staff of a field force, and chief of staff of a mechanized division. He skillfully passed on his extensive combat know-how to his subordinates and patiently taught them to fight.

V.F. Tolubko graduated from the General Staff Military Academy imeni K.Ye. Voroshilov in 1950. In March 1950 he was appointed commander of a mechanized division and in May 1953, chief of staff and first deputy commander of a field force. In 1956 and 57 he served as assistant commander in chief of the Group of Soviet Forces in Germany--chief of the combat training directorate. He commanded a field force from 1957 to 1960.

Tolubko was appointed first deputy commander in chief of the Strategic Rocket Forces in March 1960. His tireless activity helped him to resolve many scientific and technical problems pertaining to the development of missile equipment. Vladimir Fedorovich demonstrated great erudition in matters of Soviet military organizational development, a broad political and technical military perspective, and a thorough understanding of the need to create a missile shield for the homeland as rapidly as possible. Missile complexes were created, the organizational structure of the rocket forces was improved, and the level of combat and political training of personnel in the units and formations was raised with his direct participation.

Vladimir Fedorovich completed the Higher Academic Courses at the General Staff Military Academy imeni K.Ye. Voroshilov in 1968. From April 1968 to 1972 he commanded, first the Siberian Military District and then the Far East Military District.

V.F. Tolubko has served as commander in chief of the Strategic Rocket Forces--deputy USSR Minister of Defense, for more than 12 years. He devotes all of his energy, knowledge and experience to the cause of improving the combat and operational training of the troops and staffs, to assuring that the Rocket Forces are in a constant state of combat readiness, and to the development of missile equipment and armaments.

One of V.F. Tolubko's remarkable qualities is his constant striving to further improve troop control. Organizing and directing the work performed by the generals and officers to accomplish the tasks set for the Rocket Forces by the USSR Minister of Defense, he constantly demands that they master the Leninist style of management and take a thoughtful approach to new things in the development of military affairs and methods of employing the weapons and combat equipment in modern warfare.

Vladimir Fedorovich devotes a great deal of attention to the indoctrination of the personnel and to the organization and the performance of party-political work. He is very familiar with the situation in the forces, constantly studies advanced experience in the work of commanders, political organs and staffs, and looks into all the details of the military service and the internal life of the troops. His distinguishing features are party principle and demandingness, industry, persistence, a search for new forms and methods in the accomplishment of the assigned missions, strict demandingness and sensitivity to the needs of subordinates and constant concern for their life.

V.F. Tolubko maintains good contact with people. He consults the officers for making a certain decision. He frequently addresses them on matters of the party's foreign domestic policy and problems of Soviet military organizational development.

V.F. Tolubko successfully combines his service work with extensive public and political activities. He has been elected a delegate to the 21st, 22nd, 23rd, 24th, 25th and 26th party congresses. Vladimir Fedorovich was a candidate member of the CPSU Central Committee from 1971 and has been a member of the CPSU Central Committee since 1976. He has served as a deputy in the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, 8th, 9th, 10th and 11th convocations.

The Soviet government has greatly appreciated V.F. Tolubko's service to the homeland. He has been awarded the title Hero of Socialist Labor. He has been awarded four Orders of Lenin, four Orders of the Red Banner, the Order of Bogdan Khmel'nitskiy, 2nd degree, the Order of the Patriotic War, 1st degree, two Orders of the Red Star, the order "For Service to the Homeland in the Armed Forces of the USSR," 3rd degree, and many medals, and he also has foreign orders and medals.

V.F. Tolubko is the author of the books: "Raketnyye voyska" [The Rocket Forces], "Zhit'--Rodine sluzhit'" [To Live is to Serve the Homeland] and "Nedelin. Pervyy glavkom strategicheskikh" [Nedelin: The First Commander in Chief of the Strategic (Rocket Forces)]. He and N.I. Baryshev co-authored an outline based on historical memoirs about the combat operations of Soviet tankmen in the Belgrad Operation, entitled "Ot Vidina do Belgrada" [From Vidino to Belgrad], and the book "Na yuzhnom flange" [On the Southern Flank], about the combat path travelled by the 4th Guards Mechanized Corps during the period 1942-1945.

On Vladimir Fedorovich Tolubko's 70th birthday, his combat friends wish him good health and great success in his fruitful work for the good of our party and the Soviet people, and for the strengthening of our homeland's defense capability.

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MILITARY HISTORY

BUDAPEST OPERATION: BIRYUKOV'S DETACHED UNITS

Moscow VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL in Russian No 11, Nov 84 (signed to press 25 Oct 84) pp 61-68

[Article by Col (Ret) N. Gladkov¹: "The Forward Detachments are Conducting the Battles:]

[Text] In the first stage of the Budapest Operation, forces of the 3rd Ukrainian Front forced the Dunay from the march and captured a bridgehead on the right bank.

The 20th Guards Rifle Corps of the 4th Guards Army, which was commanded by Major General N.I. Biryukov, had moved two divisions--the 80th Guards Rifle Division and our 7th Guards Airborne Division to the Dunay by that time and been assigned a new mission. It was to cross over bridges erected by the 57th Army in the area of Batin and develop the offensive in a northwesterly direction toward Pecsvarad, Tamasi and Enying.² Units of our army's 21st Guards Rifle Corps was to advance on the right, forces of the 57th Army on the left.

According to information achieved by means of all types of reconnaissance, units and formations of the so-called General Keszy's group of forces--the 20th and 23rd Infantry Divisions, the 31st SS Infantry Division, the 44th Training Regiment and the 16th Border Detachment of the Hungarian fascist army--occupied defense lines in the 4th Guards Army's zone of advance on the right bank of the Dunay. The enemy grouping included a total of 24,000-26,000 soldiers and officers and had more than 50 105mm guns, 45-50 tanks, 15-20 assault guns, 50 armored personnel carriers and three batteries of six-barrel mortars.³

Neither the terrain nor weather conditions favored the offensive. The wooded Mecsek Mountains began on the right bank of the Dunay, northwest of the cities of Pecsvarad and Pecs. They are 580-680 meters tall. The southern slopes of the mountain range are steep, the northern side is gently sloping. This permitted the enemy to set up powerful defense lines and greatly complicated offensive operations by our forces. Constant rains had turned Hungary's entire Transdunay valley, with its numerous canals, streams, lakes and swamps, into an unbroken sea of mud by that time. This made it even more difficult to conduct offensive operations.⁴

The division would have to cross the Kapos, Koppan and Sio (Yelusca) canals from the march. Each of them was 25-35 meters wide and 2-4 meters deep, and

had banks 1.5-2 meters tall. This made success contingent upon the timely capture of crossings on the canals. Conventional tactical methods would not do. The enemy could blow up the existing bridges and destroy available material suitable for setting up crossings at any time. Each time, the enemy had to be forestalled by employing great mobility and initiative.

To make it possible to conduct the offensive at a rapid pace in the existing situation, Marshal of the Soviet Union F.I. Tolubkhin, commander of the 3rd Ukrainian Front, ordered each division in the first echelon of the 4th Guards Army and the 57th Army to form mobile forward detachments with adequate fire power. They were to capture highly important positions with rapid and determined operations from the march, and to hold them until the main forces approached, as well as to prevent the enemy from withdrawing in an organized manner and taking up defense positions prepared in advance.⁵

I am going to tell about the operations of two forward detachments created in our division.⁶

By decision of the commander, one forward detachment was created in the beginning. It included the 8th Separate Guards Self-Propelled Artillery Battalion (12 SAU-76) and the 3rd Battalion of the 21st Guards Airborne Regiment. The personnel were put onto 12 ZIS-5 motor vehicles. In addition, the forward detachment included the 3rd Battalion of the 10th Guards Artillery Regiment (eight 76mm battalion guns and four 122mm howitzers), a platoon of large-caliber antiaircraft machine guns (nine DShK on three ZIS-5 motor vehicles) and a combat engineer platoon of the division's combat engineer battalion (35 combat engineers on one ZIS-5 vehicle).⁷ The division commander appointed Colonel Z.T. Derziyan, his deputy, as detachment commander.

Since the combat operations of the forward detachments were to be highly mobile, it was extremely important to have continuous and flexible control of them. We therefore set up an operations group in the division headquarters, which was headed by Captain F.Ye. Rutkovskiy, assistant chief of the operations section of division headquarters. The group had the support of an RSB-5 radio set. One of the most important missions which I assigned to Rutkovskiy was that of obtaining timely information from the forward detachments and immediately passing it on to division headquarters.

Colonel V.I. Babich, chief of the division political section, and a group of officers visited the forward detachment prior to the beginning of combat operations. They talked with the personnel and explained the combat mission to the soldiers.

Colonel A.F. Koval', commander of division artillery, and I visited batteries of the 10th Guards Artillery Regiment and the 8th Separate Guards Self-Propelled Artillery Battalion, where we checked the preparedness of the Guards Artillerymen and SU gunners for combat operations.

Forward detachments of the 41st, 69th and 80th divisions and of our division went over to an offensive at 08:45 on 30 November, following 15 minutes of intense artillery fire by the 21st and 20th Corps.⁸ After overcoming stiff resistance by SS units, our forward detachment penetrated the enemy's defense from

the march on the southern slopes of the Mecsek mountain range and captured the city of Pecsvarad, an important strong point, by the end of the day.⁹

The 8th Separate Guards Self-Propelled Artillery Battalion, commanded by Major M.D. Iremashvili, operated especially determinedly and boldly in the battle. The SU gunners overran the enemy with a swift attack, inflicting great damage. One tank in good repair, two armored personnel carriers with 20mm automatic guns and a large quantity of ammunition for them were captured.¹⁰

The withdrawing enemy was pursued over the mountain roads in the difficult conditions of fall slush. In addition, the enemy had mined the roads, blown up the bridges and erected barriers during their withdrawal. The Guards airborne troops, which had extensive combat experience, operated skilfully, however. The fascists fell back and did not manage to dig in at any position.

Pursuing the retreating enemy, the forward detachment crossed the Mecsek massif and approached the Kapos Canal near the village of Kurd. A reconnaissance group sent out in advance reported that the bridge over the canal had been damaged and that the enemy had taken up a defense on the northern bank. Upon approaching the southern bank, subunits of the forward detachment joined battle. The combat engineers and the airborne troops assigned to assist them simultaneously began repairing the damaged crossing under cover of fire from the artillery battalion and self-propelled artillery pieces, and completed the job in 2 hours.¹¹

Companies of the 3rd Battalion were in the starting position for the attack at 17:00. Twenty minutes later, they rushed into the attack, covered by fire from the attached artillery. The attack was lead by Guards Junior Lieutenant V.N. Savel'yev, bold and valorous officer, communist and battalion party organizer. Guardsmen of the head, 7th Company crossed to the northern bank of the canal in a swift wave in a matter of a few minutes. The 8th and 9th Companies followed the 7th across. Taking up a defense on the opposite bank, they opened powerful small arms and machine-gun fire against the enemy. Covered by the fire, the forward detachment's main forces crossed to the opposite bank. The battalion's beloved Vasiliy Savel'yev died the death of the brave in that battle.

After crossing to the northern bank of the canal, the forward detachment did not let itself be drawn into prolonged battles with the enemy, which had taken up a position in the community of Kurd, but rushed toward the city of Tamasi 20 kilometers north of the Kapos Canal. By the morning of 2 December, it had reached the southern edge of the city, where it encountered organized fire from the Hitlerites. Subunits of the forward detachment deployed from the march and prepared to attack. Following 10 minutes of intense fire by the 3rd Battalion of the 10th Guards Artillery Regiment, the Guards Self-Propelled Artillery Battalion burst into the city at high speed and joined battle in the streets.

Two platoons of airborne troops from the 9th Company were placed on self-propelled units. The city was completely cleared of the fascists by 14:00 as a result of the daring and determined actions of the Guards SU gunners and airborne troops. Hitlerite soldiers taken prisoner proved to be from the 23rd Tank Division. They indicated that their detachment, as part of an infantry battalion with a tank company, had been assigned the mission of occupying a defense on the northern bank of the Koppan Canal and securely holding the city of Tamasi until the division's main forces arrived.

Our division's advance guard, the 21st Guards Airborne Regiment, which followed the forward detachment, entered into determined battle for the community of Kurd at 18:00. The regiment's subunits took the settlement after 3 hours of fierce fighting.

Combat operations developed differently in the zone of advance of our neighbor to the left, the 80th Guards Rifle Division. The advance of that division's forward detachment was held up in the city of Dumbovar, and it was unable to develop an offensive toward Siofok. To some degree, this complicated our situation as well.

After studying the situation which had developed, the corps command and staff concluded that the enemy was bringing in fresh operational reserves. The enemy had to be forestalled and prevented from occupying an advantageous defense line on the Sio Illozska Canal, which began near the city of Siofok on Lake Balaton and continued toward Meze-Komarom, Ozora and Cece. Since units of the 80th Division had been drawn into prolonged fighting near Dombovar, our division was assigned a new mission. Colonel Derziyan's forward detachment, together with the 21st Guards Airborne Regiment, was to deploy to the northwest, pursue the enemy toward Felso-Ireg, Szagvar and Siofok, and then force the Sio Canal from the march, capture the city of Siofok and hold it until the 80th Guards Rifle Division approached.

The main forces of the 7th Guards Airborne Division were to continue the offensive to the north with the objective of forcing the Sio Canal from the march, capturing a crossing and the city of Meze-Komarom.

The offensive was scheduled to begin at 09:00 on 3 December 1944.¹² We therefore now had to develop the offensive on a 20-kilometer front on two axes simultaneously and capture two bridgeheads on the northern bank of the Sio Canal near the cities of Siofok and Meze-Komarom. Colonel D.A. Drychkin, division commander, decided to continue the offensive in a northerly direction toward Meze-Komarom and Enying with the main forces, with the 29th Guards Airborne Regiment and the 2nd Battalion of the 10th Guards Artillery Regiment in the advance guard.

Lieutenant Colonel I.I. Golod, commander of the 29th Guards Airborne Regiment, received an order to create a forward detachment for forcing the Sio Canal and capturing the city of Meze-Komarom. It included the 1st Airborne Battalion, artillery batteries with 45mm and 76mm guns and a section of the regiment's combat engineer platoon. The forward detachment was provided with two-horse carts for all the personnel. Captain I.A. Rapoport, battalion commander, was appointed commander. A special vehicle-mounted radio set, proceeding at the head of the 29th Guards Airborne Regiment, was placed at my disposal for maintaining constant contact with Captain Rapoport's forward detachment. Thanks to this, our staff and the division commander promptly received all the necessary information.

I did not lose the reins of control with our main forward detachment either, however, but constantly received reports by radio on its operations.

Before dark on 3 December, the first forward detachment (which is what we called Colonel Derziyan's composit unit) left Tamasi. It was in the following battle

order. The 8th Separate Guards Self-Propelled Artillery Battalion was at the head. Four or five sub-machine gunners traveled on each of 12 SAU-76 units. They were followed by a combat engineer platoon, the 3rd Battalion of the 21st Airborne Regiment, and a platoon of large-caliber antiaircraft machine guns. Everyone was on a vehicle. The 3rd Battalion of the 10th Guards Artillery Regiment brought up the rear of the column.¹⁴ The main forces of the 21st Guards Airborne Regiment advanced at a march 3-5 kilometers behind the forward detachment.

A fall drizzle was falling. The sky was covered with unbroken clouds. It was totally impossible for aircraft to operate. Pursuing the withdrawing enemy, the Guards airborne troops battled their way to capture the communities of (Fel'she-Ireg), Szom and Csakvar, and reached the southwestern edge of Balatonkiliti, the last village before the city of Siofok, by 15:00.

A reconnaissance group sent out ahead reported that it could see the city of Siofok, in front of which the enemy's defense position passed. Colonel Derziyan decided to reconnoiter the area with the subunit commanders from Hill 129.1, located west of Balatonkiliti. What the officers saw was hilly terrain, which dropped off considerably from the hill toward the city of Siofok and Lake Balaton. They had a good view of the entire city. The southern and southwestern parts of the city, which were divided up by the canal, were covered with dacha-type homes surrounded by orchards and vineyards. A trench passed in front of the city, in which soldiers scurried back and forth. The Sio Canal presented a serious obstacle. The crossing over the canal was defended by fairly large forces.

Assessing the situation, Colonel Derziyan decided not to wait for the main forces of the 21st Guards Airborne Regiment to arrive, but to penetrate the enemy fortifications with a swift attack from the march and capture the bridge over the canal.

At 15:40 subunits of the forward detachment secretly occupied the starting position for the attack on the southern slopes of Hill 129.1. The artillery battalion commanded by Captain V.G. Chetyrkin began intense fire. The batteries of SU gunners and the airborne troops mounted on the self-propelled units simultaneously swept toward the southwestern edge of the city at great speed. The enemy was surprised and stunned by the attack.

The enemy was thrown into such confusion that it did not open artillery and mortar fire until our self-propelled pieces were 100-150 meters from the enemy trench. The Guards airborne troops leaped from the self-propelled units and rushed toward it in swift bounds. The 1st and 3rd batteries of the 8th Separate Guards Self-Propelled Artillery Battalion, together with the airborne troops, joined battle at the defense position, while the 2nd battery, commanded by Senior Lieutenant Kizyev, succeeded in rapidly passing through the enemy positions and rushed toward the bridge. They were within 100-150 meters of it, when a powerful blast was heard. The fascists had managed to blow up the bridge.

The fierce fighting lasted until the onset of darkness. The southwestern part of the city of Siofok had been completely cleared of the enemy. The crossing had been destroyed, however. The forward detachment was forced to take up a defense on the southern bank of the Sio Canal and wait for the main forces of the 21st Guards Airborne Regiment to arrive.

Colonel Derziyan reported that Guardsmen of the 1st and 2nd Batteries of the 8th Separate Guards Self-Propelled Artillery Battalion, commanded by Senior Lieutenants Selivanov and Kizeyev, distinguished themselves with bravery and resourcefulness in that high-speed battle. The self-propelled units of Lieutenants Tayenkov, Chernobrovkin, Rafal'skiy, Pryakhin and Zemskikh destroyed more than 80 soldiers, 8 machine guns, 1 T-3 tank and 2 assault guns with fire and with the tracks.

The main forces of the 21st Guards Airborne Regiment, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel M.I. Ryabchenko, approached the southern bank of the canal on the night of 3 December. A reconnaissance group sent out from the regiment found the most convenient spot for crossing the canal by 04:00. South of the city were two barges abandoned by the enemy quartermasters. By placing a few boards on them, they could be used for crossing to the other bank. This is what it was decided to do.

When Lieutenant Colonel Ryabchenko reported his ideas about what to do next, the division commander approved them.

It was not yet dawn, when the Guards airborne troops of the 2nd Battalion, commanded by Captain Ivanov, using the barges as a ponton bridge, crossed, undetected, to the opposite bank and rushed to attack with yells of "Ura!". The artillery battalion's 12 guns and the 12 self-propelled artillery pieces opened intense fire. The 2nd Battalion's successful actions made it possible for the regiment's other subunits to cross on the improvised bridge. The city of Siofok had been totally liberated by noon of 4 December. Subunits of the forward detachment, together with the 21st Guards Airborne Regiment, occupied a defense along the southeastern edge of the city, straddling the highway leading to the city of Szekesfehervar. They had to repel a powerful counterattack by units of the enemy's 1st Tank Division, which was attempting to regain the city of Siofok. All of the enemy's attempts to restore the situation were frustrated, however, with the aid of newly arrived units of the 80th Guards Rifle Division, which replaced our airborne troops at the positions they had held.

During the fighting for the city of Siofok, subunits of the forward detachment, together with the 21st Guards Airborne Regiment, destroyed around 600 soldiers and officers, imprisoned 550 men and captured 26 guns, 1 combat banner and other booty.¹⁵ A total of 237 soldiers and officers in our units were awarded orders and medals for their successful combat operations.¹⁶

The 29th Guards Airborne Regiment and its forward detachment were engaged in equally heavy combat operations at that time in the direction of Meze-Komarom. The forward detachment began performing its combat mission before dawn. Under cover of darkness, it bypassed an intermediate defense line north of Tamasi and advanced, undetected, in company columns. Security measures were taken, and a reconnaissance group was continuously operating ahead of the detachment. The detachment was to avoid encounters with large rearguard enemy groups.

The combat operations were conducted in the difficult conditions of fall slush. It drizzled constantly throughout the day. The dirt roads softened up, making it very difficult to travel over them. This kind of weather also had its advantages, however. It helped to conceal the operations.

At 18:00 on 3 December the forward detachment concentrated in a grove around 2 kilometers south of the community of Szabadhidveg. Captain Rapaport immediately sent a reconnaissance group ahead to ascertain what sort of forces the enemy had in the community and whether the crossings over the Sio Canal near the city of Meze-Komarom were intact.

Two hours later, Guards Sergeant Ul'yanov, commander of the reconnaissance group, reported that there were no enemy forces in Szabadhidveg, that the railroad bridge across the canal was intact, but that up to a company of enemy soldiers were defending near the bridge.

Without losing a minute, the airborne troops headed for Szabadhidveg. The detachment commander and the company and battery commanders reconnoitered the area northeast of the edge of Szabadhidveg, after which the detachment commander decided to attack the enemy unexpectedly at night, to capture the bridge, develop the offensive and take the city of Meze-Komarom.

The detachment formed into an arrowhead battle formation. Senior Lieutenant I.T. Yudkin's 3rd Guards Airborne Company, reinforced with two 45mm guns and a detachment of combat engineers, operated at the head. It was assigned the mission of capturing the bridge with a swift rush, preventing the enemy from blowing it up. After permitting the other detachment subunits to cross to the opposite bank, it was to continue the offensive toward the northeastern edge of the city. Senior Lieutenant S.F. Sukhanov's 1st Guards Airborne Company was to cross the bridge after the 3rd Company, to consolidate the success and advance toward the railroad station. Senior Lieutenant Mukhin's 2nd Company was ordered to cross the bridge and then develop the offensive toward the southeastern edge of the city. The companies were supported in the attack with artillery and mortar fire.

The subunits occupied the starting position, undetected, 30 minutes before the attack was to begin. Guardsmen of the 3rd Company crawled noiselessly right up to the railroad embankment, where the enemy trenches covering the approaches to the bridge were located. Three flares rose into the air at 23:00. The battery immediately opened fire with all weapons, under the cover of which the airborne troops attacked the enemy with shouts of "Ura!" and showered it with grenades. Soldiers of the 1st Platoon were the first to rush onto the bridge. The 20 valourous Guardsmen, led by Lieutenant S.N. Klimchuk, firing sub-machine guns and light machine guns from the march, began clearing the bridge of Hitlerites. Intense hand-to-hand fighting broke out, first in one place and then another. The 2nd and 3rd platoons of Senior Lieutenant Yudkin's company came up several minutes later. One more effort, and the bridge was in the hands of the airborne troops. The enemy forces defending it were totally routed. Forty enemy soldiers and officers were killed, and the others retreated in disorder.¹⁷

The fascist combat engineers still managed to light Bickford safety fuses leading to charges suspended beneath the bridge, however. One more moment, and the bridge would fly into the air. The combat engineers operating together with Guardsmen of the 1st Platoon noticed the eminent danger, however. When he detected the burning Bickford fuse, Guards Sergeant A.V. Pirozhok, section commander and a former Donetsk miner, risked his life by rushing to it and succeeded in preventing the explosion. Later, when the bridge was inspected, it was found that the explosive charge had consisted of 4 250-kilogram aerial bombs and a ton of TNT.¹⁸

After crossing to the north bank of the canal, subunits in the forward detachment continued the offensive toward the city. When the 1st Company approached the railroad station, Senior Lieutenant Sukhanov, company commander, noticed an enemy artillery battery deployed at a fire position. The decision was instantaneous--to circle the battery under cover of machine-gun fire and fall upon it from the flanks and the rear. The attack by the Guardsmen was so unexpected that the fascist artillerymen did not manage to fire a single shot at them. The 1st Company captured 4 105mm guns and a large number of shells. Just 2 hours later, our artillerymen opened intense fire at a counterattacking enemy with the captured guns.

The other companies were also operating successfully, clearing the city of Hitlerites, building by building, block by block. The artillerymen and mortar-men assisted the airborne troops well. They cleared the way for the Guardsmen with accurate fire, destroyed enemy fire points and frustrated the enemy's attempts to go over to a counterattack.

The city of Meze-Komarom was liberated as a result of the determined and bold operations by Captain Rapoport's forward detachment. Subunits of the 128th Motorized Regiment of the Hitlerite 23rd Tank Division retreated to Lajoskomarom after sustaining heavy losses. HQ telephones, by means of which the fascists had long been trying to gain information on the situation in the city, were forgotten in the rush and left in some of the homes. The Guardsmen immediately began securing their positions. The airborne troops dug trenches all night long. They worked in shifts. Local residents gave them a great deal of assistance with the engineer work. More than 1,000 of them worked all night long with our soldiers, digging ditches and trenches. The difficult work was not in vain. A few hours later the enemy brought an infantry battalion and 12-15 tanks up to the city and began attacking....

The 3rd and 1st companies, defending on the northern and northeastern edges of the city, took the enemy attack. There were two 45mm and two 76mm divisional guns at fire positions in the battle orders of the airborne companies. The companies also had captured panzerfausts.

The airborne troops greeted the enemy with organized and intense fire. The Hitlerite tankmen were stunned by the fact that we had panzerfausts. They were obviously seriously shaken up and opened fire from where they were. Our artillerymen took skilful advantage of this and stepped up their fire at the stationary tanks. The fascists' attack was beaten off. The main forces of the 29th Guards Airborne Regiment soon came up. Six tanks, 2 assault guns and 2 armored personnel carriers were put out of action by subunits of Rapoport's detachment in that battle.¹⁹

Good conditions were created for subsequent combat operations by the 4th Guards Army as a result of the determined and bold actions of two forward detachments, interacting with the main forces of the 7th Guards Airborne Division and other formations. All of the enemy's attempts to drive the Soviet troops from the line they held on the Sio Canal ended in failure.

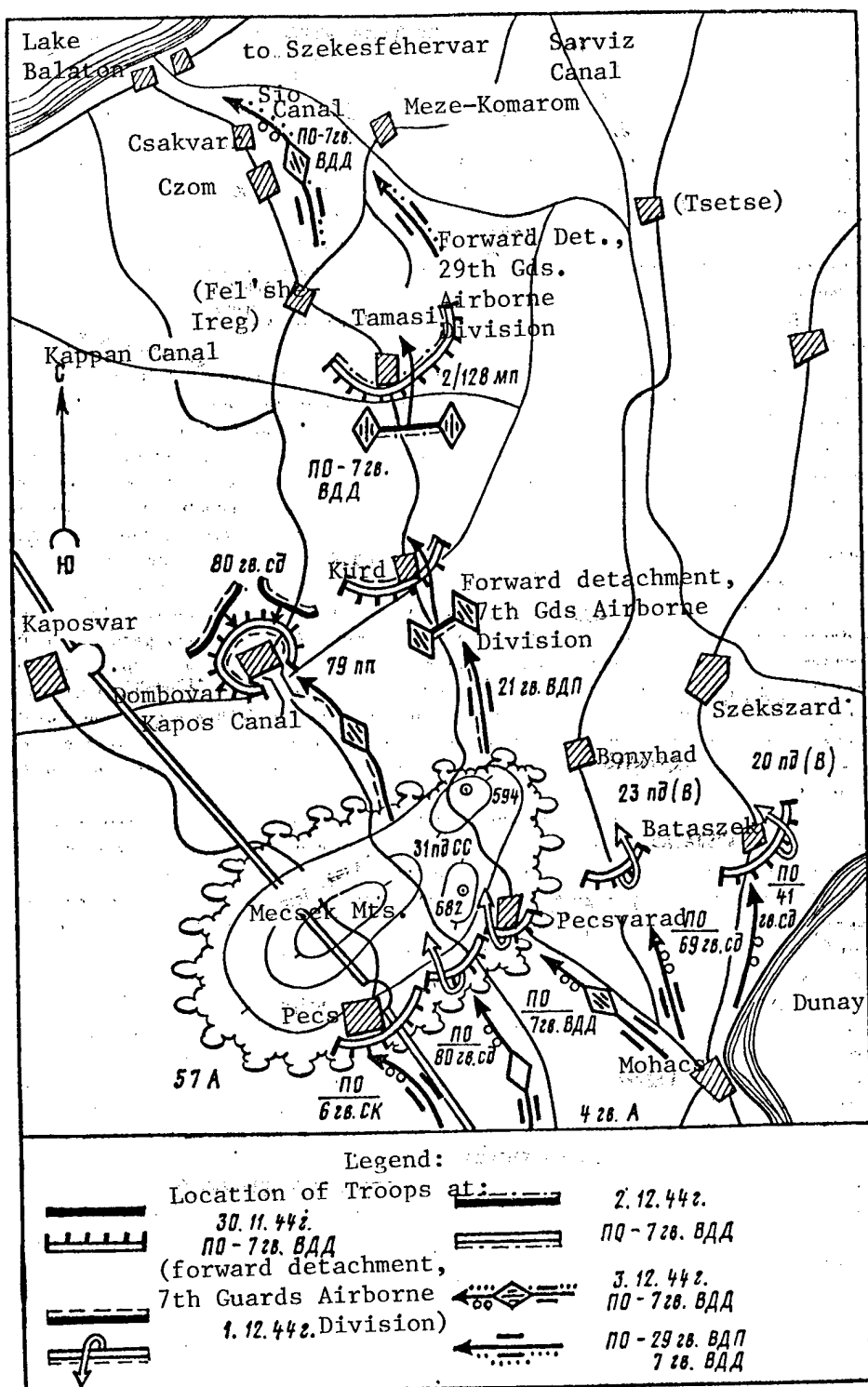


Diagram of Combat Operations by Forward Detachments of 7th Guards Airborne Division in First Stage of Budapest Operation

FOOTNOTES

1. During the period described, the author of the memoirs was chief of staff of the 7th Guards Cherskassk Red Banner, Order of Bogdan Khmel'nitskiy Airborne Division, which was a part of the 20th Guards Rifle Corps.
2. TsAMO SSSR [Central Arkhives of the USSR Ministry of Defense], fund 468, inventory 200736, file 10, sheets 17-20.
3. Ibid., fund 243, inventory 266912, file 1, sheets 47-48.
4. Ibid., fund 466, inventory 200736, file 10, sheets 18-19.
5. Ibid., fund 468, inventory 200736, file 10, sheets 19-21.
6. During the period described, the 7th Guards Airborne Division consisted of the 18th, 21st and 29th Guards Airborne Regiments and the 10th Guards Artillery Regiment, the 8th Separate Guards Self-Propelled Artillery Battalion, a separate combat engineer battalion, a signal battalion, a medical battalion and a separate motorized reconnaissance company.
7. TsAMO SSSR, fund 468, inventory 200736, file 10, sheets 19-20.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid., sheet 20.
11. Ibid., fund 468, inventory 200736, file 10, sheets 40-41.
12. Ibid., fund 320, inventory 33770, file 1, sheets 32-35.
13. After the war, Guards Captain Iosiv Abramovich Rapoport was discharged from the army and returned to scientific work. He is now a corresponding member of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR. He was awarded the Lenin Prize in April 1984 for his successes in science.
14. TsAMO SSSR, fund 5854, file 3, sheets 80-85.
15. Ibid., fund 320, inventory 33770, file 1, sheets 45-53.
16. Ibid., file 5854, inventory 442887, file 3, sheets 104-105.
17. Ibid., file 5854, inventory 442887, file 3, sheet 106.
18. Ibid., fund 5854, inventory 442887, file 3, sheets 106-108.
19. Ibid.

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MILITARY HISTORY

FLT ADM KASATONOV: ON ADM AMEL'KO'S 70TH BIRTHDAY

Moscow VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL in Russian No 11, Nov 84 (signed to press 25 Oct 84) pp 89-92

[Article by Flt Adm V. Kasatonov, Hero of the Soviet Union: "Admiral N.N. Amel'ko--On His 70th Birthday"]

[Text] Nikolay Nikolayevich Amel'ko¹ began serving in the Navy more than a half-century ago, when, upon completing secondary school as a part-time student, the doors of the Higher Naval School imeni M.V. Frunze swung open before the young Leningrad worker and Komsomol member. After 5 years of intense study in the School of Navigation, he was assigned to one of the ships in the Red Banner Baltic Fleet, where he continued with great persistence and diligence to master the job of ship's navigator at the practical level.

As commander of the electrical navigation group on the training ship "Leningradsovet," N.N. Amel'ko took part in the fleet's combat operations during the Soviet-Finnish War of 1939-1940. He was in command of the landing equipment in the capture of a group of islands in the Gulf of Finland.

When the Great Patriotic War began, N.N. Amel'ko was already commander of the training ship "Leningradsovet," which took an active part in the heroic defense of Tallin, the main base of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet, in August 1941. For 3 weeks the ship commanded by N.N. Amel'ko delivered replacements, ammunition and food to the besieged city. And when General Headquarters, Supreme High Command, made the decision to evacuate the troops from Tallin, the "Leningradsovet" together with other ships in the fleet made the transfer to Kronshtadt. It was carried out under continuous attack by enemy aircraft, which dominated the air. The ship faced the danger of being blown up by mines layed by the enemy. In addition to all of this, there were attacks by torpedo boats from the Finnish skerries and artillery strikes from Cape Juminda.

"The West Gogland stretch," N.G. Kuznetsov writes, "was witness to a heroic struggle by the Soviet people to save their vessels. The training ship 'Leningradsovet', for example, withstood more than 100 bombing raids."² "Thanks to the exceptional courage of Senior Lieutenant N.N. Amel'ko, commander of the 'Leningradsovet' and his ability to control the ship," however, not a single enemy bomb damaged the ship's vital centers.³ Despite the difficult situation, the sailors, petty officers and officers performed skillfully and smoothly, because they received precise and confident orders from their commander. They

succeeded in repelling enemy air attacks, picked up drowning men and fought a fire caused by a bomb hit.

En route to Kronshtadt, the crew of the "Leningradsovet" rescued from the sea more than 300 men from destroyed ships. The ship's commander himself was bruised and wounded in the left arm by a bomb fragment, but he did not abandon the fore bridge. He continued firmly directing the work of the personnel and maneuvering the ship during enemy air raids. Captain Lieutenant N.N. Amel'ko was awarded his first combat decoration, the Order of the Red Banner, for his skillful command and the personal courage he demonstrated during the move from Tallin to Kronshtadt.

Captain 3rd Rank N.N. Amel'ko commanded a formation of netlayers guarding the water around the Main Base of the Baltic Fleet, which, in addition to laying mines and anti-submarine nets, escorted vessels on the trip between Kronshtadt and Lavensari Island under constant fire from enemy artillery and aircraft. During that period Nikolay Nikolayevich Amel'ko made a significant contribution to the battle against the danger of mines and to the anti-mine defense, since he had had to constantly provide anti-mine support for the combat exits of submarines day after day, to supervise the destruction of floating mines and to study specimens of enemy mines in order to find the most effective methods of combatting them. He later wrote the following about the struggle against mines during the war: "The struggle against the danger of mines required enormous effort, valor and fearlessness of the personnel. Especially dangerous and difficult work fell to the lot of ships sweeping for mines, escorting ships and convoys and crossing mine obstacles and strips. Never, nowhere, and in no other theater did there exist more difficult conditions for maintaining good operating conditions in general and for a normal mine-sweeping system in particular, as existed in the Baltic. The sailors conquered those difficulties."⁴

Captain 3rd Rank N.N. Amel'ko assumed command of the 10th Patrol Boat Division guarding the waters of the Kronshtadt Naval Defense Area in April 1943. A year later, during the Vyborg-Petrozavodsk Operation, he took part in the landing of forces on islands in Vyborg Bay, and in the fall of that year, in the liberation of islands of the Moonzund archipelago. "During the summer campaign of 1944, Amel'ko's combat record states, "The 10th Patrol Boat Division... was awarded the Order of the Red Banner for combat successes in the fighting against the German invaders. In those battles, N.N. Amel'ko personally directed combat operations involved in covering as many as 30 convoys, transports and battle-ships with smoke screens under powerful artillery and mortar fire from the enemy. In the fighting on the Karelian Isthmus, he covered ships carrying landing forces for capturing the islands, with a smoke screen, under powerful artillery and mortar counteraction, and permitted them to break through."

N.N. Amel'ko was awarded the Order of the Red Banner and the fleet commander's Order of Nakhimov, 2d degree, in 1944 for skillfully directing the division's combat operations. He became a member of the Communist Party that same year.

Victory day found Captain 2d Rank N.N. Amel'ko serving as chief of staff of a mine-sweeping brigade of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet, for which the war actually lasted another entire 4 years. This was a war against mines. A total of more

than 79,000 of them were laid in the Baltic Sea by the two sides in the war. German non-contact mines (more than 400,000) posed the greatest danger to navigation and the mine-sweeping work.

Personnel of the mine-sweeping brigade accepted notification from the Hydrographic Directorate of the Navy on 25 June 1946 that the mine-sweeping of the first section of the Great Shipping Channel (from Kronshtadt to the Helsinki-Tallin channel) had been completed, as a reward for their difficult work during the first postwar year. It was opened for navigation during the daylight hours for all demagnetized ships and vessels of any draft in the merchant fleet. That same year, N.N. Amel'ko later wrote in one of his articles, we swept and cleared of non-contact mines, areas of the Kronshtadt and Tallin Naval Defense Districts, the harbor at Petrodvorets, the Tallin roadstead, Paldiski Bay and others.⁵

It remains only to be added that enormous areas in the Gulf of Finland and in the central and southern Baltic were cleared of mines as a result of the extensive and intense work performed by mine-sweeping forces of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet during the first postwar years (1946-1949). A second, bottom sweep was arranged for purposes of completely eliminating the mine danger.

In the years following, Captain 1st Rank, and then Rear Admiral, N.N. Amel'ko commanded naval formations.⁶ Upon graduating from the General Staff Academy in 1956, N.N. Amel'ko was appointed chief of staff of the Pacific Fleet. He assumed command of that fleet in 1962. Admiral N.N. Amel'ko served as deputy commander in chief of the Navy from March 1969 to March 1978.⁷ He served as assistant chief of General Staff for more than 18 months, and became deputy chief of the General Staff of Armed Forces of the USSR in November 1979.

Candidate of Navy Sciences N.N. Amel'ko performs a great deal of scientific work including the summarization of experience in the Great Patriotic War and work to enhance the combat capabilities of the Soviet Navy in the contemporary situation.

N.N. Amel'ko's service to the homeland has been given a high rating by the Communist Party and the Soviet government. He has been awarded three Orders of Lenin, three Orders of the Red Banner, Orders of Nakhimov, 1st and 2d degree, the Order of the Patriotic War, 2d degree, the Order of the Labor Red Banner, three Orders of the Red Star, the Order "For Service to the Homeland in the Armed Forces of the USSR," 3rd degree, and many medals.

Admiral N.N. Amel'ko was elected a delegate to the 23rd and 24th CPSU Congresses and a member of the Maritime Kray Committee of the CPSU. He was elected to candidate membership in the CPSU Central Committee (1966-1971) at the 23rd party congress, and served as deputy in the USSR Supreme Soviet, 7th and 8th convocations.

On this birthday of our combat friend and comrade, Admiral N.N. Amel'ko, we wish him new successes in his work of further strengthening the defense capability of the Soviet Armed Forces, well-being and good health.

FOOTNOTES

1. N.N. Amel'ko was born on 22 November 1914 in a worker's family in Petrograd. He began his labor career at the Leningrad Stationary Factory. N.N. Amel'ko was sent from there to a naval school on Komsomol authorization.
2. N.G. Kuznetsov, "Kursom k pobede" [On A Course Toward Victory], Moscow, Voenizdat, 1975, p. 66.
3. "Boevoy put' Sovetskogo Voenno-Morskogo Flota" [The Combat Path of the Soviet Navy], Moscow, Voenizdat, 1974, p. 258.
4. VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL, No. 5, 1973, p. 25.
5. VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL, No. 7, 1978, p. 41.
6. N.N. Amel'ko was promoted to the rank of Rear Admiral on 31 May 1954.
7. N.N. Amel'ko was promoted to the military rank of Admiral on 13 April 1964.

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